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COVER PHOTO



Men around campfire during the sharecroppers' protest in Southeast Missouri, 1939, Arthur Witman Photograph Collection.

New Exhibitions Depict the Social, Racial and Cultural Landscape of the American South from the 1920s to 1950s

By Joan Stack

THE State Historical Society of Missouri is excited to collaborate with the University of Missouri's School of Journalism to present *Mr. Pruitt's Possum Town: Trouble and Resilience in the American South*. This traveling exhibit is sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities and curated by Berkley Hudson, an associate professor emeritus at the Missouri School of Journalism. Seventy-five of the exhibition's photos are on display in the State Historical Society's Art Gallery, while another 25 images can be viewed at the Reynolds Journalism Institute on the MU campus.

The exhibition focuses on photographs produced during the lengthy career of Otis N. Pruitt, who spent his professional life in the small, segregated town of Columbus, Mississippi.



A woman sitting on porch steps. Photograph by O.N. Pruitt.



A preacher with baptismal group at Tombigbee River. Photograph by O.N. Pruitt.

Photos courtesy of the Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Libraries.

Hudson and four childhood friends from Columbus discovered the vast collection of photographs and even some glass plate negatives. They were able to acquire the collection in 1987. In recent years, with help from the Missouri School of Journalism students and faculty, Hudson has researched some 88,000 negatives that Pruitt made from the 1920s through the 1950s. Hudson selected images for this exhibition that reflect the breadth and depth of Pruitt's work.

"We realized this was the history of our part of the American South, in visual form," said Hudson.

In his studio, at family reunions, and in homes, Pruitt, who was white, photographed white and Black residents,

which was uncommon. In addition to studio portraits, Pruitt's camera traveled to church revivals, baptisms, businesses, carnivals and the countryside. The most difficult and horrific images that Pruitt photographed are of two 1930s courthouse executions and an illegal lynching.

"This profound imagery amongst the horrors that then plagued not only the American South but also the nation offers a measure of remission as we strive today for deeper understandings of the intersections of culture, history and race relations," explained Hudson, who wanted a national audience to see the scope of Pruitt's work. The photos depict a range of stories from joy, sorrow and suffering to hopefulness and resilience. Former chairman of the National Endowment for Humanities William Ferris has described the Pruitt images as "a national treasure."

To tie *Mr. Pruitt's Possum Town* to Missouri's history, the State Historical Society has mounted a related exhibition of artworks from its own collections, *Picturing Missouri Sharecroppers: Finding Counterparts to Pruitt's Images in Missouri*. This smaller exhibit presents images



O. N. Pruitt (right) with his son Marvin Lambuth Pruitt (left) and his brother Jim Pruitt (center). Photograph by O.N. Pruitt.



A farmers' hay market where pigs, chickens, and sorghum and cane syrup were sold, Main Street, Columbus, Mississippi, circa 1927. Photograph by O.N. Pruitt.



Studio portrait of Oscar West, a custodian for Brown Buick-Cadillac Co. and caregiver for the Brown children, circa 1930. Photograph by O.N. Pruitt.

Photos courtesy of the Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Libraries.

of rural southeast Missouri produced by *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* editorial cartoonist Daniel Fitzpatrick and photojournalist Arthur Witman. On assignment, they documented the Sharecropper's Protest of 1939 as well as life in the community of Cropperville, a rural Missouri cooperative created to provide homes and farmland to former tenant farmers who participated in the protest.

Like the photographs in *Mr. Pruitt's Possum Town*, the *Missouri Sharecroppers* show depicts trouble and resilience in rural and small-town America. However, unlike most of the Pruitt pictures, the sharecropper images were created specifically for publication in newspapers, and their journalistic function affects their aesthetic qualities. Hudson describes the pairing of the two exhibitions as

providing "a broader visual context of understanding life in America in the early and mid-twentieth century, especially in the rural South and Midwest, places with distinctive yet in some ways parallel development, cultures and histories with the onset of Modernity."

Both exhibits are on display in the SHSMO Art Gallery through November 5, 2022. Visitors can learn more about Pruitt's photographs in Hudson's book *O. N. Pruitt's Possum Town: Photographing Trouble and Resilience in the American South*. The book is available in the SHSMO bookstore.

Joan Stack is the curator of art collections at the State Historical Society of Missouri.



Scenes from the sharecroppers' protest camp in southern Missouri, 1939.

Photographs by Arthur Witman for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, SHSMO Photograph Collection.



SHSMO Welcomes New Staff

KURT Himmelmann joined the State Historical Society in May as the assistant director, finance and accounting, in the administration office. He has worked in financial leadership positions with Hallmark Cards, ABC Laboratories and Addison Biological Laboratory. A native of St. Louis, Himmelmann enjoys being outdoors, including hiking and skiing. He received his bachelor's degree in organizational management from Colorado State University and an MBA in finance from the University of Missouri–Columbia.

