

The State Historical Society of Missouri

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COVER PHOTO:
Lori Watts stands in a flower garden, Howard County. Burford Leon Royston Collection, 1970.

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Followers loved the photo of the showboat Goldenrod and shared many memories about happy times spent onboard.

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Missouri Conference on History Builds Upon Legacy of 66 Years

By Beth Pike



Missouri Conference on History attendees tour the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and Museum.

SESSIONS exploring German, Greek, and Chinese immigrants, labor trends of World War II, and how to interpret nineteenth-century Missouri were among the variety of panel discussions at the 2025 Missouri Conference on History held March 12-14 in Blue Springs. The George S. Robb Centre for the Study of the Great War at Park University served as host. One hundred and seventy-five attendees came from across Missouri as well as from other states.

Among the highlights was a private reception at the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and Museum in nearby Independence. Attendees noted the engraved lettering in the library's courtyard with a quote by the 33rd president: "Truth is all I want for history."

A roundtable discussion with students and professors from the University of Missouri-St. Louis and University of Missouri-Kansas City offered a new approach to teaching Missouri history. Both universities collaborated for an eight-week public history class that included a joint field trip to museums and history organizations in St. Louis and Kansas City. The idea was to experience history collectively on opposite sides of the state. After visiting these places, UMKC history professor Andrew

Bergerson asked his students, "How could each site improve civic engagement?"

Professor Laura Westhoff spoke about seeing a transformation in her students when they saw beyond their own biases. "Civic spaces, such as museums and historic sites, are places where we can have tough conversations with others," said Westhoff, who chairs the history department at UMSL. Several of Westhoff's students said their class helped them form a better appreciation of Missouri and its place in history. Plus, the visits to various sites showed that there are many different careers related to history.

A session on the art of oral history included a presentation by independent scholar Rich Gaynor, who read through monthly bulletins from the St. Louis Master Bakers Association and interviewed 25 bakers for his book, *How Our Hearts Were Stollen: A Partial History of St. Louis Bakeries*, chronicling independent bakers from the early 1900s to the present. As a native St. Louisan who grew up with German grandparents, he experienced the pleasures of coffee and cakes. His father became a professional baker who eventually owned and ran an independent grocery store.



(left to right) John Peretz, Olivia Ramsey, Jason McDonald, Micaela Reiss, and Andrew Heise of Truman State University pose with the statue of President Truman at the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and Museum.

Gaynor's interest in his early food experiences led him to take on a new passion once he retired from teaching. He discovered historical events that contributed to the demise of the independent bakery during the 1950s. "I also found a strong presence of a bakery community in St. Louis during the 1900s that looked out for each other," said Gaynor. "Every conversation is an oral history, and I had the added luxury of spending several hours with each interview to get their story."

Gary Kremer, executive director of the State Historical Society of Missouri, gave the keynote address, tracing the history of the conference since its first meeting in 1959. He recalled attending the conference for the first time 50 years earlier, and how nervous he was as a student presenting his paper to a room full of historians. Kremer is retiring as SHSMO's executive director later this year.

Noting that the conference was established by the University of Missouri's history department and first held on the Columbia campus, Kremer remarked on the many distinguished historians who have served as past keynote speakers or participated in other ways. Some of the more prominent figures include Daniel J. Boorstin, Alan Simpson, Frank Freidel, and Henry Steele Commager. "In his late seventies, Commager was still teaching at Amherst and had recently published his much-acclaimed book *The Empire of Reason*, one of more than 40 books he published over his career," Kremer said. Commager came to the conference in 1979.

Despite the prominent speakers, attendance began to dip in the 2000s, with fewer than 70 persons registered for the 2006 conference. Attendance rebounded after the State Historical Society of Missouri agreed to become the conference's administrative host.

Marjorie Finley of Kansas City attended this year to meet others who are also passionate about history. As a member of more than a dozen historical societies, libraries, and museums, Finley said that her curiosity drives her interests. "I like to explore towns and places in Missouri where I can connect with the past and ponder how it impacts us today," she said. "I think we can sometimes overlook an important event in history, too, which also can affect our lives in the present." Finley is currently researching the history of elderberries, a native Missouri fruit.

The conference wrapped up with an awards luncheon emceed by steering committee president Timothy Westcott, director of the Robb Centre and a history professor at Park University.

Congratulations to the award winners honored this year:

Book Award (\$500): Kimberly Harper, State Historical Society of Missouri, *Men of No Reputation: Robert Boatright, the Buckfoot Gang, and the Fleecing of Middle America* (University of Arkansas Press, 2024).

Lawrence O. Christensen Article Award (\$250): Jenny Barker-Devine, Illinois College, "Protection for All Citizens': Civil Defense and the Problem of Evacuating Missouri's Urban Centers during the Cold War, 1950–1970" (*Missouri Historical Review*, April 2024).

Lynn and Kristen Morrow Missouri History Student Prize (\$175): Ethan Prior, Southeast Missouri State University, "Labor Trends of World War II: Gender in the Mid-Missouri Firebrick Industry."



(left to right) Nancy Ehrlich (Independence), Virginia Laas (Joplin), and Steven Brawley (St. Louis) visit during a reception at the Harry S. Truman Presidential Library and Museum.

