

Shirley Seifert  
By Danya Shaikh

Shirley Seifert, one of the six founders of St. Louis Writers Guild, was born to Richard Seifert and Anna Sanford in 1888 in St. Peters, Missouri. Her father was an electrical engineer who emigrated alone from Germany when he was 17; her mother was from Massachusetts, and her heritage can be traced back to 1634. Seifert completed high school in St. Louis where she found her love of writing through inspirational teachers and a “wonderful world of books.” At Washington University in St. Louis, she majored in classical and modern languages.

Seifert enjoyed the study of history and languages and eventually taught English, Latin and history. In spite of her love for the subject matter, she soon found that she did not have a passion for teaching and moved on to writing professionally. Her journalism professors had encouraged her writing, and this led her to sell an article to *Population Science Monthly* for \$3. In 1919 Seifert wrote “The Girl Who Was Too Good Looking” and earned \$100 from *American* magazine. Some of Seifert’s other writing endeavors were published in *Redbook*, *McCall's*, *Ladies Home Journal*, and *New York Herald-Tribune Magazine*.

Seifert’s literary career centered on historical fiction. Many of her novels were set in the American Midwest, featuring ordinary people living in extraordinary times. She rummaged through old records, letters, newspaper clippings, and diaries to develop factual information for her stories. She maintained a positive outlook regarding the future of the United States, saying, “I am no defeatist. When I am doing research for a novel, I see how America will work out of its present crisis.”

She wrote fifteen novels, about one novel every two years, and earned a noteworthy place in American literature during the mid-twentieth century when *The Wayfarer* was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize.

Seifert was named “St. Louis Woman of Distinction” twice. She considered herself a greatly devoted citizen of St. Louis, “recognizing all its faults and liking even those if you press me too hard.”

Shirley Seifert was a well-rounded woman with many talents and interests. Some of her hobbies included traveling, gardening, and sewing. Writing talent seemed to run in her family; her two sisters, Adele Seifert and Elizabeth Seifert Gasparotti, were also accomplished authors and members of St. Louis Writers Guild. Adele authored several mystery novels and even collaborated with Shirley in a few works. Elizabeth focused on stories about doctors, since she herself was once interested in medicine; she published 24 novels during her lifetime.

Shirley Seifert passed away in 1971, followed by her sisters, Elizabeth in 1983, and Adele in 1986. All three are remembered with appreciation by St. Louis Writers Guild; however, Shirley Seifert’s involvement in the establishment of the organization, coupled with her body of work, make her an especially important part of our legacy.

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## Booklist of Shirley Seifert

*River out of Eden* 1940

*Farewell My General* 1955

*Captain Grant* 1946

*Proud Way* 1948

*Turquoise Trail* 1950

*Destiny in Dallas* 1958

*The Wayfarer* 1938

*The Medicine Man* 1971

*Key to St. Louis* 1963

*Never No More* 1976

*Land of tomorrow; A Legend of Kentucky* 1937

*Look to the Rose* 1960

*Those Who Go Against the Current* 1943

*Three Lives of Elizabeth* 1952

*Waters of the Wilderness* 1941

*River Out of Eden* 1940

*The Proud Way* 1948

*Let My Name Stand Fair* 1956

*The Senator's Lady* 1967

*By the King's Command* 1962

*Death Stops at the Old Stone Inn* 1938

*Grace Church, Kirkwood, Missouri: Its Story* 1959