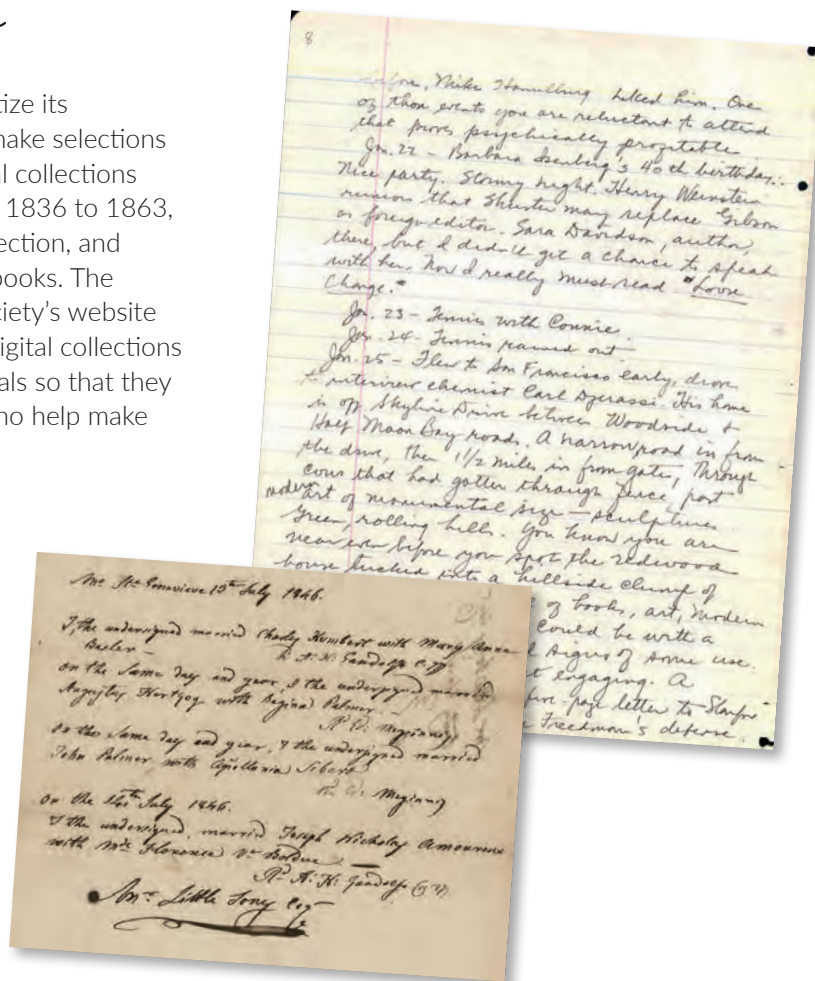
In another recent staff change, Whitney Heinzmann has been named coordinator of the Kansas City Research Center. She succeeds Lucinda Adams, who took a new position as executive director of Freedom's Frontier

National Heritage Area in Lawrence, Kansas. Heinzmann has worked at the Kansas City Research Center as an archivist since 2016. She graduated from the University of Illinois–Springfield with a master's degree in public history. She received a bachelor's degree in history and intercultural studies from Elmhurst College.

Additionally, Maggie Mayhan has moved from her event management role, where she coordinated public programming initiatives, oversaw SHSMO's virtual program series, and launched the Center for Missouri Studies' event rental program. Mayhan is now assistant director in charge of the newly formed Advancement and Engagement department. She began her new position last summer.

New Digital Collections Content Available to the Public

THE State Historical Society continues to digitize its manuscript and photograph collections and make selections from them available online. The newest digital collections include Ste. Genevieve marriage records dating from 1836 to 1863, selections from the National Women and Media collection, and steamboat photographs in the James T. Thorp scrapbooks. The digital collections are keyword searchable on the Society's website at digital.shsmo.org. SHSMO is able to increase its digital collections because of the volunteers who transcribe the materials so that they can be reproduced as digital files. Thank you to all who help make SHSMO more accessible to the public!



Missouri Students and Liberty High School Teacher Honored at National History Day Contest

By Danielle Griego

THE 2023 National History Day contest is underway with the theme *Frontiers in History: People, Places, Ideas*. Missouri students in grades six through 12 are eligible for the competition, which is sponsored within the state by the State Historical Society of Missouri.

A generous grant from Missouri Humanities this year is supporting teacher workshops, defraying the cost of contest materials and meeting other needs. NHD organizers are planning for the contest to be held in person this year after two years in which the state and national contests were online events only.

In 2022, 55 Missouri students advanced to the national competition in June. At the national contest, John Jasper, David Bhend, and Brock Pyle of South Middle School in Joplin scored in the top ten in the junior group website category and received an outstanding entry award for their project, *Cuban Missile Crisis: Diplomacy on the Brink of Nuclear War*. Elizabeth Arnold of Richland High School in Essex also received an outstanding entry award for her senior individual documentary, *Governed with Greater Justice: The Debate and Diplomacy of the Anthracite Coal Strike of 1902*. Richland High School student Allison Arnold was awarded the History of Agriculture and Rural Life special prize for her junior individual documentary, *A Traitor to the Planter Class: Thad Snow*. Additionally, Kimberly Brownlee, a teacher at Liberty North High School, was a finalist for the Patricia Behring Teacher of the Year Award.

An online showcase of 53 exhibits created by middle and high school NHD students was featured on the Smithsonian Learning Lab website for a week in June. Missouri delegates Kiley Thomas and Rebekah Thurston of Odessa Middle School were selected by the Smithsonian showcase for their junior group exhibit,



Danielle Griego hosts the virtual National History Day in Missouri contest at the Columbia Research Center, April 30, 2022.

The Newsboy Strike: Fighting for a Diplomatic Compromise. Their exhibit explored the debate over poor working conditions for newsboys in New York during the 1890s and the diplomatic actions taken to improve work environments. The students showed how events like the newsboy strike of 1899 influenced other calls for labor reforms, such as the Child Labor Law Act of 1916.

Danielle Griego is the education program coordinator at the State Historical Society of Missouri.

Missouri Sports and Recreation Oral History Project Delves into Women's Sports on the Fiftieth Anniversary of Title IX

By Sean Rost

AS AN oral historian, moments of enlightenment can happen when you do a lot of listening and allow the conversation to unfold. That was the case when former college women's athletic coaches Linda Dollar, Reba Sims, Rhonda Ridinger, and Mary Kay Hunter came together to recount the long struggle for better sports accommodations, budgets and educational opportunities before and after Title IX, the 1972 federal civil rights law that prohibited schools from discriminating on the basis of sex.