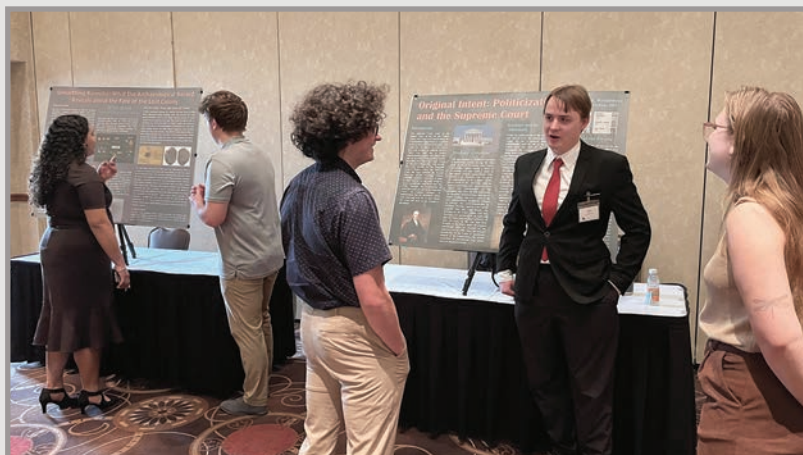


Suman Kumar Roy of Arkansas State University gave a presentation about a historic firehouse and how individuals can play a role in heritage preservation.



Left photo: Sarah Coppersmith (standing) of the University of Missouri-St. Louis speaks to Andrew Bergerson of the University of Missouri-Kansas City (at podium) during a talk with other educators and students about teaching Missouri history.

Right photo: Katelyn Ziegler (right) of the State Historical Society of Missouri explains how researchers can utilize Missouri's digital newspapers. Panelist Sandy Selby (left), author of *Arrow Rock Inc.*, showed how she accessed the digital archives for her recent book.



Students from Westminster College shared posters of their research at the Missouri Conference on History.

Otto Widmann

Missouri's Pioneer Ornithologist

By Bill Eddleman

FOR most of the 19th century, knowledge about Missouri's birds could only be found scattered in bits and pieces in the writings of travelers and others. Most of these records emphasized large or distinctive species. A more comprehensive book on the birds of Missouri awaited the efforts of a German immigrant to St. Louis, Otto Widmann.

Born in 1841 in Baden, Germany, Widmann came to St. Louis in 1867 and found work as a pharmacist. An avid naturalist, he began documenting the local bird life along the Mississippi River, combing the deep woods surrounding the River des Peres, which flows into the Mississippi. A letter from one of Widmann's young correspondents, Johnson Neff, who later became a noted wildlife biologist, related a story of how Widmann was able to devote so much time to birds:

"As a struggling young pharmacist in St. Louis, he bought a ticket on the Louisiana Sweepstakes and won the drawing. As befitted his Germanic nature, he invested his moneys, or part thereof, in well-located drugstores in the St. Louis area...he never actually had to work again and could travel whenever and wherever he wished."

Widmann quit his business in 1889, moved to Old Orchard (a town later annexed by Webster Groves), and devoted himself to the study of Missouri birds. He developed a network of correspondents around the state and traveled extensively. From this intensive fieldwork and research, he published his groundbreaking book, *A Preliminary Catalog of the Birds of Missouri*, in 1907.

On an 1896 trip to the St. Francis Sunken Lands in Dunklin County, Mo., Widmann found two rare swamp songbirds—Swainson's Warbler and Bachman's Warbler. Widmann noted that even locals avoided the swampy woods in summer due to the abundance of wood ticks, seed ticks, and chiggers, a nuisance "hardly seen with the naked eye until it has entered the skin where it causes restless nights and suffering for weeks. This worthy trio forms a society for the protection of birds, more powerful than the best state laws."

Widmann returned the next year to Kolb Island in the southwestern corner of Missouri's Bootheel, just west of Cardwell. He soon located numerous Bachman's Warblers and recorded behaviors of this rarely observed bird.



Otto Widmann in 1883
from the *Wilson Bulletin*,
September 1927.



Bachmann's Warbler, *The Birds of America*, Vol 7, 1841,
by John James Audubon

On May 13, 1897, Widmann discovered the first nest and eggs of this species among blackberries in a tangled swamp. This finding became his primary contribution to the larger field of ornithology, and his observations are particularly valuable because Bachman's Warblers have become extinct.

Widmann loved birds and nature from the time of his childhood. In one letter, he stated, "The naturalist feels a thrill, a most pleasurable sensation, when he greets the return of a bird after its absence of a few months, and a similar joy fills him with happiness at the sight of the first green in spring and the flowers of the season whenever they appear." Widmann continued to write about Missouri birds and correspond with others until his old age. He died in 1933 at age 92.

Portions of the life and work of Widmann are within the Otto Widmann Collection at the Columbia Research Center. The collection contains correspondence, notes, publications, and miscellaneous material compiled by Daniel McKinley, who intended to write a biography of Widmann, but was unable to complete one.

Bill Eddleman is the coordinator of the Cape Girardeau Research Center.

Missouri's Early Conservation Movement Celebrated at the Center for Missouri Studies

SEVERAL hundred people stopped by the Center for Missouri Studies on a very cold Saturday earlier this year for talks and tours of the *Legends of Conservation* exhibit, a display of life-size cutouts of conservationists who influenced the movement over the past two centuries. The exhibition, which features Aldo Leopold, Rachel Carson, John Muir, and others, has been traveling around the state and made a stop at SHSMO on February 15.

Attendees were inspired by a conversation with Sara Parker Pauley, former director of the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC), and MU history professor emerita Susan Flader, a longtime board member and former chair of the Aldo Leopold Foundation. Flader talked about Leopold's influence on Missouri's own conservation movement in the 1930s. Leopold was the trusted adviser to E. Sydney Stephens, a prominent leader in the establishment of the Conservation Federation of Missouri and one of MDC's first conservation commissioners.

