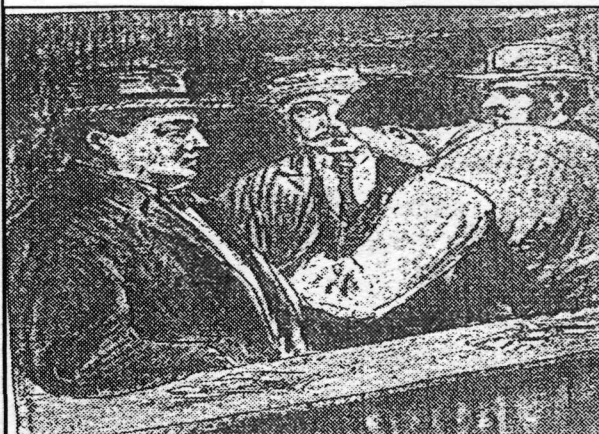


illuminations

A quarterly publication of the Historical Society of University City

The Delmar Race Track War



Bookmakers arrested at the Delmar track are frisked by a detective in this drawing from the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, July 26, 1905.

"Holy Joe" vs. the Bookies
by David Linzee

The Delmar Race Track opened for business in 1901. It occupied part of the area that is now the Parkview Gardens neighborhood, with the location of its entrances preserved in the names of Eastgate and Westgate avenues. In the summer of 1905, the year before University City's incorporation, it was the scene of a political skirmish so hot it was even covered by the *New York Times*, which dubbed it the "Delmar race track war."

On July 25, about 100 St. Louis policemen, including mounted police and a "rifle corps" armed with repeating rifles (the SWAT team of the day, evidently) swept onto the race track grounds and arrested 11 bookmakers. They allowed the day's races to go forward. Detectives had been investigating the track all week, and had applied for warrants in St. Louis County, but hadn't waited for the warrants to be approved.

County prosecutor Rowland Johnston declared that he would not prosecute the arrested men and furiously protested the St. Louis City police "invasion of the County." That wasn't enough for his assistant prosecutor, J.C. Kiskaddon, who resigned and wrote an open letter to Johnston, accusing him of bending to the will of Missouri Governor Joseph W. Folk, a zealous reformer nicknamed "Holy Joe." In addition, the Delmar Jockey Club, which operated the track, sued Folk and the Chief of St. Louis police. Missouri's Attorney General responded by starting proceedings to lift the Club's charter and put the track out of business.

The troubles now coming to a head had been brewing for a long time. What lay at the bottom of it all, said Kiskaddon in his letter, which

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A Message from the President by Eleanor Mullin



Eleanor Mullin

The Decade has changed, and so has the Presidency of the Historical Society. So introductions are in order. I'm Eleanor Mullin, and I am honored to have been elected to the position by my fellow board members.

I've lived in University City since I was two years old, on Cornell in what my peers referred to as 'the circle streets'—University Heights 1. I attended Delmar-Harvard, Hanley Junior High, and, logically, graduated from U. C. High School. I did 'abandon' U. City then for a five year stint in Columbia, MO, earning a Bachelor and Masters degree from the University of Missouri. And I must admit, when I returned, it was to a 'modern' apartment complex (read with swimming pool and clubhouse) in West County.

However, I always knew my destiny was to return to U. City—I soon married my High School sweetheart, Tim, who graduated a year before me, and we moved into his home—in University Heights 3!! This apple did not fall far from the tree, and I can take a short walk and admire my childhood home any time I want!

My first career was teaching high school English, Speech and Drama, and then I segued to managing Tim's law office, and both careers were very gratifying. I am quite active in local theatre—on the boards of two groups, and appear on stage for many others. I got involved with U. City's CALOP (film) commission, where I met Ed Nickels. We worked well together, and one day he asked if I was interested in joining the Historical Society's board. I was thrilled, and the rest, as they say, is history (stop groaning)!