Over the past few years, the Oral History Program has traveled across the state—both physically and virtually—to listen to and record the experiences of former players, coaches and administrators on the fiftieth anniversary of Title IX. The interviews are part of the Missouri Sports and Recreation Oral History Project.

Dollar, Sims, Ridinger and Hunter all coached at Southwest Missouri State (now Missouri State University) and are members of the MSU Athletics Hall of Fame. Interviews with them and with other distinguished coaches and athletic administrators in Missouri shed light on topics that have faded over time, including the popularity of women's traveling softball teams from the 1940s through the 1970s; the National AAU Women's Basketball Tournament held in St. Joseph and Kansas City in the mid-twentieth century; the progression of women's basketball from a game in which defensive and offensive squads could not cross the half-court line to five-on-five full court; and the legacy of the Association for Intercollegiate Athletics for Women.

Additionally, interviewees for this project spoke about the significant contributions made by coaches and administrators such as national and state Hall of Fame inductees Mildred Barnes, Mary Jo Wynn, Nanetta "Nan" Carter, and Sallie Beard.

Title IX applies to any educational program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. It not only



An oral history session with (left to right): Reba Sims, Linda Dollar, Virginia Laas, Rhonda Ridinger, and Mary Kay Hunter at Schweitzer Brentwood Branch Library–Springfield, December 7, 2021.



Students playing basketball at Lindenwood College, St. Charles, 1910. Photo by Rudolph Goebel, SHSMO Photograph Collection.

transformed school sports for girls and women, but also opened doors to academic majors, teaching positions, and other fields and positions within education. According to the Women's Sports Foundation, one in 27 girls played sports before Title IX. Today that number is two in five.

Be sure to listen to excerpts from recent interviews on the *Our Missouri* podcast series covering women's athletics in the Show-Me State.

Sean Rost is the Oral Historian at the State Historical Society of Missouri.

SHSMO Member Solves Mystery of Unknown Diary Authors

By Christina George

IT WAS the snake bite that piqued the interest of John Dougan. Starting with that clue, he set out to identify the unnamed author of the Good Fairy Diaries collection, described in “Anonymous in the Archives” from the *Missouri Times* Spring 2022 issue. Dougan, the Missouri state archivist and record services director for the Office of the Missouri Secretary of State, is a member of the State Historical Society.

“I thought I could find a person of the right age who had been snakebitten,” explained Dougan. The author of the Good Fairy Diaries included an account of his teenage half brother’s death after a copperhead snake bite in 1882. Using an index of Missouri newspapers, Dougan identified the likely brother and used him to confirm the author through sibling names, birth years and census records. “It’s the snake bite and the math,” Dougan said.

The author is probably Aurelius Clio McManaway, who was born in Callaway County in 1876 and later moved to Boone County. McManaway’s work as a day laborer contributed to his death at age 59 in 1936.

Dougan then turned his attention to the Overland Diary, another collection with an unknown author, also discussed in the “Anonymous in the Archives” article—a trickier mystery with gaps and red herrings in the story. The author wrote that the family “left Canada” for Missouri. Thinking he had not found evidence of a family in Canada, Kentucky, that matched the clues within the diary, Dougan continued to research names within the narrative, hoping one might lead him to the author. He eventually circled back to a family living farther north that he had discounted early on.

“Within 10 or 15 minutes of working on this, I actually found the right family on the 1850s census, but you discount it because it doesn’t match all the clues,” Dougan said. After going back to the diary, though, he realized that details in the story lined up with a family named Mathews.

Dougan brought his research to SHSMO senior archivist Elizabeth Engel and told her he was “95 percent



John Dougan and Elizabeth Engel look over journals with previously unidentified authors, Columbia Research Center, July 22, 2022.

certain” he had identified the author. “After John gave me the name, I was able to piece together that the donor of the diary was the writer’s granddaughter. The key to unlocking the answer had been in plain sight all these years,” said Engel.

The Overland Diary author is most likely America Mathews Whitson Remington (1838-1899). She migrated by covered wagon from Gallatin County, Kentucky, to a place near Brunswick, Missouri. The diary she kept is available online at digital.shsmo.org.

Today’s online digital resources make mysteries like these easier to solve. “The diary was cataloged and indexed probably sometime in the 1950s or 1960s, so the archivist processing the collection would have faced an uphill battle piecing this mystery together,” said Engel.

Shards of relevant information mixed with false leads are familiar to family researchers. It often takes tenacity and a little ingenuity to solve these kinds of mysteries. Dougan sees the challenge and the benefit in the search, saying, “In many ways, the unanswerable questions are the fun ones.”

Christina George is a senior strategic communications associate of the State Historical Society of Missouri.

Popular Podcast Series Finds Clues to a National Mystery in the SHSMO Archives

By Beth Pike

FIFTY years ago, a plane carrying two U.S. congressmen vanished in Alaska and was never seen again. Despite an extensive search, neither the aircraft nor its passengers were ever found. Officials blamed the weather, and with the Vietnam War and Watergate consuming most of the nation's attention, the investigation ended with the disappearance of the plane and its passengers unsolved.

New questions arose two decades later when an imprisoned member of the Mafia claimed that the plane carrying U.S. House majority leader Hale Boggs of Louisiana and Rep. Nick Begich of Alaska had been bombed. The mobster had ties to a 1976 car bombing in which Don Bolles, an Arizona reporter, was killed while covering a story on land fraud schemes by Phoenix contractors. Bolles was a member of the Investigative Reporters and Editors (IRE), and after his death the organization launched the Arizona Project to find his murderers. Documents related to the Arizona Project and other papers of the IRE, which is headquartered at the University of Missouri School of Journalism, are housed at the State Historical Society.

