



St. Louis Genealogical Society Monthly Meeting
Ask Louie at Your Service
11 January 2025

The following information fleshes out the discussion at the January monthly meeting as presented by the Ask Louie panel: Judy Belford, Debbie Benoit, Viki Fagyal, Kathy Franke, Ilene Murray, Jim Ross, Josiah Schmidt, and Carol Whitton.

Carol Whitton—Steamship Travel 1830s–50s

- How was steamship travel organized on the Mississippi, Missouri, and Ohio Rivers in the 1830s to the late 1850s, the time when immigrants from Europe mainly arrived via New Orleans?
 - Don't assume all immigrants to the Midwest came via New Orleans. New York, Baltimore, Boston, and Philadelphia were equally important. For example, immigrant author, Gottfried Duden, landed in the east and sailed via flatboat and then proceeded on foot to St. Louis. His book, *Report on a Journey to the Western States of North America: and a Stay of Several Years Along the Missouri (During the Years 1824–1827)*, can be found in German and English and is an important resource for understanding the immigrant experience.
- Did the paddle steamers only stop in larger towns like St. Louis, St. Charles, or Alton or also in Kaskaskia, for example?
 - Steamboats began to ascend the Mississippi River from New Orleans in 1817. Private, competing companies mainly moved goods, and people came second. They published their schedules in newspapers. They stopped at docks near small rural towns, and sometimes if there was a special request, they added additional stops. Kaskaskia was a large town with about 7,000 people and an early capital of Illinois.
- Could smaller rivers like the Osage River or the Kaskaskia River also be navigated by boat?
 - River traffic on smaller rivers was mostly by flatboat, rafts, and canoes. Many small rivers weren't deep enough for steamboats until much later in the century when some dredging occurred along larger waterways. In addition, deforestation along riverbanks to supply steamboats often resulted in catastrophic flooding.
- Or did people walk to places like Westphalia, Osage Co., Mo., or St. Libory, St. Clair Co., Il.
 - Roads were muddy trails outside of big cities in the mid-1800s. Immigrants struggled to live on the frontier. They weren't prepared to clear land or build houses, to hunt or live in isolation the way American pioneers were. Some people did walk along the rivers with wagons on trails.

A few websites for steamboat research:

Herman T. Pott Steamboat Library: <https://umsl.edu/mercantile/pott/index.html>

Steamboating the Rivers: <https://www.steamboats.org/>



Panel—City Directories

- Are 20th century city directories digitized (1920s–1950s)? If so, where are they?
 - City directories are widely available in digital format.
 - Start with the Mercantile Library in St. Louis's online list of available directories, which will point you to many other possibilities.
<https://www.umsl.edu/mercantile/research/research-guides/directories.html>
 - **FamilySearch.org** has many St. Louis directories digitized.
<https://familysearch.org/en/united-states/>
 - St. Louis Genealogical Society has a large collection of paper directories, and the Emerson History and Genealogy Center at the Clark Family Branch, St. Louis Count Library (SLCL), has many in both paper and digital formats.
- Who has a paper collection that can be used onsite?
 - The largest comprehensive paper collection is at the Missouri Historical Society's Library and Research Center on Skinker Boulevard. Also, StLGS and SLCL have collections available, but their paper sets are not complete.

Panel—St. Louis City Tax Records

- My grandfather lived in the city from the 1890s until 1923. How can I see what property he owned and if he was earning income as a landlord?
 - Check with the Recorder of Deeds office in the city.
<https://www.stlouiscityrecorder.org/land/>
 - Also check the Missouri Digital Heritage website to see if they have any online for your time period. <https://www.sos.mo.gov/mdh/>

Jim Ross—Online Security Software

- I am researching online security software (Guardio, Incogni, Privacy Hawk). If I install any of these, will it keep genealogists from finding me on genealogy websites?
 - These software programs protect your computer and your personal identity from various kinds of disaster: malware, scams, phishing, etc.
 - They do not appear to affect your visibility or access on legitimate genealogy websites.

Panel—St. Louis Grade School Yearbooks

- Are grade school yearbooks available anywhere? Is the St. Louis Public School Archives still accessible?
 - Some grade schools did issue yearbooks, but they are not common. Availability will depend on which schools and where they were.
 - The St. Louis Public Schools Archives has closed. Some, if not all, of its collection has been moved to the Mo. History Library and Research Center on Skinker Blvd., but the collection has not yet been catalogued.
 - Send an email to archives@mohistory.org for specific requests.