What is in store for HSUC in the 'twenty-teens'? First, after a wonderful year of celebrating the Lions, we have raised a decent amount of money for their preservation. Late this spring, for the first time in

almost twenty years, we will have them inspected, and then repairs made.

We continue to promote our Century Placques, and as the years roll by, more and more of our beautiful homes are eligible. Do you live in one? If you're not sure, we will be glad to either tell you—we have lots of information compiled already—or help you find out. We're in the process of having our own website designed. Currently you can find us on the library's website at: www.ucpl.lib.mo.us. When our site is up, we'll have a variety of pictures, information and links on it, and all of our items—booklets, books, videos, posters and more—which are for sale will be available for purchase through PayPal.

We're always on the look out for historical items. If you, or any relatives or friends who live(d) in U. City, are cleaning out the attic or basement and find items, let us know. And of course, we will continue to present four programs each year on a variety of U. City topics. In January, Alan Spector, class of 1964, entertained us with his memories of U. City High from his book *Hail Hail to U. City High*. The evening was well attended, and all had a great time not only listening, but sharing stories. We hope to see you at our next program, at which time Ilene Murray will speak about her book *University City, Missouri: Its People and Events 1906-1931*. This is HSUC's most recent publication. It is an astounding compilation of facts about everyone and everything in U. City from 1906-1931. The event will be Tuesday, March 23rd, at 7:00 p.m. in the Library's second floor auditorium, and like all of our programs, is free.

Now that you've heard what HSUC is doing, I want to let you know what each of you can do to help our Board make our organization even more successful. You can spread the word, and help grow our membership. I'd like to see every one of you **persuade one new person to join HSUC**. I know you each have a neighbor, friend, or relative you can talk to about this. Remember, you don't have to live in U City to join! Even our low membership fees (\$10.00 for seniors, \$20.00 individual, \$30.00 families) are tax deductible. When your neighbor or friend says they are interested, please contact us (ucityhistory@hotmail.com) and we will get a brochure out to them immediately!

Thanks for your time in reading this, and I look forward to meeting you at upcoming events.

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was published in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, was prejudice and partisan politics. The race track arrests were just the latest of Folk's "militia spasms," he said; Folk had been tyrannizing and calumniating the people of the County for some time, enforcing laws no one had bothered with in years—especially the one closing the bars on Sunday.

Kiskaddon passionately defended the Countians from charges of lawlessness. Oh, last year's World's Fair had brought troublemakers to the area, but they were just transients. The residents were churchgoers and good family folk: "[S]ee their stalwart sons and blooming daughters—no 'race suicide' here," Kiskaddon wrote. Holy Joe was prejudiced against the Countians because most of them were German, and they liked their beer. Even worse, in the eyes of the Governor, a Democrat, was that they were Republicans. He was scheming to stock County boards and commissions with his cronies to give Democrats the advantage.

The race track incident seems to get lost in the passions and conspiracy-theorizing of Kiskaddon's letter. He was probably taking advantage of the fact that the Temperance movement, seeking Prohibition, and the Progressive movement, seeking to reform corrupt government, were intertwined, and the former was a lot less popular with Germans and other more recent immigrants.

But for Folk and his supporters, the race track was a simple law enforcement issue. A month before the arrests, the Breeder's Law had been repealed, making organized betting at Missouri racetracks illegal. But bookmakers continued to operate at the Delmar track, and St. Louis County Sheriff Herpel turned a blind eye. So Folk ordered the City police to enforce the law. "There has been entirely too much making of laws to please the moral element and then allowing the laws to be ignored to please the immoral element," he declared.

Folk was in his first year as governor. According to *Holy Joe: Joseph W. Folk and the Missouri Idea* by Steven L. Piott, he had made his reputation as a crusading St. Louis prosecutor. He had been celebrated in print by famed muckraking journalist Lincoln Steffens, and praised by President Theodore Roosevelt. He meant to clean up Missouri and wasn't about to back down.

