

Our Missouri Podcast

Title: Episode 16: Rolla, Rotoscope, and Route 66

Guest: Katie Seale

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KEVIN WALSH: Welcome to *Our Missouri*, a podcast about the people, places, culture, and history of the 114 counties and independent city of Saint Louis that comprise the great state of Missouri. Each episode focuses on a topic related to the state ranging from publications about Missouri's history to current projects undertaken by organizations to preserve and promote local institutions. The *Our Missouri Podcast* is recorded in the J. Christian Bay Rare Books Room at the State Historical Society of Missouri's Columbia Research Center, and is generously provided to you by the State Historical Society of Missouri. And now, here's your host, Sean Rost.

SEAN ROST: Good morning, good afternoon, and good evening, or at whatever hour you are tuning in to listen to the *Our Missouri Podcast*. My name is Sean Rost and I will be your guide as we explore the memories, moments, and misfortunes from our Missouri. Spring is here. The temperatures are warming up. The trees are green. The wildlife is out. The state's highways and waterways are calling your name. For many, May marks the start of vacation season. And so, it's time to hit the road. In today's episode, we're headed to the "Mother Road," better known as Route 66, for a conversation with Katie Seale, Senior Archivist at the State Historical Society of Missouri's Rolla Research Center. Welcome to the *Our Missouri Podcast*, Katie.

KATIE SEALE: Thank you.

SEAN ROST: Could you tell us a little bit about the Rolla Research Center, and where it's located at on the Missouri S&T campus?

KATIE SEALE: Yeah. Absolutely. So, we are located in the basement of the Curtis Laws Wilson Library. We've been there since 1980. So, the same room down there. Room G-3, if you want to get real specific.

SEAN ROST: How long has the Research Center been in Rolla?

KATIE SEALE: So, our office opened in January of 1980. It started as the Western Historical Manuscript Collection, or WHMC is what a lot of people know it as. We switched over to the SHS, and we're the curators of the WHMC, in 2011.

SEAN ROST: Now, what counties comprise this Rolla Research Center collecting area?

KATIE SEALE: Originally, when the office was first opened, the collecting region was actually all of southern Missouri counties. So, our collections encompass all of southwest Missouri, central, and southeast. But, more recently, with the opening of the Springfield and the Cape

Girardeau offices, our collecting area has shrunk a little to thirteen counties. So, from about Maries and Phelps County straight south all the way to the Arkansas border are the counties that we cover.

SEAN ROST: For people who are interested in preserving their history or their communities history, and thinking about the Rolla Research Center if they're in those collecting counties, what's the best way to kind of get in contact with you? Or, some of the collections that you are thinking about focusing on for the future?

KATIE SEALE: Yeah. So, we are open to anything that you might think has historic preservation needs. If you think it should, feel free to contact us. Probably, the easiest way is either by email or by phone. Right now, I'm focusing and looking at collections that are science and technology related. We're on a science and technology campus. It makes sense. It's not an area we have done strong collecting in in the past. With that being said, we're not by any means restricting it to that. So, it's still very open to business records, genealogical records, anything of that nature. Feel free to contact us, and I would be more than happy to talk to you about it.

SEAN ROST: What types of materials do you usually have housed at the Research Center or that you collect?

KATIE SEALE: So, we have a little bit of everything. In the past, there's been a lot of emphasis on transportation, Civil War, science and technology collections. So, we have some really good collections connected to the railroad. Rolla, itself, was a major railroad head during the Civil War. So, kind of by default, we were interested in that. And then also, Civil War. We have a lot of really good diaries and correspondence. You had some major troop movements and Union presence in Rolla, so there's a lot of letters from that area. We also have—connected with the transportation as well—Route 66 materials, which came through Rolla and traversed several of the counties within our collecting area as well.

SEAN ROST: What are some of the notable collections?