MDC staff photographer Noppadol Paothong also gave a presentation on his nature and wildlife photography, describing how he captures the images that have made him an internationally recognized and award-winning wildlife photographer.

Visitors also stopped by the art gallery to see *Wild Missouri—The ART of Conservation* exhibition, where Paothong's photography was on display along with illustrations by former MDC artist Charles Schwartz, a distinguished artist, biologist, and naturalist known for his studies of the habitats of animals and birds. He and his wife, Elizabeth "Libby" Schwartz, also a renowned biologist, collaborated on many projects for MDC, including the book *Wild Mammals of Missouri*, first published in 1959 and still in print. The couple became good friends with Leopold and the famous zoologist Marlin Perkins of St. Louis. SHSMO holds the collected papers of Charles and Libby Schwartz and of Perkins.



A visitor looks at the *Legends of Conservation* exhibit at the Center for Missouri Studies in Columbia, Feb. 15, 2025.



On stage, Susan Flader (left) and Sara Parker Pauley (right) talk about Aldo Leopold's ties to Missouri.



Photographer Noppadol Paothong (on stage) discusses the techniques he uses to capture nature and wildlife images in the field.



U.S. Army Veteran Offers Extensive Records of the Vietnam War and Postwar

By Beth Pike

THE Vietnam War ended fifty years ago this spring with the defeat of South Vietnam. Since 1975, memories of the war have been shaped by scores of movies, books, and other retrospectives, many of them based on archival records that document the experiences of those caught up in the brutal conflict. One such personal account can be found in the more than 122 cubic feet of letters, photographs, poetry, books, and other material donated to SHSMO by Vietnam War veteran Larry Rottmann, a retired English and journalism professor at Missouri State University and Ozarks Technical College in Springfield. Rottmann grew up in Columbia, Mo. Since his initial donation of records in 2000, Rottmann has made several more postwar trips to Vietnam, and his personal papers and activism offer researchers insight into his journey as a veteran of the war.

Rottmann and Trong Thanh, a North Vietnamese Army photographer, recently donated more than 6,000 photographs and slides of Vietnam during and after the war to the Larry Rottmann Collection at the SHSMO Columbia Research Center. The collection has sparked the interest of researchers worldwide, including Cristina Alsina Rísquez, a professor of American literature at the University of Barcelona in Spain, who spent a week at the center going through Rottmann's collection for a book she is writing.

Laura Jolley, assistant director, manuscripts, helped Rísquez on her visit last September. "The strength of this large collection is that it has information on a variety of aspects of the Vietnam War and aftermath of the conflict all in one place," said Jolley. "Researchers can examine Rottmann's personal experience during and after the war with the unique perspective of someone who became an activist against the war upon returning home."

Of the 2.7 million U.S. troops who went to Vietnam, 147,403 were from Missouri. Rottmann served as a lieutenant with the 25th Infantry Division in 1967-68. He was wounded during the 1968 Tet Offensive and returned home. In 1971, Rottmann spoke against the war at a congressional hearing by the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. Since his service, Rottmann has made 23 postwar visits to Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia and has written or contributed to more than 50 books. He hopes his extensive collection will help the public better understand the war through his own experiences as a Missouri vet.

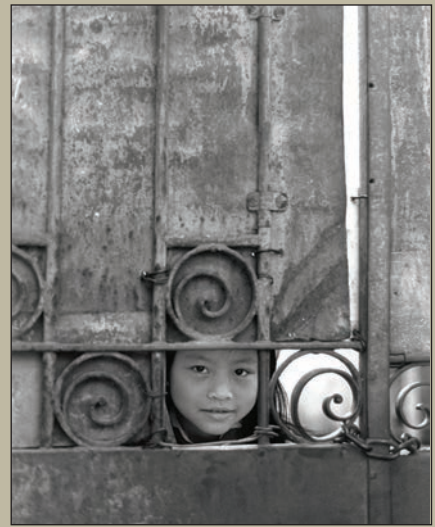
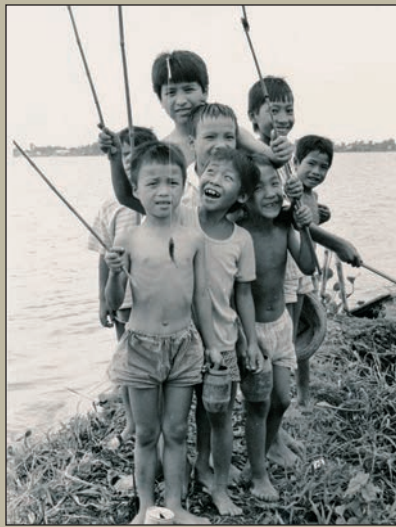
"In order to more truly and fully understand the war and its historical, cultural, and political fallout, my postwar visits and personal friendships with our former 'enemies' are essential to learning about what really happened at the human level and how all that still influences the behavior, attitudes, and even the memories of former

soldiers and civilians,” said Rottmann. “Not to mention how future scholars, researchers, and writers will interpret the Vietnam War.”

At age 82, Rottmann spends much of his time angling smallmouth bass in clear Ozark streams and lakes while remembering the aroma and lure of Huong River, also called Perfume River, near the city of Hue in Vietnam. “Vietnam is a wonderful and beautiful country with thoughtful, gentle, and educated citizens,” said Rottmann. “It’s been important in my journey to document the Vietnamese people and their society, and how a home-grown Vietnam veteran from Missouri sees the world.”



Larry Rottmann visits with Vietnamese students at a school in Hanoi, Vietnam, 1995.