The next day, July 26, the City police came again, to find the gates of the track shut against them. They pushed through, with Chief Kiely threatening to bar everyone from the track if any more attempts to exclude the police were made. County Sheriff Herpel

had belatedly remembered his duties and was on hand, with warrants for bookies. But he wasn't very zealous. He could find only two of the seven men he had warrants for. Folk ordered Chief Kiely to station city cops permanently at the track. Two days later, the track shut down for the season. The courts revoked the Jockey Club's charter.

NiNi Harris, in *Legacy of Lions*, writes that this was the end of horseracing in St. Louis County. But other sources say the track re-opened. Whether it held horseraces or car races only is unclear. In any case, it closed for good in 1911.

Folk was praised by the *Post*, which had long been at war with the bookmakers. The paper claimed that the bookies of Chicago and St. Louis channeled over \$70 million a season away from legitimate investment. The June 1906 Democratic convention also applauded Folk, saying "the greatest racetrack syndicate in the world [has been] driven from the State, after having enjoyed the special protection of Republican officials in the county." But "Holy Joe" didn't appeal to urban voters, and when he ran for senator, he lost. He moved to Washington and became, ironically, a well-paid lobbyist.

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Members, help HSUC save on paper and postage—and avoid cluttering up your mailbox. Please send your name and email address to ucityhistory@hotmail.com, and we'll use it to keep you up to date on our programs and other interesting news.

Upcoming Programs

Tuesday, March 23—Ilene Murray on her book *University City, Missouri: Its People and Events 1906-1931* 7 pm at U City Public Library

Tuesday, April 20th—Esley Hamilton gives a talk entitled "A Vanished World: St. Louis in 1900." 7 pm at U City Public Library

Esley told *Illuminations*: "My thesis is that the city in the era of the World's Fair was very different than the one we have today, with many landmarks that have disappeared. From about 1895 to 1910, almost every important institution in the Central Corridor of the city moved to a new building farther west. E. G. Lewis was quick to recognize this phenomenon and to capitalize on it in University City."

Tuesday, September 21st—General Meeting dinner.



The Historical Society of University City
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- *Incoming President's message

TWO NEW PUBLICATIONS

University City, Missouri: Its People and Events, 1906-1931, by C. Edwin Murray and Ilene Kanfer Murray is a comprehensive survey of residents in the early years of U. City. The authors describe each time period and the resources they used and have reproduced many historical photos. The final chapter contains almost 100 biographies written by and about families who lived in U. City during its developing years. This is a fascinating glimpse into the past. The hardcover book, printed on archival quality paper, can be ordered from the address below for \$35 plus \$5 shipping, or picked up from the public library.

Memoirs of a Childhood in Ames Place is a 16-page booklet written by Elizabeth Gentry Sayad recalling her young years when she lived in a home on Pershing. Many photos accompany the text. Ms. Sayad discusses her family, her time at Flynn Park School, classmates, holidays, and her many related activities. Ms. Sayad is author of "A Yankee in Creole Country: The Unfinished Vision of Justus Post in Frontier St. Louis." She is a founding member of the Missouri Arts Council and of the St. Louis Arts and Humanities Commission (now the Regional Arts Commission), and has received numerous awards for her many accomplishments in the arts and humanities. An accomplished pianist, Ms. Sayad has a Master's in music from Northwestern University, and a Master of Arts degree in American Culture Studies from Washington University where she received her B.A. degree. A sixth-generation Missourian, she descends from a long line of early Virginian planters who came to the St. Louis region in 1795 on a Spanish land grant.

The booklet, *Memoirs of a Childhood in Ames Place*, sells for \$5.00 and is the first in a series of booklets on growing up in our community between the early 1940s and 1970s. If you have a story to tell and several good clear photos of scenes from your childhood growing up in University City (preferably some in association with University City buildings and landmarks), please write the Historical Society of University City, c/o The University City Public Library, 6701 Delmar Boulevard, University City, MO 63130.