

# UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI PRESS

113 HEINKEL BUILDING • 201 S. 7<sup>TH</sup> STREET • COLUMBIA, MO 65211-1344

**Media Contact:** Robin Rennison, Sales & Marketing Manager, University of Missouri Press  
[rennisonr@missouri.edu](mailto:rennisonr@missouri.edu)

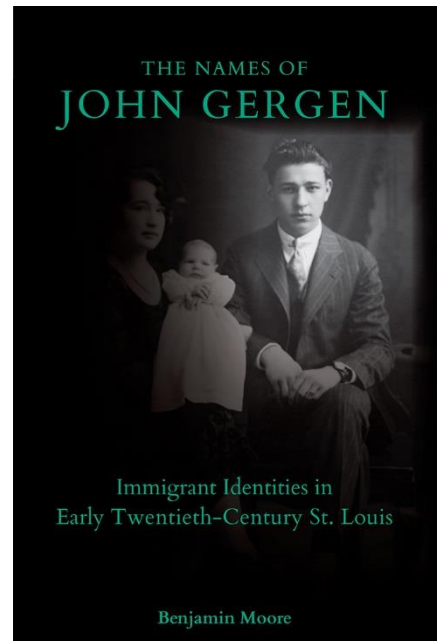
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## WHO WAS JOHN GERGEN? AND WHY SHOULD WE CARE?

COLUMBIA, Mo., Nov. 15, 2020 – Rescued from the dumpster of a boarded-up house, the yellowing scraps of a young migrant's schoolwork provided Benjamin Moore with the jumping-off point for this study of migration, memory, and identity. Centering on the compelling story of its eponymous subject, *The Names of John Gergen* examines the converging governmental and institutional forces that affected the lives of migrants in the industrial neighborhoods of South St. Louis in the early twentieth century. These migrants were Banat Swabians from Torontál County in southern Hungary—they were Catholic, agrarian, and ethnically German.

"No one has brought into print the details of an individual working-class St. Louisan's life in anywhere near the depth that Moore has done—and this from what started as a handful of crumbling school assignments found in a dumpster. Moore's point, however, is for us not simply to discover a once-invisible man, but also to reflect upon the extent to which identity itself is, in this nation, shaped by the collective decisions of the people and institutions that shape our lives and record our traces."—Eric Sandweiss, author of *St. Louis: The Evolution of an American Urban Landscape*

"Benjamin Moore's accidental discovery of 124 pages of schoolwork from a boy, born in 1908, led to years of research and discovery as well as the writing of a biography of not only the boy himself but of the immigrant story. Moore's book tells us a story about various forces of Americanization and the immigrants' resistance to them; it provides us with a local, St. Louis (as well as a German, Banat, Hungarian) example of the immigrant experience."—John C. Swanson, author of *Tangible Belonging: Negotiating Germanness in Twentieth Century Hungary*



---

**Benjamin Moore** is Associate Professor of English and Director of the Bosnia Memory Project at Fontbonne University in St. Louis, Missouri.

---

### **The Names of John Gergen: Immigrant Identities in Early Twentieth-Century St. Louis**

by Benjamin Moore

Hardcover | 978-0-8262-2227-5 | \$50.00 | 360 PP.

**Pub date: February 26, 2021**