

Victoria in St. Louis

Victoria lived in St. Louis for at least few months, maybe a year or two, depending on which of her biographers you choose to believe. She came to St. Louis sometime between April 1864-1866 and set up an office from which she plied her clairvoyant medium and healing services under the name Madame Holland. Biographies give three different locations for her downtown office: across from the City Dispensary, a hotel on Pine Street, and an office on Washington Street.

There she met Col. James Harvey Blood, a former bookkeeper in the city comptroller's office, now city auditor, who lived at 453 Pine Street. He was also President of the St. Louis Railroad, which was not a steam engine, but a line of horse-drawn cars and secretary and then President of the St. Louis Society of Spiritualists. He was married to a woman named Mary, and had a daughter named Carrie (a son died at or near birth), though some biographies say he had two daughters.

Originally hailing from Massachusetts, Blood was staunchly anti-slavery, so he joined up when the Civil War broke out. He fought in many battles and successfully argued of adequate pay and provisions for his men. In 1861, he helped organize the Sixth Missouri Volunteers by raising funds and recruiting members. As their Commander, he was wounded in Vicksburg and saw action in the battles of Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge. Stories say he had up to seven bullet wounds and on at least one occasion, removed the bullet himself.

Why Colonel Blood went to seek Victoria's services is unclear. Some say he wanted healing for himself, while others say it was a woman's ailment suffered by his wife that brought him to Victoria. According to Victoria's biography written at her request by Theodore Tilton, upon meeting Colonel Blood, she immediately went into a trance and declared that their futures were linked together in marriage. She says that they were betrothed on the spot by the "powers of the air," which some biographers take to mean they had sex not long after they met.

After a brief affair with Victoria, the Colonel left his wife and moved to a boarding house on Washington Avenue. Shortly thereafter, both Blood and Victoria left the city under the names Mr. and Madame Harvey in a caravan with a ball-fringed top to take her healing services throughout the Midwest. The two were eventually married in Dayton, Ohio, but the official paperwork was either incorrectly filed or never filed at all.

It is possible that while she was in St. Louis, Blood introduced Victoria to Virginia Minor, a local who would go on to co-found and become the first president of the Woman's Suffrage Association of Missouri. If not then, the two St. Louisans surely met on the women's suffrage circuit. Virginia's argument that the Fourteenth Amendment's language already gave women the right to vote by its use of the term "citizen," rather than "males" or "men," would be central to the petition Victoria would later bring before Congress.

With the prominence St. Louis enjoyed at the time, it's likely that Victoria returned on many of her speaking tours. We know for certain she was in town in 1876, during her tour of the speech "The Human Body, the Temple of God." Both the *St. Louis Globe Democrat* and the *St. Louis Journal* reported on the speech.

Sources:

The Woman Who Ran for President by Lois Beachy Underhill

Notorious Victoria by Mary Gabriel

The Scarlet Sisters: Sex, Suffrage and Scandal in the Gilded Age by Myra Macpherson

Victoria Woodhull's Sexual Revolution by Amanda Frisken

Other Powers: The Age of Suffrage, Spiritualism and the Scandalous Victoria Woodhull by Barbara Goldsmith