In 2019, Louisiana-based journalists Jon Walczak and Chris Brown traveled to Columbia to explore the IRE collection and learn more about what happened to Congressmen Boggs and Begich for their new podcast *Missing in Alaska*. They planned a few days at the archives but stayed for more than a week.

"The IRE files were the most valuable archival material I accessed while reporting *Missing in Alaska*. They have information that, despite a decade of research, I didn't find anywhere else," said Walczak. "These detail-rich records examine organized crime in Arizona and Alaska in the 1970s."

Walczak became interested in the story while writing for the *Seattle Weekly* in 2011. "On a slow afternoon, I went down a Wikipedia rabbit hole and stumbled into this story. I had never heard of it, which surprised me. They were powerful politicians whose plane disappeared in Alaska. I had to know more, so I started digging."

The story took on various forms in Walczak's head. Perhaps he would write a book. Or maybe it would

become a film documentary. Finally, he settled on the idea of his project being an audio story, and he pitched it to iHeartRadio as a podcast. Twelve episodes and five bonus segments later, the series invites listeners to help solve the mystery of what happened on the fateful night of October 16, 1972, when the twin-engine Cessna carrying two congressmen, a congressional aide, and the pilot disappeared. The podcast is available for free to download. Episode 8 is devoted to the research found in the IRE files at the State Historical Society.

"It's fascinating to handle raw material: notes, tapes, surreptitiously taken photos of mobsters. Most of it was never made public," said Walczak, who credits the staff of the State Historical Society for helping him to navigate the IRE collection. "What a beautiful research center! It was so clean and quiet, making it easy to focus. The staff was extremely helpful as we cycled through boxes of documents, furiously taking note."

Columbia was the last place the team traveled before Walczak began writing the series. Then, the COVID-19 pandemic changed everything.



Jonathan Walczak (left) and Chris Brown (right) research the IRE Arizona Project records at the Columbia Research Center, Dec. 11, 2019.

"We recorded the first three episodes in a studio in Atlanta in February 2020. Then the world fell apart. I recorded the rest of the show in a closet inside my apartment in New Orleans. It was extremely difficult to focus and script hundreds of pages on deadline as everything blew up," said Walczak.

Despite the extreme challenges, the series was launched in June 2020 with millions of listeners. Walczak said the audience offered more than a thousand tips as new information emerged on what happened to the missing plane and its passengers.

"I want our audience to understand that without archivists and librarians—the frontline workers who preserve history—*Missing in Alaska* wouldn't exist," said Walczak. "Archives and libraries allow people like me to mine raw material for new insight. They can change our understanding of history."



Chris Brown studies photo negatives in the IRE Collection at the Columbia Research Center, Dec. 11, 2019.

More on the Investigative Reporters and Editors, Inc., Records and the Arizona Project

By Heather Richmond

The Investigative Reporters and Editors, Inc. (IRE) Records is arguably one of the most intriguing, dangerous, and heavily restricted collections in SHSMO's holdings. Its contents concern murder, conspiracy and organized crime. Headquartered at the Missouri School of Journalism, IRE is a professional association of journalists that began in 1975.

The bulk of the IRE collection documents the Arizona Project, a unique cooperative reporting effort in which dozens of journalists from news organizations across the nation worked together on a story. In the aftermath of the 1976 car bombing that killed Don Bolles, the IRE initiated the Arizona Project to continue Bolles' work reporting on fraud, corruption, and organized crime and to investigate his murder. The team of journalists produced 23 articles, biographies of key figures, and photographs documenting political corruption and organized crime in Arizona. The stories were then widely distributed to news organizations throughout the country.

The processed portion of the IRE collection includes subject files, interviews, and photographs from the Arizona Project. The collection description can be viewed online, but at the donor's request,

researchers must obtain permission from the IRE office prior to viewing the physical collection. The unprocessed portion of the IRE records includes 23 boxes of Arizona Project records that require permission to even view the inventory. Those patrons who have obtained permission have found a trove of documents investigating 1970s mob activity.

We should note that all collection restrictions such as those of the IRE are at the request of the collection's donor; they are not imposed by SHSMO. Few SHSMO collections have restrictions, but the restrictions that do exist vary in nature. Political collections sometimes have sections that are closed for a number of years due to privacy or legal concerns. Authors' collections often have copyright restrictions. Some, like the IRE collection, require researchers to contact the donor for permission to view the collection due to the sensitive (and possibly dangerous) nature of the information contained inside.

Heather Richmond is a senior archivist at the Columbia Research Center.

State Historical Society Collecting Material for Route 66 Centennial

By Kathleen Seale



U.S. Highway 66, fondly called “The Mother Road” or “Route 66,” became the main artery connecting Chicago to Los Angeles by the late 1920s. Made for the automobile era, it played a significant role in the nation’s transportation history. In Missouri, the highway followed earlier trails, dirt tracks and gravel roads from the Mississippi River at St. Louis to the Kansas border west of Joplin. Motels, restaurants, gas stations and roadside attractions thrived on the steady commerce from travelers along Route 66.

Missouri is where Route 66’s name became official, as the highway received its number assignment via a telegram sent on April 30, 1926, to Springfield. Supporters who met there for the proposed highway were led by Cyrus Avery, the Oklahoma highway commissioner now widely known as the “Father of Route 66,” and John T. Woodruff, a Springfield attorney and business owner. They lobbied hard for the number 60 to be assigned to the new highway. Roads ending in the number “0” were being reserved for the most important

transcontinental routes. Failing to get Route 60, the Springfield group rejected other proposed numbers until 66 was offered and accepted.

In anticipation of the Mother Road's centennial celebration in 2026, the State Historical Society of Missouri is launching a Route 66 collecting initiative focused on preserving the road's history within the state. Examples of items the Society seeks to collect include photographs, postcards, film and home videos along the route, records of roadside businesses, oral histories of people who traveled or worked along the road, small souvenirs or artifacts, artwork, and architectural drawings of iconic structures and places.