Debbie Benoit—Information about Annulments

- Where do you find divorce and/or annulment papers in Missouri?
 - An annulment is a court proceeding asking the court to make a determination that the marriage never existed.
 - Under Missouri law, a court could grant an annulment for bigamy, being underage, close levels of kinship, lack of capacity, common law marriage, and duress or fraud.
 - If there was an annulment granted by a court, it should be located along with other records at the county courthouse, most likely with the divorce records.
 - Religious annulments may be granted by the Catholic Church, but there are certain qualifications to obtain a copy of one. These records were not microfilmed when the other church records were filmed.
 - Contact the Archdiocesan Office of Archives and Records at <https://www.archstl.org/about/offices-and-agencies/archives-archdiocesan/>. (The St. Louis Catholic Archdiocese includes parishes in St. Louis City, St. Louis County, St. Charles County, Lincoln County, Warren County, Franklin County, Jefferson County, Washington County, St. Francois County, Ste. Genevieve County, and Perry County.)

Josiah Schmidt & Panel—St. Louis/Missouri Newspapers

- What is the difference between what the county library has (or had) in their collections and what is now included in Newspapers.com and what is not included in their collection that remains in the library?
 - Most of the small, community newspapers in St. Louis have not been digitized and can be accessed through SLCL but not online.
 - The library has a helpful page of newspapers and periodicals on microfilm on their website at <https://www.slcl.org/research-learn/genealogy/list-of-newspapers-and-other-periodicals-on-microfilm>.
- What is the difference between going directly to Newspapers.com (with a subscription) or accessing them through the library.
 - Not all newspapers nationwide nor all years are available through the library subscription.
 - In addition, many newspapers are found on other sites, which are also worth exploring.
- With a library card, you can access the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* digital archives. The only difference between a subscription and what is available through the library will likely be that current editions require a subscription.
- What about the State Historical Society of Missouri's collection?
 - The State Historical Society in Columbia, Missouri, has the most comprehensive collection of newspapers from around the entire state.
 - They have only recently started to digitize their collection and are working with Ancestry to do so.
 - Specifics of their collection are on their website: <https://shsmo.org/collections/newspapers>



Judy Belford—Death Records

- How can you get death records in Missouri for people who died less than fifty years ago?
 - The Bureau of Vital Records issues Missouri death records that are less than fifty years old.
 - House Bill 1634 (2004) transferred all death records more than fifty years old to the Missouri State Archives, which maintains a database and website with copies of the death certificates older than fifty years. (See Missouri Digital Heritage for these records.)
 - For death certificates within the last fifty years, a certified copy of a birth or death certificate may be obtained by contacting the Bureau of Vital Records, 930 Wildwood, Jefferson City, MO 65109 or call (573) 751-6387.
 - You can also go to their website at <https://health.mo.gov/data/vitalrecords/obtain-vital-record.php> for information on obtaining birth or death certificates.

Ilene Murray—How to Connect to Others with the Same Surname?

- What are some ways to connect with other people who share a common surname?
 - The most effective way to do this is to utilize social media.
 - Seek out groups of researchers who are doing genealogy in towns or counties of your interest and send in queries.
 - Use Google to search for one-name surname groups.

Ilene Murray—Finding Naturalization Records

- How do I find naturalization papers for a woman who naturalized sometime after 1900?
 - Naturalization after September 1906 became a federal function. Before then, women automatically became citizens if their husbands or fathers naturalized.
 - In 1907, any woman marrying a foreigner automatically lost her citizenship, although she regained it if her husband naturalized. This act was repealed in 1922.
 - After 1922, women could naturalize on their own and would no longer lose citizenship if married to a foreigner.
 - If you are looking for a woman's naturalization prior to 1922, you should first see if her husband or father naturalized, as she is likely to be with a man.
 - You can look on the local level first, but then you will need to go to the National Archives for whatever area of the country you need. St. Louis naturalizations are in the National Archives in Kansas City.
 - Both St. Louis Genealogical Society and the Emerson History and Genealogy Center of SLCL have digital copies of some indexes and actual records, so you might want to start your search there.

Kathy Franke—Where are Catholic St. Louis Baptism/Marriage Records?

- How do I find and request a copy of a baptism record for my ancestor born in 1883?
 - Go to <http://familysearch.org>.



