

## Genealogical/Historical Resources in Court Records—Mike Everman, 2=13=2021

All levels of court records processed and indexed so far—Many online on Missouri State Archives website—Missouri State Archives/Research/Missouri Judicial Records

Circuit court records are similar in all other counties—they are available at county circuit court offices or on microfilm at the Missouri State Archives.

### Courts in St. Louis—

*Circuit Court*-1804-present, clerk with aid of sheriff

*Court of Common Pleas*, 1841-1865

*Criminal Court*, 1839-present

*Land Court*, 1851-1865 (dealing with real estate)

*Law Commissioner's Court*—small claims, mostly debts less than \$100

*Justice of the Peace courts*—justices in each township, with aid of constable—could appeal to circuit court.

Probate Court—1804-present

**\*Non-judicial court**= County Court—dealt with county administrative and financial matters--property, construction, accounts, licenses, contracts.

Types of court records—civil (A vs B for damages); criminal (State vs Persons or Corporations for fine or imprisonment; chancery--injunctions, divorces, partitions, contracts (1811-1850)

***Being in court did not mean that they were in trouble!!!*** Maybe they were “alleged” and not tried or found guilty. They could also be registering for naturalization or other functions.

***Case files*** include—petitions (complaint), summons, depositions, subpoenas, judgments, maps/drawings. ***Record books***—daily record of what actions occurred for each case, with plaintiffs, defendants, and case number within each term of court.

***It's always worth a look in the indexes!!!!*** Contact court staff for checking actual court and records book indexes or their database—most are not online. Index books for case files and for record books for each court could be on microfilm and/or digitized at court office or at Missouri State Archives in Jefferson City.

**Direct indexes** by plaintiff versus defendant; *Dewey, John vs. Grantham, Elsie*

**Inverted indexes** by defendant *adversus* plaintiff. *Grantham, Elsie vs. Dewey, John*

Look next door also—many cases were moved to another St. Louis court or to a court in another county on Change of Venue!!!!

***Circa*** is a useful Roman word!!!--Try “around” the date you think it was for a couple of years before and after the information you have about a case. Court procedures took longer and might be delayed or continued for several of the quarterly or monthly terms of the court.

**Slices of life to lead to your people in court records: it's all about relationships!!!! And more than half of the cases are about debt. And it is worth it if they were only alleged and probably not guilty!!!!**

Litigants and witnesses reveal your ancestors and their friends, enemies, neighbors, relatives.

Activities—civil AND criminal

Addresses and descriptions of property

Business accounts and letterheads

Cutting timber

Debts—business and personal

Disorderly house

Disturbing the peace

Divorce from 1817 forward--(in chancery court from 1825-1850)

Doing business without a license

Dram shops, taverns, liquor violations

Estate settlement suits

Ferries

Forgery

Freedom—enslaved persons, runaways; freedom suits, emancipations

Gambling—faro; loto; gaming

Habeas corpus to prove why someone was put in jail

Land and property disputes; partition; ejectment; mortgages

Larceny

Libel

Murder

Naturalizations—declarations and final papers, including minors and soldiers

Occupations

Partnerships

Personal injury

Promissory notes—could be settled via money or attachment of property

Property damage

Property descriptions

Railroads

Replevin of goods or property taken

Riot

Robbery

Slander

Steamboats

Trespass of rights or property

Vagrancy

**2=13=2021**

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# Missouri State Archives Online Resources and Databases Available at

**<http://s1.sos.mo.gov/archives/resources/resources.asp#onlinedb>**

## Civil War Provost Marshal Index Database

The online database is an index of the Missouri portion of the War Department Collection of Confederate Records in the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). The collection contains thousands of pages of documents detailing the way the provost marshals affected the lives of Missouri citizens who came into contact with the Union Army. Also included are military prison rolls and United States Colored Troops (USCT) enlistments.

## County and Municipal Records on Microfilm

A roll-by-roll listing of over 64,000 reels of microfilm containing county and municipal records. These records include deeds, marriages, circuit court and probate court materials and more.

## Missouri Death Certificates, 1910-1965

<https://s1.sos.mo.gov/records/archives/archivesmvc/deathcertificates#searchDB>

Death certificates contain valuable information for family historians and researchers. The Missouri Death Certificate Database, containing death records created from 1910 up to those 50 years old, makes that information available online through a searchable index that links to a digitized image of the original death certificate.

## Missouri Judicial Records

This database of circuit and probate court files is currently searchable by name, county and year for approximately 30 counties. These historic probate records offer insight into the lives of Missourians through wills, inventories, settlements, and guardianship records. Circuit court cases provide information on many aspects of life, from the fur trade to the Civil War, steamboats to railroads, agriculture, land ownership, urbanization, and business and personal relationships. Many search results will also include images.

## Missouri State Penitentiary Database

The Missouri State Penitentiary (MSP) was the first penitentiary west of the Mississippi River. This database includes information on inmates from 1836-1931. Results include the individual's name, crime, county of commitment, dates served, and much more. Results may also include an image of the original MSP register.

## Missouri Supreme Court Historical Database

The Missouri Supreme Court database provides an index and abstract of the criminal and civil court cases that were appealed to the territorial and state Supreme Court of Missouri up to 1868, and a partial listing to 1889. Many of these case documents are now accessible online.

## Naturalization Records Database, 1816-1955

The information contained in the naturalization records includes name, native country, date of record, court of application, county court, circuit court, Supreme Court, and microfilm location for copy of full entry (reel number, volume and page numbers).

# Court Records for St. Louis City and County

## **St. Louis *Circuit Court* Records Post-1875**

Kathy Grillo, Records Manager

St. Louis City Circuit Court

10 North Tucker

St. Louis, MO 63101

Phone: 314-641-8309

E-mail: [kathy.grillo@courts.mo.gov](mailto:kathy.grillo@courts.mo.gov)

## **St. Louis County Court Records, 1877-present**

St. Louis County *Circuit* Clerk

105 South Central Avenue

Clayton, MO 63105

Phone: 314-615-8029

[Circuit Clerk – St. Louis County Courts \(stlcountycourts.com\)](http://stlcountycourts.com)

St. Louis County *Probate* Division

105 South Central Avenue

Clayton, MO 63105

Phone: 314-615-2629

[St. Louis County Courts \(stlcountycourts.com\)](http://stlcountycourts.com)

## **St. Louis City Probate Records, 1804-present (*all probate files are now at this office*)**

Alexandra Jackson, Resource Room Clerk

St. Louis City Probate Court

10<sup>th</sup> Floor, Civil Courts Building

10 North Tucker

St. Louis MO 63101

Phone: 314-622-4238 (General Probate File Room)

Website: <http://www.stlcitycircuitcourt.com/index2.html?XMLFile=xml/HistoricalIndex.xml>

E-Mail: [Alexandra.Jackson@courts.mo.gov](mailto:Alexandra.Jackson@courts.mo.gov)

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