The State Historical Society is interested in stories and materials ranging from the road's origins to its peak period in Missouri (circa 1926-1960) to its decline following the rise of the Interstate Highway system. Topics might include small towns affected by Interstate 44 realignment; immigrant communities; African American experiences; LGBTQ+ experiences; the impact of Fort Leonard Wood's construction; specific business, entertainment and music venues; criminal activity; or other significant events that occurred along Route 66.



Cyrus and Esther Avery and their children, circa 1906, Ruby Rose Stauber Papers, SHSMO.

Contact the State Historical Society if you have questions or wish to donate to the Route 66 in Missouri collection. A donation form on the SHSMO website is available to download: shsmo.org/support/materials.

Kathleen Seale is the coordinator of the Rolla and Springfield Research Centers.



Elsey Carriage Company Photographs Expand SHSMO's Digital Transportation Collection

By Haley Frizzle-Green

BEFORE Route 66 and just before Henry Ford set out to revolutionize the automotive industry with the Model T, the G.E. Elsey Carriage Company began in Springfield in 1904. Grant Ellis Elsey built horse-drawn carriages and eventually automobiles for businesses in Missouri and Arkansas. At the height of his business, Elsey employed 15 to 20 people and produced carriages ranging from covered, enclosed delivery wagons to flat, open-bed wagons. The company's patronage included businesses such as Domino's Bread, Model Bakery, Frank B. Smith Laundry, and Jack Wood Livery. In addition to delivery vehicles, Elsey produced one of the first wagons for the Springfield Fire Department, including ambulance and hearse carriages for the city of Springfield.

An innovator in transportation, Elsey built the first motor-driven milk wagon for Gurley Brothers Dairy in 1910. The company produced its final wagon in 1915 and the following year began building motorized vehicles, adding automobile painting and repairing services. Elsey and his sons continued the business, later renamed Elsey Auto Works, for much of the twentieth century. Grant Elsey died in 1953. His youngest son, Paul, operated the business until 1968.

Although there are no records indicating the total number of vehicles produced by the Elsey Carriage Company, a 1983 article in the *Springfield Leader and Press* quoted Paul Elsey



Above: Grant Ellis Elsey in his office, 414 Pearl Street, Springfield, 1912.



Left: A Springfield Creamery Company Carriage.



Below: A Shamrock Butter Carriage, Springfield.

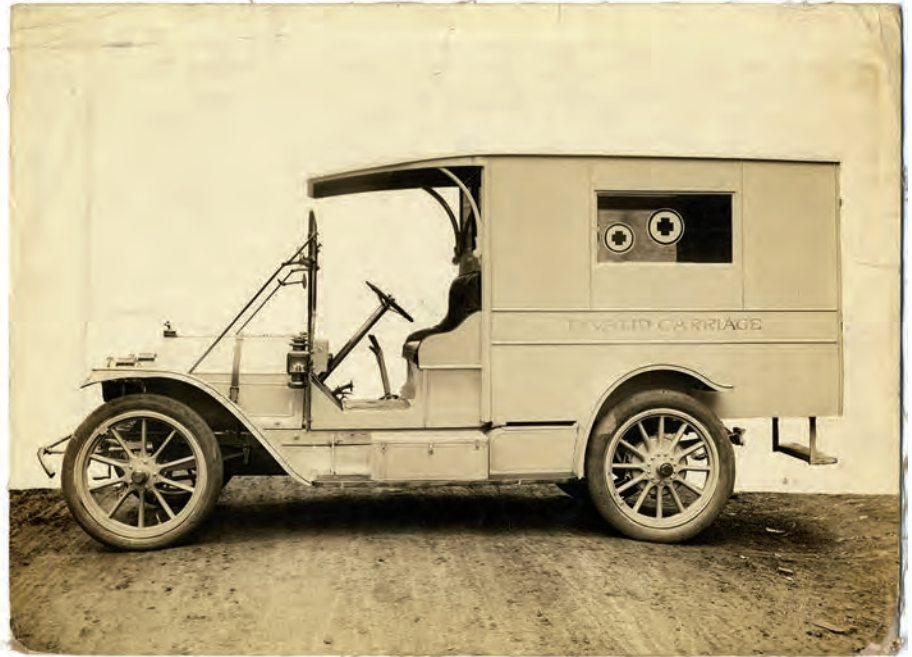
speaking about the family business. Elsey recalled his father delivering carriages “by the carload” to St. Louis dairy companies.

More recently, the Springfield Research Center completed digitalization of the Elsey Carriage Company photographs, donated to the State Historical Society by Carrie Rippe in 2019. The collection includes 59 original photographs commissioned by Grant Elsey. The images, taken by a professional photographer, document carriages built by the company during the early 1900s. Many of the images include carriages parked in front of Elsey’s shop on Pearl Street, as well as background scenes of Springfield streets and businesses. The collection provides viewers with a glimpse into transportation, vehicle craftsmanship and related businesses in the Ozarks at the turn of the century.

The photographs are online and can be downloaded at the Transpor-

tation link on the State Historical Society of Missouri’s digital collections site, digital.shsmo.org.

Haley Frizzle-Green is an archivist at the Springfield Research Center.



A World War I Red Cross ambulance carriage, Springfield.

New Collection at Cape Girardeau Research Center Provides Records of One of Missouri’s Longest-Running Mills

By Bill Eddleman and Ann Lowe

WALKING on one of the last remaining truss bridges of its type in Missouri, visitors can enjoy seeing the moving current that once ground wheat into flour at a mill on the Perry County side of Apple Creek, which forms Perry’s border with Cape Girardeau County in southeast Missouri. The mill by Old Appleton is long gone, but it was one of the county’s

oldest continually operating mills, lasting for more than 120 years. The Old Appleton Mill Deeds Collection, recently donated by Eileen Christian to the Cape Girardeau Research Center, includes original deeds, letters and other documents related to the mill, also known as McClane’s Mill.