To mark the 50th anniversary of the Fall of Saigon, a special two-day event was hosted by SHSMO at the Center for Missouri Studies on April 30 and May 1. The event included a screening of *Voices from Vietnam*, a documentary film produced, narrated, and written by Rottmann. The documentary includes photographs taken during and after the war by Rottmann and Thanh as well as video footage by director Mark Biggs, who accompanied Rottmann on several trips to Southeast Asia. In addition, stories about war, accompanied by original live music, were presented by Rottmann and military veterans Tim Burrows of Nixa, Mike O'Brien of Boise, Idaho, and Rottmann's son Eli Redstone of Gainesville, Florida. A photo exhibition from Rottmann's collection was also on display for the event.



Images by Distinguished Photojournalist Portray Kansas City Newsmakers 1965-1995

By Whitney Heinzmann

A COLLECTION of about 8,000 images by Raymond E. Corey, an accomplished Kansas City photographer, is now available online. The collection, mostly photo film negatives, was donated by the photographer's family and covers many notable events. In May 2023, the Kansas City Research Center received a generous donation from Lee and Don Wadsworth to digitize a portion of the Raymond E. Corey Photograph Collection. The large body of work focuses on subjects of popular and historical interest such as the American Royal, the Kansas City Chiefs, and social movements.

The digitization process began in September 2023, with high-resolution scanning outsourced to a specialized vendor. Last year, SHSMO staff created metadata for the images, which went online in February on SHSMO's Digitized Collections website.

Raymond Ernest Corey, born in 1936, was the son of Mae (Vader) and John Corey of Kansas City. During high school, Corey began working part-time at the Associated Press. Though he never pursued a formal college education, his mentors recognized his talent and encouraged him to photograph events, honing not only his eye for compelling images but also his skills in developing and printing quality news photographs.

Corey's career began with roles at the *Coffeyville (Kansas) Journal* and *Kansas City Kansan*. In 1966, the National Press Photographers Association recognized Corey for a photograph of policemen apprehending a robbery suspect at the Brotherhood State Bank in Kansas City, Kansas, which originally had appeared in an October 1965 issue of the *Kansan*. The image was released to the United Press International and Associated Press and appeared on page one in many national newspapers, including the *Chicago Tribune* and *Los Angeles Times*.

Following this success, Corey joined the staff of the *Kansas City Star*, where he worked until 1979. He later continued his photography career with Sun Publications



Kansas City Royals third baseman George Brett talks with Reggie Jackson during his first season as a right fielder for the New York Yankees in 1977. Jackson began his major-league career playing for the Kansas City A's in 1967.

in Overland Park, Kansas, and as a freelance photographer. Corey passed away on June 11, 1995, leaving behind an enduring legacy of visual storytelling.

In 2014, the Raymond Corey Family—Daniel Corey, Randall Corey, Tanya Glennon, and Lee Wadsworth—donated a remarkable collection of their father's work to honor his dedication to photography. This extensive collection includes over 49,400 negatives, 740 slides, and 430 photographs produced between 1965 and 1995.

The Raymond E. Corey Photographs will take center stage in a special exhibit opening at the Kansas City Research Center on July 10. The exhibit will celebrate Corey's contributions to photojournalism and his enduring influence on Kansas City's visual history.

The digitization project and exhibit would not have been possible without the generous support of Lee and Don Wadsworth. Their significant contributions ensure that these historic images will be preserved and appreciated by a wide audience for years to come.

Whitney Heinzmann is the coordinator of the Kansas City Research Center.



This photo of a robbery suspect being arrested appeared on front pages across the nation and earned Corey plaudits from the National Press Photographers Association.



Firefighters extinguish a fire as soldiers line the streets in Kansas City after a protest in the wake of the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. turned violent, 1968.



Black Panther Party leader Pete O'Neal and unidentified members, no date.



TWA pilot Karen Davies operates the control panel in an airplane cockpit, 1979.

SHSMO Art Gallery Renamed to Honor Supporter Bill Little; New Exhibit Opens

THE State Historical Society of Missouri opened its latest exhibition in April at the newly renamed William Guitar Little Missouri Gallery of Art in the Center for Missouri Studies. Formerly the SHSMO Art Gallery, the space is renamed to honor Columbia resident Bill Little, whose generous gifts will help fund new art acquisitions.

"The William Guitar Little gift will endow a fund for the acquisition of historically important artworks and the maintenance of our art collection, enhancing our ability to preserve Missouri's cultural heritage for future generations," said SHSMO Art Curator Joan Stack.

Stack, along with SHSMO executive director Gary Kremer, Sen. Roy Blunt, University of Missouri President Mun Choi, and artist Nora Othic, spoke at the gallery dedication attended by many friends and family of Bill Little.

The exhibition, *Mail Carrier with a Camera*, features the captivating photographs of Burford Royston, a mail carrier who documented mid-twentieth-century rural life in southern Howard County. It coincides with the 250th anniversary of the U.S. Post Office, founded in 1775. Royston's photos will remain on display through September.

Royston, who delivered mail in a Willys Jeep truck and later a 1953 Ford, captured rural Missouri life for several decades, beginning in the 1950s. His route covered roughly a hundred miles of county roads, with part of it following the historic Santa Fe Trail that connected antebellum Missouri's Boonslick region

to the Southwest. Through his lens, Royston documented a generation of Howard County residents, many of whom have long since passed, as well as historic structures that have disappeared from the landscape.

In more than seventy-five images, the exhibition shows daily life in a rural community where small family farms had not yet given way to larger, more specialized operations. Royston's carefully composed photographs, shot with Kodachrome and Ektachrome slide film, reveal an unromanticized view of rural life, in which people sweat in the hot sun and landscapes do not always look like postcards.

