



Joseph Gerk Papers (S0852)

Collection Number: S0852

Collection Title: Joseph Gerk Papers

Dates: 1923-1957

Creator: Gerk, Joseph A., 1874-1957

Abstract: The Joseph Gerk Papers contain newspaper clippings, photographs, and a report documenting Gerk's career with the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department.

Collection Size: 0.01 cubic foot
(4 folders, 23 photographs)

Language: Collection materials are in English.

Repository: The State Historical Society of Missouri

Restrictions on Access: Collection is open for research but may be stored offsite. This collection is available at [The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-St. Louis](#). If you would like more information, please contact us at stlouis@shsmo.org. Collections may be viewed at any research center.

Restrictions on Use: The Donor has given and assigned to the University all rights of copyright, which the Donor has in the Materials and in such of the Donor's works as may be found among any collections of Materials received by the University from others.

Preferred Citation: [Specific item; box number; folder number] *Joseph Gerk Papers* (S0852); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-St. Louis [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-St. Louis].

Donor Information: The papers were donated to the State Historical Society of Missouri by Kate Bueter Lochte on September 10, 2026 (Accession No. SA4895).

Processed by: Processed by AJ Medlock and Emma Mittermeyer September 2026.

Biographical Note:

Joseph Gerk was born on September 26, 1874, in St. Louis City, Missouri, to Johann and Barbara Gerk. Gerk worked as a police officer for the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department from 1899 until his retirement in 1934. During this time, he served in numerous positions and was eventually promoted to chief in 1925, where he remained until his retirement. Throughout his career, he worked to enforce Prohibition and to disband prominent criminal organizations. Joseph Gerk married Corinne Gerk (nee Korzendorfer). Together, they had two children: Joseph Gerk Jr. and Margaret Corinne Gerk. Joseph Gerk died on April 2, 1957, in St. Louis City, Missouri.

Arrangement:

The collection has been arranged alphabetically.

Scope and Content Note:

The Joseph Gerk papers contain newspaper clippings, photographs, a report, and a testimonial dinner booklet, documenting the career of Joseph Gerk, who served as chief of police of the Metropolitan St. Louis Police Department from 1925 to 1934. Materials of interest include a report titled *The Colbeck Gang*, which lists numerous crimes committed by the gang, an offshoot of Egan's Rats, primarily consisting of armed robberies, gang disputes, and murders—including the racially charged murder of an unnamed African American musician—occurring between 1919 and 1924. Other items of interest include the *Confidential Testimony of W.R.* In the transcript, Gerk and his colleague, "Chief Kaiser, questioned "W.R." about the Italian Mafia's activities in St. Louis, particularly surrounding a man called Vito. The materials in this collection are arranged alphabetically and date from 1923 to 1957.

Container List:

Box 1	f. 1	Confidential testimony of "W.R." and a report on the Colbeck gang, 1927, no date
	f. 2	Joseph Gerk testimonial booklet and newspaper clippings, 1925, 1957, no date
	f. 3	Photographs, 1923-1933, 1945, 1949
Oversize tray 1	f. 4	Photograph, testimonial dinner to Police Chief Joseph A. Gerk, May 21, 1925

Index:

Index Terms	Folder	Image
Bueter, Edward Gorrell, 1908-1999	3	Yes
Colbeck, William	1	
Crime--Missouri--Saint Louis	1	
Gerk, Joseph A., 1874-1957	1-4	Yes
Gerk, Margaret, 1911-1990	3	Yes
Police--Missouri--Saint Louis	1-4	Yes

Robinson, David	1	
Saint Louis (Mo.). Metropolitan Police Department	1-4	Yes