North Carolinians settled the town of Old Appleton (also called Apple Creek) in the early 1820s, and

the mill was constructed in 1824 by John Shoults and John A. McLane. McLane’s son, Alfred, operated the water-powered flour mill in the 1830s. Flooding swept away the original mill. Once rebuilt, it would pass between various owners until closing after World War II.

Appleton, on the Cape Girardeau County side of Apple Creek, incorporated in 1859 and became Old

Appleton in 1917. The town of just over 100 residents flourished during the 1920s with a distillery, brewery, blacksmith shop, soda water plant, creamery, hotel, bank and garage.

The series of deeds in this collection begins with Ludwig H.

Meyer's sale of the mill to Ignatius Meyer Sr. in 1903. With one exception, ownership passed for nearly 70 years between members of the Meyer, Buchheit and Unterreiner families, who were related directly or by marriage.

The final two deeds correspond to a time in the late 1960s and early 1970s when the owners were considering reopening the mill. They refurbished the mill works in 1967, but the plans to reopen never came to fruition. A flash flood on December 3, 1982, swept away the historic iron bridge nearby, and the mill itself was destroyed in another flood in 1986. The foundation of the mill is all that remains. In 2006, community members restored the bridge, raising its piers by three feet to prevent destruction by another flood. Today, visitors can walk the pedestrian bridge, feel the wooden planks over a bubbling creek underneath, and imagine a time when a once-important mill sustained life in the town of Old Appleton.

Bill Eddleman is associate director and Ann Lowe is an archivist at the Cape Girardeau Research Center.



Above: Old Appleton Mill, n.d., Charles Bell Photographs. The Old Appleton Bridge is partially seen in the photo.

Right: The Old Appleton Bridge is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It crosses Apple Creek, connecting Perry and Cape Girardeau Counties. Photograph by Bill Eddleman, July 30, 2022.



The Book Lover's Club of Greater Kansas City Continues Its Legacy of Literacy, Scholarship, and Leadership

By Hallie Allan

AS Kansas City's metropolitan area surpassed 200,000 people at the turn of the twentieth century, a deadly flood in 1903 shut down the city's water and electric supply, leaving thousands homeless. In that difficult year, three Kansas City friends met to discuss a book they were reading during the winter: *The Souls of Black Folk*, by W.E.B. DuBois. Callie Jordan Edwards, Daisy Cook, and Anna Holland Jones saw the benefit of their discussion and wanted to invite more Black women to join them to read and discuss their next book. On February 27, 1904, the Book Lover's Club officially began with 15 members.

More than a century later, the Book Lover's Club of Greater Kansas City continues the long tradition of Black literary societies in advancing the rights of African Americans through literacy and activism. It is the oldest active Black women's club in Kansas City.

For many years the club members set an annual theme for its book study that often reflected pressing issues of the day, such as "Freedom" for the club year 1964-1965, when the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 were being passed. The club's book lists included Black women authors who contributed to the nation's efforts to wrestle with these issues.

In addition to its literary focus, the Book Lover's Club has given scholarships to young women in the



The Book Lover's Club 100th anniversary celebration, April 17, 2004.

community. Club members have also assisted with voter registration drives and collecting books to send to Africa. Its members have made financial contributions to the NAACP, the MLK Memorial Fund, the Niles Home for Children and various mental health agencies in Kansas City. They have also hosted read-ins to encourage the Black community to read together, with an emphasis on books by African American authors.

Throughout the years, club members have included educators, business owners, doctors, writers and artists. Many of its members have been honored for their service to the community. The Kauffman Foundation awarded a \$1 million grant in the late 1990s to establish the Early Childhood Professional Development Fund named after book club member Fern Webster, who had worked as a kindergarten teacher and later with the Kansas City Head Start program.

Another member, Marietta Selmon-Gumbel, was awarded the U.S. Department of Commerce's Silver Medal of Honor for her work with the Census Bureau. And in 2003 the resource center at the Bruce R. Watkins Cultural Heritage Center in Kansas City was named after club member Gertrude Keith, longtime president of the Heritage Center's Board of Governors.

The Book Lover's Club continues to make a positive impact on Kansas City. The collection, housed at the Kansas City Research Center, preserves records from 1915 to 2011 and includes a history of the club, reading lists, membership records, yearbooks, correspondence and other materials.

Hallie Allan is a volunteer at the Kansas City Research Center. Allan recently completed a Master of Library and Information Science degree at Long Island University-Post in Brookville, New York.

Records at St. Louis Research Center Chronicle Efforts to Save Wolves from Extinction

By Zachary Palitzsch

WHEN Marlin Perkins retired as the director of the St. Louis Zoo in 1970, he and his wife, Carol, were offered 10 acres of the Tyson Research Center, an ecological reserve near Eureka, Missouri, for a wildlife project. The Perkinses made plans to establish a center at Tyson to rejuvenate critically endangered canid species, and by 1971 they had established the Wild Canid Survival Research Center, which was later renamed the Endangered Wolf Center.

The Endangered Wolf Center Records, collected at the State Historical Society's St. Louis Research Center, document the founding and growth of what is now an essential breeding center and research facility for studying wolves and other endangered species of canids. The Endangered Wolf Center educates the public about the benefits of wolf conservation and maintains gene pools for breeding and reintroducing wolves into the wild.

In 1974, Carol Perkins and several board members created the first Symposium on Endangered and Threatened Species in North America. The symposium, organized six months after ratification of the Endangered Species Act in 1973, brought together leading conservationists and wildlife experts to discuss the status of many animals threatened with extinction.