The exhibition's images were selected from hundreds of slides donated to the State Historical Society from the Burford Royston family with assistance from SHSMO volunteer Susan Vale. Vale also provided funding for the exhibition as well

as a generous gift to help support a book on Royston's photographs that will be published by the State Historical Society this summer.



Bill Little



Friends and family of Bill Little gathered to celebrate the naming of the art gallery on April 25. The painting *Snowbird in Winter* by Nora Othic of Marceline, Mo. was unveiled and gifted to the William Guitar Little Missouri Gallery of Art in honor of Bill's support of the arts.

New Exhibition *Mail Carrier with a Camera*



The Stanleys cut tobacco on Newman Cox farm, Howard County, 1953.



Mary Long stands on her gravel driveway at her home off Route Z in Howard County, 1954.



Burford Royston delivers mail in Howard County, 1952.

Greig Thompson Retires after 19 years at SHSMO

By Joan Stack

AS Greig Thompson bids farewell to the State Historical Society of Missouri after many years as art collections manager, we reflect on the indelible mark he has left on the institution. Greig's tenure has been characterized by his unwavering dedication, artistic vision, and commitment to preserving and enhancing the state's rich cultural heritage.

Greig's journey with SHSMO began in 2006. He brought with him a wealth of experience and a profound passion for the arts. Holding a Master of Fine Arts degree in ceramic sculpture and printmaking from the University of Missouri, Greig's academic background laid a solid foundation for his future endeavors. Before joining SHSMO, he spent most of two decades as a professor of studio art and art history, inspiring students at six universities across Missouri. His leadership extended beyond the classroom, as he directed the art galleries of two of these institutions, spent eight years as an exhibit designer and chief preparator at MU's Museum of Art and Archaeology, and did art consultation with various Missouri institutions and businesses.

One of Greig's most significant achievements was his role in developing and enhancing SHSMO's collections and facilities. His vision and expertise were pivotal during the Society's transition into its new building in 2019. Greig led efforts to



Greig Thompson

make the new art gallery functional and welcoming to visitors. His efforts in improving the art collections infrastructure will benefit SHSMO for years to come.

During his career, Greig has designed about 200 exhibitions, half of those at SHSMO. Each exhibition reflected his creativity, deep understanding of art, and meticulous attention to detail. His commitment

to preserving and promoting the state's artistic heritage has earned him the respect and admiration of colleagues, scholars, artists, and art enthusiasts alike.

As we bid farewell to Greig, we do so with immense gratitude for his contributions and the knowledge that his achievements will continue to inspire and shape the future of SHSMO.

**Help Grow
SHSMO's
Digital
Collections!**

Save the Date



SHSMO SUMMER GIVING CAMPAIGN

August 4 to 8

Your donation will help us digitize more letters, photographs, maps, and other materials in our collections. Thank you for your support!
Visit shsmo.org/support

Pioneering Journalist Sara Lockwood Williams Collection Available Online

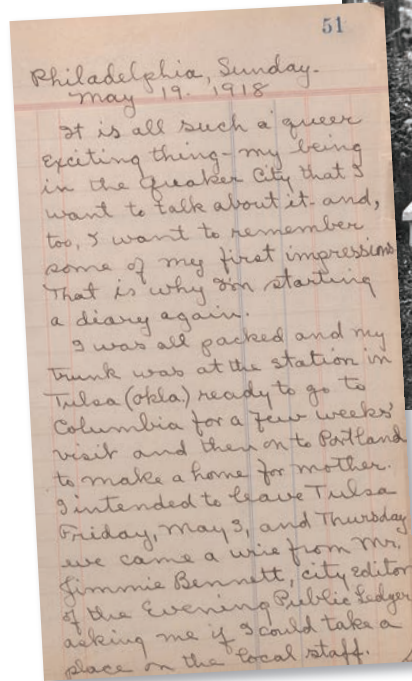
By Heather Richmond

FOR the past two years, SHSMO volunteers have been diligently transcribing the letters and diaries of journalist Sara Lockwood Williams, born in 1889 in Rock Port, Mo. We are pleased to announce that the project is nearly complete, and a large portion of the collection is now online in SHSMO's Digitized Collections.

Through her letters, researchers can trace Lockwood Williams's early career after graduating from the University of Missouri School of Journalism. Hired as the first female reporter for the *St. Joseph Gazette*, Lockwood Williams later taught at her alma mater, becoming the first woman to teach at a journalism school in the United States. She was a prolific writer, publishing many articles in magazines and newspapers across the country for almost five decades.

Her romance and marriage to Walter Williams, founder and first dean of the journalism school, is documented in their letters to each other, and her diary describes her heartbreak after his death. Lockwood Williams's diaries also follow her later career teaching at Yenching University in China, Texas College of Arts and Industries, and Rockford College, as well as her eventual decision to move back to Columbia, where she worked once again for the journalism school.

In transcribing her diaries and letters, SHSMO volunteers have experienced an intimate view not only of



Sara Lockwood Williams in her garden on Glenwood Avenue in Columbia where she lived with Walter Williams while they were married. Date unknown.

A page from Lockwood Williams's diary after she moved to Pennsylvania to work as a reporter at the *Philadelphia Evening Public Ledger*, May 19, 1918.

Williams's extraordinary life, but also of Columbia in the mid-twentieth century. Williams describes parties, friendships, and building her home in southwest Columbia. Volunteer Bill Carney notes that in reading her diaries, "You could visualize Columbia as a much smaller community. You can also get a sense of the reliance on trains to get to Columbia when she recounted leaving Chicago, traveling to St. Louis and on to Centralia and then to here. The Wabash station must have been a busy place!"