KATIE SEALE: Some of the bigger, probably well-known, collections—we have a large Frisco, or the Saint Louis & San Francisco Railway Company (R362). So, these are the business records for the Frisco Railway. The Burlington Northern Company—which is now overseeing much of the Frisco Line—donated those to us. So, we have records—not just from the main Frisco Line, but from several of the smaller railroad lines that the Frisco either bought out or took over over time. So, there's a lot of really great records. There's maps. There's photographs. So, that one gets used a lot, as well. We also have a lot of interesting mining collections. So, you have the Lead Belt that goes through southeastern Missouri. You have the Tri-State Mining Area down in southwest Missouri. So, we've got a lot of collections connected to those. One in particular is the American Zinc collection. So, that was a large conglomerate company that took over a lot of smaller mining prospects. That's one that gets used a lot. There's a lot of really good information. Again, maps, business records, correspondence, photographs. A lot of really good, useful information in there. We also have—this is one we're actually currently processing right now—the U.S. Geological Survey. They had a research center in Rolla on the [Missouri] S&T campus. So, we have some of their records from that research center. So, some of the records and

different projects that they did. Some of the experiments—we've got some photographs, some press releases, different papers from that area. And then also, some maps of the different projects and stuff that they went out and did across the state and then also in some of the surrounding states as well. They covered a good portion of the Midwest. Their area kind of changed over time—grew and then shrunk down to just the Midwest. It's not just Missouri materials in those collections as well.

SEAN ROST: Obviously, one of my favorite collections is Rotoscope. I mean, we've talked about that in the past through a lot of SHS avenues and social media and things like that. Tell us a little bit about the history of that collection and all that it encompasses.

KATIE SEALE: Yeah. So, this is a really unique collection. It is out of the Carney family. So, Rowe Carney, Jr. was a native of Rolla. His family actually owned several theaters throughout town, and also, I believe, in Lebanon and Saint James, if I'm remembering correctly. Rowe Carney, himself, was a projectionist during World War II, and early on in his career after he had left the Army he'd come back and actually had attended the opening for Cinerama in New York City. So, this was a large curved screen that showed 180-degree view of a video. But, how they did it was they used three cameras to record, and then three projectors in order to show the video. So, there were some problems with lining up the edges and it wasn't all quite there, and he thought he could do it better. Turns out—he actually could. He went home and through a lot of tinkering was actually able to create a film attachment and also a projector attachment that allowed him to record 180-degree view on a single reel of 35mm film. And then, he was able to project that on his curved screen. So, he has patents for the film attachment, for the project attachment, and then also for the screen as well. He retrofitted one of the—the Uptown Theater there in Rolla to fit this new curved screen because no other theater could actually house it. It was amazing. He actually ended up attaching this to the front of his car. So, this is late 1950s, early 1960s. Driving around Rolla and through Jeff City. So, you got views of the Capitol from the '60s. He took it to Forest Park in Saint Louis and actually went on a roller coaster with it. He took for an airplane ride out of Vienna. Some really amazing early images, but what's really great about is, especially when he's in the car, you don't just get the forward view but you get the side view of all of the businesses and the cars and everybody turning to look and wondering what is that. So, yeah, we have all those original films. His son, Gene Carney, donated those to us. So, we have all of the original films. We have his original patents. The schematics for how they invented these things. Some of the press releases. He got movie makers from across the country who came to view this film [and] to see this wonder. I mean, he was really kind of ahead of his time in the early '60s there with that.

SEAN ROST: Are there efforts being made to preserve and make those films available to a wider audience?

KATIE SEALE: Yeah, we actually are. So, all of the physical materials—the photographs, the correspondence, those things—have already been processed and are available for viewing. We also have some—all of the films were captured digitally, however, with the makeup of how these films are done, each reel, each clip has the three images that show up kind of wonky. So, just viewing the film, you actually have to view it through the projector to get the full 180-degree. So, we haven't made it through it that process to be able to have the full capture. But, so far,

everything has been digitized at this part. So, it's just the next step of getting it into the 180-degree view and then being able to digitize that, not just the raw film footage.

SEAN ROST: Someone put it online in one of those Facebook groups—like history groups—one of [Gene Carney's] Youtube videos that he has, and it blew up.

KATIE SEALE: It's amazing. He's got a few more. So, he was able to flip it, and it's actually just a small portion. He had to cut it down for the Youtube videos, so there's actually more to the film. It's pretty bizarre.

SEAN ROST: Yeah. I caught it, and I was like, "Hey, this is where the collection is housed at. This is where you can find it at." And people were like, "Oh, my gosh, this is amazing."

KATIE SEALE: Yeah. Yeah.

SEAN ROST: Because it's just that nostalgia element. You can drive around town in 1961, and there's your house, there's where you went to school at. People just eat that stuff up.