The center acquired its first two wolf packs—Mexican gray wolves and



Above: Carol and Marlin Perkins at the Walk for Wildlife in Forest Park, St. Louis, 1976.

Right: Marlin Perkins with "Sophie."

red wolves—in 1973. Both species were endangered, and in 1980 they were declared extinct in the wild.

Researchers at the Endangered Wolf Center focused on rejuvenating the Mexican and red wolves and were successful in establishing breeding programs in partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services. Wolf puppies and many young wolves were reintroduced into the wild at wolf refuges in North Carolina, New Mexico and Arizona.



By 2012, the red wolf population had increased to as many as 120 individuals. Unfortunately, due to poachers and a lack of regulation from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services, the population has decreased to around 20 wolves in the wild. However, there are about 275 red wolves in captive breeding programs throughout the nation, including at the Endangered Wolf Center. Ten wolves are scheduled to be released this year. The Mexican wolf has fared better than its red counterpart. Last year, the population grew to 186 individuals spread throughout New Mexico and Arizona, with another 350 held in captive breeding programs.

The Endangered Wolf Center celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 2021. It is the only wolf center in the world certified by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and was one of the first two facilities selected by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services to breed swift foxes for release. Public tours are available at the Endangered Wolf project in Eureka. Researchers can learn more about the history of the project and its work by exploring its records at the St. Louis Research Center.

Zachary (Zack) Palitzsch is an archivist at the St. Louis Research Center.

Right: A red wolf (*top*), a Mexican wolf with pups (*middle*), and Mexican wolf pups (*bottom*).

Photos courtesy of the Endangered Wolf Center.



Missouri Dedicates Bicentennial Mural

Painted by 16,116 Citizens

THE Missouri Bicentennial Mural found a permanent home this summer. The large mural featuring 19 state symbols is now inside Harry's Place Cafeteria on the fourth floor of the Harry S. Truman State Office Building in Jefferson City. Cape Girardeau artists Aaron Horrell and Barb Bailey traveled across the state for several years with canvas and supplies to

create a 15-panel mural measuring 30x12 feet. Horrell and Bailey invited the public to help paint the mural by filling in small triangles sketched into the design. The artists recorded the names of 16,116 people who painted the mural at stops during its tours of the state. The oldest painter was 102 years old, while the youngest, helped by a family member, was 12 days old. Mural painters came

from 358 Missouri towns, 30 states, and Washington, D.C., as well as 17 other countries. Begun in 2019 and completed in 2021, the mural was donated by the artists as a gift to the people of Missouri in recognition of the state's bicentennial. The public can view the mural during regular business hours when the Truman Building is open.



State employees and artists who painted the Missouri Bicentennial Mural gather for a group photo during the dedication of the mural at the Harry S. Truman State Office Building in Jefferson City, June 23, 2022.

Missouri State Fair Historic Main Gate

Restored for the Bicentennial

BEFORE the start of the 2022 Missouri State Fair, Chris Chinn, director of the Missouri Department of Agriculture, along with members of the State Fair Board, the Missouri Bicentennial Commission, and staff of the Missouri

Department of Agriculture and the State Historical Society dedicated the restoration work completed this year on the historic main gate at the fairgrounds in Sedalia. Commemorations for the Missouri state centennial and bicentennial took place at the Mis-

souri State Fair in 1921 and 2021. The Bicentennial Commission funded the restoration of the art deco-style gate, built in 1939, as a way to honor Missouri's past, commemorate the state's bicentennial and welcome fairgoers in the future.—BP

Missouri Governor, State Leaders and Boy Scouts Dedicate Bicentennial Chess Board

THE State Historical Society of Missouri worked with the Saint Louis Chess Club, the World Chess Hall of Fame and the Great River Council of Boy Scouts to develop a large granite chessboard on Adrian's Island, across the newly opened Bicentennial Bridge in Jefferson City. The Bicentennial Chess Board, dedicated on May 1, began several years ago as a project of the Bicentennial Commission. Dr. Jeanne Sinquefield, a member of the commission, spearheaded the project with funding from the Sinquefield Charitable Foundation. Staff from the State Historical Society provided content and 32 images depicting Missouri history that appear on the chessboard. As part of their Eagle Scout projects, Andrew Dowden helped to create the engravings on the granite chessboard and Maya Thomas created benches from 200-year-old Missouri oak wood to provide seating around the board.



SHSMO Executive Director Gary Kremer speaks at the dedication of the Bicentennial Chess Board in Jefferson City on May 1, 2022. Standing behind the podium (left to right) are Missouri Lieutenant Governor Mike Kehoe, Dr. Jeanne Sinquefield, Missouri Governor Mike Parson, First Lady Teresa Parson, Eagle Scouts Maya Thomas and Andrew Dowden, and Jefferson City Mayor Carrie Tergin.



Members and staff of the Missouri Department of Agriculture, Missouri State Fair Board, Bicentennial Commission and State Historical Society of Missouri dedicate the restoration of the historic main gate, Missouri State Fair, Sedalia, June 16, 2022.

Volunteer Spotlight

Dave Connett

Dave Connett is a time traveler. He describes being transported to a different era while transcribing letters in the SHSMO manuscripts collection each week. The challenge he enjoys is figuring out vocabulary used in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century.

"When I volunteer at the State Historical Society, I may be trying to decipher a letter from a soldier in the War of 1812, or I could be transcribing a letter from Olympian Helen Stephens, who lived much later," said Connett. "I'm really struck by the difference in penmanship

"Transcribing letters in the SHSMO collections is the closest I'll get to traveling back in time!"

—Dave Connett, SHSMO volunteer

and grammar between the eras. The earlier letter writers from the 1800s use a lot of swirls in their cursive writing and the authors leave out periods and capitalizations. I have to be a bit of a detective!"