Several volunteers became interested in the house that Lockwood Williams built and lived in during the 1950s. Jim Linsenbardt researched the location of the home and discovered that her house was one of the first built in the Quarry Heights neighborhood, which included the defunct Stewart Quarry next to the

MKT railroad tracks. The old quarry filled with water and became a lake used for swimming and fishing. "Her 'picture window' looked out over the lake and many diary entries described the trees, flowers, and lake activities she observed," said Linsenbardt.

Dave Connett said Williams's descriptions of her home "prompted me to take a walk along the recreational trail that now runs along the same route as the old railroad that ran near her home."

Thanks to the passion and hard work of our inquisitive volunteers, these materials are all online at digital.shsmo.org and keyword searchable.

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

Citizen Committee Records Illustrate How Old Phelps County Courthouse Survived Demolition

By Ashley Weaver

WHEN Phelps County voters finally approved a sales tax in 1991 to fund a new courthouse in Rolla, after six failed attempts over the previous forty-five years, the one argument that seemed to pass the measure was that it would end the costly maintenance bills for the old courthouse. This left the 131-year-old building's fate in the hands of the historic-minded people in Phelps County. If no actions were taken by the public to preserve the old structure, the city would be free to raze it to create a parking lot for the new courthouse.

Many citizens rose to the challenge and created a citizen collective called the Old Courthouse Preservation Committee, which worked to raise funds for preservation and maintenance. They created a plan to assume ownership of the building, restore the cupola, and add the old courthouse to the National Register of Historic Places. They also campaigned to alter the design of the new courthouse to complement the old courthouse (directly across from one another) and the old town area.

Construction of the Old Phelps County Courthouse began in 1860. Union forces seized the partly finished building, discarding the rebel flag flying from it, and used it as a military hospital during the Civil War. The courthouse's second floor was not completed until after the war. In



Phelps County Courthouse, 1931.

Left: Advertisement for White Elephant Sale advertisement for a rummage sale fundraiser sponsored by the Old Courthouse Preservation Committee, 1992.

1912, a three-story addition allowed space for a new jail and administrative offices. The original cupola deteriorated and had to be removed in the 1940s and replaced with a new one.

Fundraising was the primary activity for members of the Old Courthouse Preservation Committee. They held a rummage sale, accepted donations, and sold a painting of the old courthouse by the artist John W. Koenig at auction. Monies raised in the campaign helped to return the courthouse to its historic state after years of the interior being modernized for office space. The preservation work was needed to get the Greek Revival-style building listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Many of the committee members also volunteered with the Phelps County Historical Society, which later accepted ownership of the building.

In 1994, the Old Courthouse Preservation Committee assumed responsibility for the building with plans to turn the space into a regional history museum. After



Old Phelps County Courthouse building, 2025.

meeting most of its goals, the committee disbanded in 1997. Today, the Phelps County Historical Society operates a museum in the old courthouse and hosts events on its grounds. Several offices inside the building are used by the Phelps County Genealogical Society and other local businesses.

Ashley Weaver is an archivist at the Rolla Research Center.

Rare Photographs Discovered of Former Pulaski County Courthouse Before 1903 Fire

By Haley Frizzle-Green

WAYNESVILLE, Missouri, has witnessed the construction and destruction of four county courthouses since the city's formation in 1833. The first structure, built around 1840, was a temporary two-story log courthouse on a one-acre tract of land donated by Waynesville resident William Moore. The later courthouses were also built on the same property.

By 1843, the second courthouse was constructed, replacing the wooden structure with a two-story brick building. Although the new courthouse was built with stronger materials, it only lasted about 30 years. During the Civil War, most of Waynesville's residents supported the South, going so far as to fly the Confederate flag outside the courthouse. The city was occupied by Union soldiers in 1862, leading to damage and destruction of local establishments. This included the second courthouse, which was later deemed unsafe and beyond repair. The condemned building was razed in 1872 after the state appropriated \$2,000 for war damages. In addition

to the state-appropriated funds, Pulaski County issued \$6,000 in bonds to build Waynesville's third courthouse.

Between 1872 and 1873, a larger, two-story brick courthouse was built on part of the previous courthouse's foundation. After another 30 years of use, the third courthouse caught fire and burned on June 13, 1903. Tax ledgers, probate records, and abstract books were saved, but other irreplaceable county documents were destroyed.

Less than a month after the fire, Pulaski County determined that the courthouse would be rebuilt. State architect Henry H. Hohenschild was selected to design the new structure, and Rolla contractor Ed Long completed the \$10,240 building on March 4, 1904. Described as Romanesque Revival style with Italianate features, the courthouse maintained the two-story brick foundation. The fourth courthouse has lasted longer than its predecessors, and in 1979 it was listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Today, Hohenschild's courthouse is home to the Pulaski

County Courthouse Museum. Pulaski County moved government operations into a new building alongside the historic courthouse in 1990.

Until recently, the only known photograph of Pulaski County's third courthouse was one taken shortly after the fire. While going through recent donations to SHSMO's Johnson Family Collection, I discovered two photographs from before the fire. Both images were unidentified, prompting me to research the histories of courthouses across southern Missouri. A familiar-looking building in the photos led me to Terry Primas, a local historian at the Old Stagecoach Stop in Waynesville. He was able to confirm what we had guessed from my research: that the photographs were indeed Pulaski County's third courthouse. The approximate date of the photograph is sometime around 1902, about one year before the fire, based on what we know of William Howard Johnson's railroad work in the area.