- Sign in or create an account. It is free, and they will not contact you or try to sell you anything.
- After signing in, click on “**Search**” at the top of the page.
- Click on catalog.
- In the “**Author**” section, type in: “Catholic Missouri [name of the church]” **without the quotes.**
- Click on “**Search**” in the blue box.
- This will bring you to the digitized images. The images are not searchable by name, but some of the churches have an index written in the front or back of their register.
- You may want to consult Christy Hughes’s definitive book, *Guide to St. Louis Catholic Archdiocesan Parish Records*, online on the SLCL website.
<https://www.slcl.org/sites/default/files/2023-06/HG%20SLAPR%202015.pdf>

Viki Fagyal—Early Missouri State Censuses

- Can you tell me how to find early Missouri state census records, particularly 1797–1840?
 - All Missouri state census records are online at the Missouri State Archives website. Go to <https://www.sos.mo.gov/archives/resources/resources>.
 - Under “Online Resources,” find “Census Records and Tax Lists.”
 - Censuses available are:**
 - Territorial Censuses (1752–1818) and Tax Lists (1814–1821)
 - State Censuses (1840–1876) and Tax Lists (years vary by county)
 - Federal Censuses (1830–1940)
 - Census of Agriculture
 - Manufactures and Products of Industry Schedules
 - 1890 Military Schedule
 - Slave Schedules for 1850 and 1860
 - Special Censuses (1857–2004)

Ilene Murray—Cemetery Tours

- Is it possible to tour some of the cemeteries in St. Louis, particularly Bellefontaine and Old/New St. Marcus?
 - Bellefontaine Cemetery is a beautifully maintained, active cemetery in north St. Louis City with a fully staffed office. They have regular tours scheduled throughout the year and many special events.
 - Bus tours are free, but their trolley tours do involve a small cost.
 - For more information, you can call them at (314) 381-0750 or visit their website <https://bellefontainecemetery.org/events>.
 - Old St. Marcus Cemetery now is a St. Louis City Park with most graves removed. Some are at New St. Marcus and some in other locations.
 - StLGS has more information on all of these cemeteries. **Be sure to log in as a member** and then go to the cemetery pages for:
 - Bellefontaine (<https://stlgs.org/research-2/life-death/cemeteries-2/st-louis-area-cemeteries-list/bellefontaine-cemetery-b10>)



- Old St. Marcus (<https://stlgs.org/research-2/life-death/cemeteries-2/st-louis-area-cemeteries-list/st-marcus-old-cemetery-st20>)
- New St. Marcus (<https://stlgs.org/research-2/life-death/cemeteries-2/st-louis-area-cemeteries-list/st-marcus-new-cemetery-st19>).

Viki Fagyal—Unsealing Adoption Records

- How do I go about obtaining a birth record for someone adopted in St. Louis in 1955?
 - A law passed in Missouri in 2016 gives to adoptees and lineal descendants of adoptees the ability to get copies of their birth certificates from the state of Missouri.
 - You will need to complete the application and send it to the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services. We understand, though, that there might be a long wait for records to be processed.
 - if you know the county where the adoption was completed, you could request the records from the Circuit Clerk's office in that county.
 - Adult adoptees born in or after 1941 can request a copy of their original birth certificate from the Missouri Bureau of Vital Records. You can contact them:
 - By calling (573) 751-6387
 - Emailing VitalRecordsInfo@health.mo.gov
 - Visiting 930 Wildwood Drive, Jefferson City, MO 65109.
 - A copy of the necessary form for the actual adoptee or a lineal descendant is available at [https://health.mo.gov/data/vitalrecords/forms/?/\\$I](https://health.mo.gov/data/vitalrecords/forms/?/$I). Click on:

[Application for Non-Certified Copy of Original \(Pre-Adoptive\) Birth Certificate by Adoptee, Adoptee's Attorney or Birth Parent](#)

[Application for Non-Certified Copy of Original \(Pre-Adoptive\) Birth Certificate by Lineal Descendant](#)

- For more information on adoption records, go to <https://www.sos.mo.gov/cmsimages/adrules/csr/current/19csr/19c10-10.pdf>, page 15, to read a copy of the Code of State Regulations pertaining to the Department of Health and Senior Services, Vital Records.

Viki Fagyal—Order of the Eastern Star

- My great-aunt was a member of the Eastern Star. What is it?
 - The Eastern Star is a service organization affiliated with the Masons.
 - It is the “largest fraternal organization in the world open to both men and women” and still has about a million members worldwide.
 - Their Missouri chapter has a Facebook group and a website. Find them on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/348082141940377/> and their website <https://oesmo.org>.