Connett recently retired from the University of Missouri after 20-plus years of creating, analyzing, and mapping all types of data for the Center for Applied Research and Engagement Systems (CARES) office on the Columbia campus. Before fully retiring, Connett began migrating to other areas of interest, which included history, and joined

the State Historical Society as a volunteer six years ago.

"I reduced my hours at my job, which left more time to do other things I enjoy. As a longtime member of the State Historical Society, I decided to volunteer and contribute my time with an organization that is important to this state," said Connett.

The first volunteer job for Connett at the Society was working with the World War II Letters collection that is now online with over 3,000 handwritten copies and original letters and photographs from soldiers during the war.

"Honestly, I was really intimidated when staff asked me to help transcribe letters," said Connett. "But once I dived in and got the hang of it, the work became easier and really enjoyable. I felt a connection to the people who wrote the letter. I wanted to learn more about them."

Connett said one of the memorable stories in these letters came from an American prisoner of war who was freed when his German guards fled at the end of World War II. The soldier described what life was like as a prisoner. In one letter, he showed some compassion for his captors. "The U.S. soldier wrote that he and other prisoners had very little to eat and almost starved to death. But he didn't blame the Germans, stating that they didn't have anything to eat either. There just wasn't enough food."

That intimate experience led Connett to another favorite hobby that he and his wife, Deborah, enjoy together—visiting cemeteries.



SHSMO volunteer Dave Connett prepares to transcribe a letter written by William Woods, who founded William Woods University in Fulton. Connett is seated inside the Columbia Research Center processing office, June 21, 2022.

"The oldest letters that I've transcribed came from the Thomas Smith collection," Connett said. "Smith was a land agent in Franklin, Missouri, in the 1820s. He also served in the War of 1812 and led an interesting life. He was buried in Saline County, so my wife and I did a little investigating and found his gravesite."

Much like with handwritten letters, Connett said he is fascinated by the differences in the iconography of the gravestones and the history of the people buried in cemeteries. "The older the stone, the better," said Connett, who has traveled to cemeteries all over the state and to gravesites in Tennessee, Massachusetts and even London.

Born and raised in St. Joseph, Connett's roots run deep in the state—his family goes back six generations in Buchanan County. He figures that is why his interest in Missouri history has stayed with him for so long. "I feel the connection to the state, its history, and the need to preserve these stories," said Connett. "A lot of our country's history can be traced right here in Missouri." —BP

Looking Ahead

The SHSMO Art Gallery is open to visitors Tuesday through Friday, 10 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. and each Saturday, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.



SHSMO Annual Meeting | My Missouri Lecture

October 29, Cook Hall, Center for Missouri Studies

Join SHSMO trustees, staff and members on Saturday, Oct. 29, for the annual meeting of the State Historical Society of Missouri. The 10:30 a.m. meeting is open to the public. Attendees need to register online for the lunch and lecture that follows. The My Missouri Lecture at 1 p.m. will feature U.S. Senator Roy D. Blunt, who has served Missourians for more than 45 years.



Mr. Pruitt's Possum Town: Trouble and Resilience in the American South

Through Nov. 5, Art Gallery, Center for Missouri Studies

This exhibition sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities presents photographs by Otis N. Pruitt, who documented life in the segregated town of Columbus, Mississippi, between 1920 and 1960. The traveling exhibit is curated by Dr. Berkeley Hudson in collaboration with the Missouri School of Journalism. An associated exhibition in SHSMO's Guitar Family Gallery of Editorial Cartoons and Illustrations displays artworks related to the 1939 Missouri Sharecroppers Strike by *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* photojournalist Arthur Witman and cartoonist Daniel Fitzpatrick.



In Their Own Words: Celebrating the National Women and Media Collection

Through Dec. 23, Wenneker Family Corridor Gallery, Center for Missouri Studies

In honor of the collection's 25th anniversary, diaries, letters, photographs and other items from the National Women and Media Collection are on display. The collection contains the records of media organizations and the professional and personal papers of notable women in the field. For related programming featuring the National Women and Media Collection, visit shsmo.org.



Music in Missouri

Through April 29, SHSMO St. Louis Research Center

This exhibit explores Missouri's contributions to American music, specifically St. Louis music styles in genres such as ragtime, jazz, rock 'n roll and rap. See how Missouri played a role in shaping the American sound and how music broke down barriers on race, gender and region—making Missouri a unique place for creativity, reinvention and progress.



Thomas Hart Benton: The Complete Editioned Lithographs

Nov. 11 – March 4, Spiva Center for the Arts, Joplin

SHSMO's collection of Thomas Hart Benton lithographs is headed to Joplin for an exhibition at Spiva Center for the Arts. Over 90 master prints dating from 1929 to 1974 reflect the many changes that took place in Benton's artwork over the course of his life. The exhibit will be the first at Spiva's new home – The Cornell Arts & Entertainment Complex in downtown Joplin.

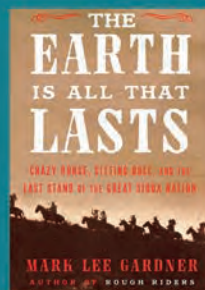


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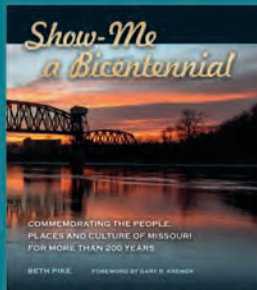
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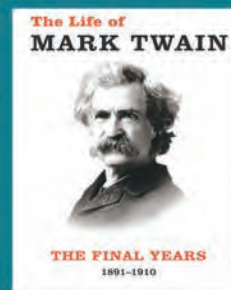
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