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



Two unidentified men standing on the street in Waynesville, Missouri. The Pulaski County Courthouse is pictured on the left and the Black Hotel is pictured on the right, circa 1902.

CoMo Music Project Seeks Donated Materials Documenting Columbia Music Scene

By Autumn Cuddy



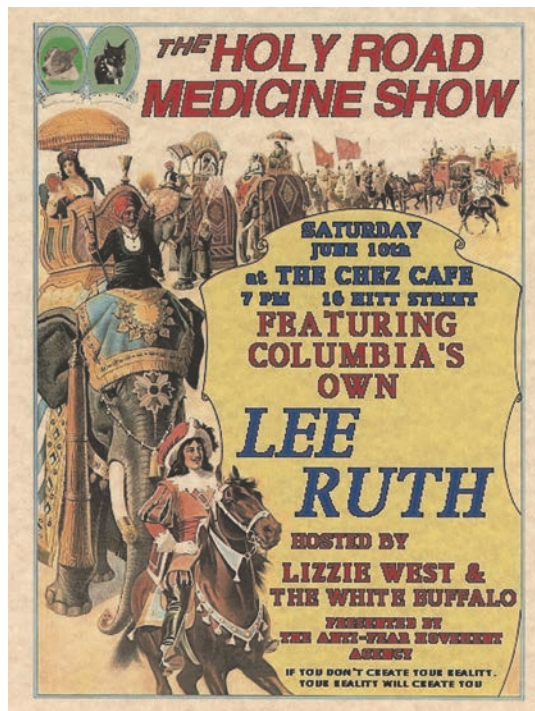
A sampling of posters in the Columbia Concerts and Events Collection (C4728 and C4730).

ON AUGUST 1, 1980, Columbia's Lamont Cranston Band and Springfield's The Misstakes took the stage at the grand opening of the Blue Note, a new music venue on Columbia's Business Loop, a commercial district near I-70. By the end of the 1980s, the Blue Note had moved downtown, where it began attracting bigger bands and national acts. Despite its new status, it was far from the only place where music fans lined up to catch a show.

Toward the end of the 20th century, indie and underground music venues rose and fell in Columbia as the interests of their clientele shifted. Lee's Lounge brought in the blues and jazz crowd, country folks showed up at the Silver Bullet, rock fans found their home at Eastside, and the doors of the Blue Fugue opened to bursts of

reggae and Latin music. DIY venues like Hair Hole and the Ranch offered something a bit further from the typical concert experience. Aspiring musicians too young to play in bars and clubs booked gigs at the Music Café or sought out talent bookers who were willing to look the other way.

Records in the Columbia Concerts and Events Collection show that the city has always been home to talented musicians and a thriving music scene. SHSMO staff members Peter McCarthy and Kevin Walsh donated their own extensive poster collections, which established the collection that now spans from the 1970s to 2010s. Concert posters from venues across Columbia and the greater mid-Missouri area promoted shows ranging from local legends to national and international acts.



Many of the posters are from the Blue Note and the former Mojo's (now Rose Music Hall), as well as smaller venues like Tropical Liqueurs and Shattered, plus record stores, radio stations, house shows, businesses, restaurants, campus centers, and other local places. The flyers depict bands of all genres in professional designs and creative hand-drawn styles.

In August 2024, I started the CoMo Music Project to collect a wider scope of records on Columbia's historic music scene. While the posters offer which bands played where, they don't tell the whole story. The project aims to flesh out this history with a variety of materials from an extended period from the 1960s to the 2010s. We hope to collect photographs, videos, artwork, news clippings, reviews, zines, journals, magazines, scrapbooks, and more.

In addition, SHSMO oral historian Doug Genens is helping me record firsthand accounts of those who were part of the music scene.

This summer, the State Historical Society will host a free Music at Noon series on Hirsch Plaza at the Center for Missouri Studies, featuring talented local musicians. Join us for acoustic rock on May 9, old-school country on June 13, and "hillbilly swing" on July 11.

To contribute to the CoMo Music Project or Columbia Music Scene Oral History Project, contact Autumn at cuddyau@shsmo.org.

Autumn Cuddy is an archivist at the Columbia Research Center.

SHSMO St. Louis Research Center Acquires Fontbonne University Records

By A.J. Medlock

ON MARCH 10, 2024, Fontbonne University's Board of Trustees voted to cease operations of the nearly 100-year-old campus in the summer of 2025, citing declining enrollment and financial struggles. One of the immediate questions surrounding the closure of the private Catholic university in Clayton, Mo., was the fate of its archives. After consulting with several stakeholders, including Rebecca van Kneist, Fontbonne's university librarian, the trustees selected the State Historical Society of Missouri as the final home for the archives. Since January 2025, St. Louis Research Center staff have been making regular visits to Fontbonne's Jack C. Taylor Library to process and bring back to SHSMO about 100 cubic feet of materials documenting the university's rich history.

Fontbonne's voluminous meeting minutes, correspondence, reports, and photographs create an extensive tapestry chronicling the university from its founding as an all-women's Catholic college by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet in 1923 to its final status as a co-educational university offering a wide range of degrees in numerous fields. Indeed, Fontbonne's Department of Communication Disorders and Deaf Education, founded in 1957, became one of the first higher educational institutions to offer degrees for deaf education. The photographs found in the collection provide visual evidence of Fontbonne students in the 1960s teaching deaf children how to speak.

Carol Bonnar (right), a student in Fontbonne's Department of Communication Disorders and Deaf Education, conducts a speech and hearing screening for Matt Jensen (left), circa late 1970s.

This program became one of Fontbonne's many enduring legacies.