KATIE SEALE: Oh, yeah. He's got [Missouri] S&T. He's even got one point where he gets on Route 66 at that time, and they've cut it to—one of the major films—so now they've got like a soundtrack and this dramatic music starts. You see a state trooper pull up, and he gets pulled over. And then it fades out. And you're just like, "I wonder what that conversation was like." "Sir, what's on the front of car? What's happening?" Because, I mean, he has a large 35mm camera and then the attachment itself is a good three-and-a-half feet long. So, yeah, I wanted them to keep filming. I want to know what happens next.

SEAN ROST: We can only image how that probably went down. Or, how unsafe that probably was. Think about that camera—because it was a big—when it was attached to the front of the car it was not a small attachment.

KATIE SEALE: No. No. Not at all. I don't know how they—there's a picture of them actually attaching it to the hood of his car—late '60s—early '60s car. So, you know, good big boat of a car. But, there's not a lot of straps. I'm not sure how it was firmly attached. He's got one video, in particular, where he's in the streets of Rolla, where he's at a train stop and the train goes by and then he just kind of takes off in the car. It's like this mad race through the streets. I'm like, "How is that safe?" Yeah. It feels very much like a 3D movie. You get a little nauseous watching that a little bit.

SEAN ROST: That kind of was the point.

KATIE SEALE: Yeah. I think that was the point.

SEAN ROST: Throw you back and forth. Yeah.

KATIE SEALE: Yeah.

SEAN ROST: Before we return to our conversation, let's take a step back in time with Bob Priddy to an event from this week in history in a "Missouri Minute."

BOB PRIDDY: I'm Bob Priddy with this "Missouri Minute." When one of his biographers asked him if his father had been a success, Harry Truman responded, "He was the father of the President of United States, and I should think that is success enough for any man." Harry Truman became the successful man's son on May 8, 1884. For years, he was the beloved Captain Harry of the 129th Field Artillery from World War I. His postwar clothing store failed. A term as county administrative judge, then a defeat, and then victory as a presiding judge of the Jackson County Administrative Court, winning in 1926 and 1930, which led to his election in 1934 with backing from the notorious political boss Tom Pendergast to the U.S. Senate. He was re-elected in 1940, beating the immediate past governor, and headed a committee during World War II credited with saving [the] government millions of dollars. He was criticized for his friendship with Pendergast, but always maintained he had never done anything wrong and would not have done anything wrong even if Pendergast had asked. Vice President in 1944. President upon the death of Franklin Roosevelt. His 1948 re-election is considered one of the great upsets in political history. He died in 1972. Missouri's only native-born President. I'm Bob Priddy for the Center for Missouri Studies.

SEAN ROST: Tell us about this year's Ozark Pickin' Time concert.

KATIE SEALE: Okay. So, this is a little different from what we had last year. So, last year was Bluegrass Pickin' Time, and that was kind of a tribute to some of the bluegrass legends that we have in Missouri. So, we had Mona Jones, Jim Orchard, and Jimmy Allison. Some very well-known and notable musicians from Missouri who do traditional bluegrass. So, each of those musicians have donated to the Rolla Research Center their collections, their personal collections, which includes some of the flyers from the events that they've been to, their original music, photographs, some really great insight into the world of bluegrass music from Missouri. So, we really wanted to highlight those musicians and their talent. This year, we opened it up a little bit more. So, it's the Ozark Pickin' Time. We want to highlight the traditions of Ozark music, whether that be traditional bluegrass, whether it's more folk, or gospel, or acoustic guitar, what that may be. There's a lot of amazing music traditions in the Ozarks of Missouri. Some of them have traditions that originate from other parts of the country or other parts of the world, and it all kind of feeds back into what makes up this culture and this tradition for the Ozarks. So, this year we have Jimmie Allison—he's coming back, but he's actually bringing—he's reuniting his band Midnight Flight. This group played together for over twenty years. So, it's really interesting to see them come back. They're a traditional bluegrass group, so they're going to be playing some old favorites, some of their original music that they had made together previously, and I think they're coming up with new stuff. And then, we're going to be joined by Jerry Rosa and the Rosa String Works Band—get all of that in there. So, he's another local from the Phelps County area who is very well-known for his mandolin and guitar playing. He also makes and repairs these. So he's well-versed in any stringed instrument—that's for sure. He bring a little bit more not just traditional bluegrass, but some new, more contemporary, and some original works of his own and his groups. And then, we also have Marideth Sisco and Accomplices. So, if anybody knows Marideth's name, she was actually the featured vocalist for the movie, *Winter's Bone*. Those musicians that are playing with her were actually some of the musicians that played on that

soundtrack as well. Marideth is a renowned master storyteller, so she not only is a talented musician, but a talented storyteller as well. She does that not just through her music, but in other avenues as well. So, we're really excited to have them and to showcase a little bit broader range of the music traditions.

SEAN ROST: Now, how did this concert series idea originate? This even kind of goes back beyond SHS in the area, both in Phelps County, but also in areas like Salem and down towards the Ozarks.

KATIE SEALE: Yeah. Absolutely. So, we kind of got the idea, actually, from Mona and Bill Jones. So, they started one of the—if not the earliest—bluegrass festivals in Missouri at their home in Dixon. So, that was the Pickin' One More Time is what we get from them. They did that for decades down there. It ended up it was twice-a-year event—Memorial and Labor Day—where bluegrass musicians from all over would come and just play together all day long. So, we kind of wanted to get that feel again of bringing all these bands together and they can each play individually and then we had the jam session at the end where literally all three of our bands got together and played. These are people may not have seen each other for a full year, but once they're up there on stage playing together it's really something interesting to see and you can see just how talented these individuals and how strong these bluegrass traditions are. They may not see each other for half a year, but they all get together at Dixon. You can see some of them reliving some of those memories again, and that's kind of what we wanted. We wanted to draw attention not only to the fact that we have collections that highlight the Dixon Festival, but other festivals that these musicians had been at, and then also, hopefully, pull more people in because we know that more people have these collections, have these memories, that would be really great to have preserved that other people can see as well.

SEAN ROST: What date is the concert?

KATIE SEALE: It's going to be on May 19th [2019], and we're going to start at one o'clock, and we're going to have each of our bands play for about an hour. Then, probably a jam session towards the end. So, feel free to come and go as you like.

SEAN ROST: Do people need tickets for that, or how can they learn more about the overall concert?

KATIE SEALE: So, we actually do have this on our [State Historical Society of Missouri] events page. There's a place on there where you can go ahead and register, but you do not need a ticket. That register is just to let us know a ballpark figure of how many people are going to show up. You're more than welcome to contact us at the Rolla Research Center as well for more information. But, yeah, it is free and open to the public. We are asking for a ten dollar donation, or whatever you feel to give. But, as far as that, it's free, it's open, it's a family-friendly event. So, anyone of all ages is welcome to come.

SEAN ROST: Thanks for being on the podcast with us, Katie.

KATIE SEALE: Thank you for having me.

SEAN ROST: Thanks for listening to this week's episode. As always, I am your host, Sean Rost. The show's producer is Brian Austin. The opening and concluding credits are narrated by Kevin Walsh. If you are interested in more of the people, places, culture, and history around our Missouri, check out the following upcoming events:

If you're in the mood for a little bluegrass music to kick off your summer, Rolla is the place to be on May 19th for Ozark Pickin' Time. This afternoon of music and memories will be held at the Highway 72 Event Center in Rolla and features Jimmie Allison and Midnight Flight, Jerry Rosa and the Rosa String Works Band, and Marideth Sisco and Accomplices. This event is free and open to the public, though registration is appreciated. While you're there, be sure to check in with staff from the State Historical Society to learn how the Historical Society is preserving the state's rich musical history.

If you are planning to attend the 2019 Family History Conference in Saint Charles on May 8-11, 2019, be sure to visit the State Historical Society of Missouri's exhibit booth to learn more about how to preserve genealogy and local history.

Finally, coming up this summer, the *Our Missouri Podcast* will launch a four-part series celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 mission and moon landing. In an effort to document the history of the moon landing and grow the Historical Society's oral history archive, we will be collecting stories from listeners who are interested in speaking about their memories of this historic event. These "Memories of the Moon Landing" conversations will be preserved in the Missouri Innovation & Exploration Oral History Project (C4352), with some of the stories being featured on the podcast. If you are interested in contributing your story, please contact us by email at "ourmissouri@shsmo.org."

KEVIN WALSH: Thank you for listening to the *Our Missouri Podcast*. If you would like to learn more about the podcast, including past and future episodes, information about guests, and upcoming events, please visit our website at shsmo.org/our-missouri.