One of the collection's highlights is the *Black Manifesto to Fontbonne College*, written by eight African American students in October 1970 during a sit-in at the Jack C. Taylor Library to protest campus racism. The manifesto called for reforms, including increased enrollment of Black students, improved working conditions for non-academic Black staff, and the immediate cessation of harassment against African American visitors. Fontbonne's initial response was to suspend the students (they were later reinstated), but the school agreed in 1971 to recruit more Black students. Among the 704-student population, 37 Black students were enrolled in the fall of 1970. That number rose to 46 (among 738 total students) for the 1971-1972 school year.

The St. Louis Research Center plans to finish processing Fontbonne's paper-based archives when ownership of the campus transfers to Washington University this summer. Fontbonne's extensive



electronic records and webpages documenting its last two decades of existence will be the final part of the collection to be processed.

Although van Kneist is saddened to see Fontbonne close, she says she is confident that its historic legacy is in good hands. "The library's commitment to facilitating historical remembrance and preserving the heritage of more than a century in higher education has guided our search to identify the best steward for Fontbonne's archives," wrote van Kneist. "We are grateful to AJ and the staff at the State Historical Society for their recognition of the importance of this collection and their willingness to assume its care to make it available for future generations."

A.J. Medlock is the coordinator of the St. Louis Research Center.

Missouri Teachers Nominated for National History Day Teacher of the Year Award

By Danielle Griego

EACH year, two outstanding Missouri teachers are chosen to represent their affiliate as nominees for the National History Day (NHD) Teacher of the Year Award in the program's junior and senior divisions. Dr. Heather Van Otterloo, from South Middle School in Joplin, is this year's nominee for the junior division. She teaches English language arts to gifted students in grades six through eight.

Van Otterloo regularly participates in NHD workshops and mentors new educators involved in the program. She embodies passion and advocacy for her students, integrating NHD into her classroom because it not only meets curriculum standards but also challenges students to think critically about how the past shapes the present. She believes that NHD provides students with an opportunity to actively engage with primary sources "that deepen their understanding of historical events." Additionally, attending competitions, Van Otterloo says, "helps them develop important skills such as public speaking, critical thinking, and taking constructive feedback."

Dr. Megan Burian is the 2025 nominee for the senior division. She teaches gifted education to seventh graders at Selvidge Middle School and teaches grades nine through twelve at Marquette High School in St. Louis County.



Heather Van Otterloo

Burian and a group of her high school students were accepted to participate in the Silent Heroes: Untold Stories of the Korean War program through NHD. They are researching two Korean War veterans interred at Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery.

Burian has grown the NHD program from a handful of students in the Rockwood School district to a larger group that has been successful at both the state and national levels. She believes that empowering students to share their work with peers, teachers, and administrators is key to the program's growth. "NHD prepares them to speak confidently about history and their interests, which helps students advocate for the program," wrote Burian, who sees the positive impact of the program



Megan Burian

on her students. Burian said the experience motivates her to continue as an NHD teacher and to encourage more educators in her district and Missouri to "teach and grow with their students through NHD."

The results for the Teacher of the Year awards will be announced at the national competition in College Park, Maryland, in June. This year's contest theme is *Rights and Responsibilities in History*. The state contest was held at the University of Missouri-Columbia and the State Historical Society of Missouri on April 26. The results for the state contest are posted on nhdmo.org.

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

Volunteer Spotlight

Suzanne Flanegin

By Beth Pike

Since its founding in 1827, the western Missouri town of Independence has attracted many leaders. In 1831 Joseph Smith Jr. sent some of his Mormon followers there in search of a place to build a “holy city.” Faced with violent resistance, the Mormons abandoned Independence two years later. In 1860, a former enslaved man, Hiram Young, operated the largest factory in Independence, producing 6,000 yokes and 300 wagons for pioneers headed west on the Oregon and Santa Fe Trails. In 1890, Missouri’s only U.S. president moved with his family from Lamar to Independence. That same year, young Harry Truman met Bess Wallace during Sunday school. A little more than half a century later, people from around the world would know of the home of the 33rd president.

SHSMO volunteer Suzanne Flanegin grew up in Independence, where these historical figures and their ideas took root. Their stories and other events in the region gave her a sense of the importance of Missouri’s history, but she knew her knowledge only scratched the surface.

“I pursued other fields in school. History not being one of them,” said Flanegin, who signed up to volunteer at the State Historical Society so she could learn more about Missouri’s past. “Once I began volunteering

here, this world opened to me. I discovered the diversity of views and backgrounds of Missourians that have shaped our state.”

Both Suzanne and her husband, Mark, are volunteers at the Center for Missouri Studies. Suzanne has supported SHSMO in a variety of roles, helping with public events and in the bookstore, and greeting visitors to the building from her post at the welcome desk.

“When I’m at the lobby desk, I may be the first person a visitor encounters when they arrive with plans to donate materials of a loved one who died. I understand the difficulty in parting with their family or close friend’s papers. SHSMO’s archivists are wonderful and sensitive in how they interact with donors who donate cherished family history,” said Flanegin.

Helping people has been at the forefront in her own career. Flanegin is Mizzou-made, with an undergraduate degree in political science followed by a law degree. She spent 21 years as a public sector lawyer in the Missouri Attorney General’s Office, where she met Mark, who worked there as well. She later joined the staff of the U.S. Attorney General’s St. Louis office, where she worked in environmental enforcement. Eventually, though, she came back to the University of Missouri.



Suzanne Flanegin welcomes visitors at the Center for Missouri Studies, Jan. 30, 2025.

“I needed a job that required less travel, so I went to work at MU’s law school in advancement,” said Flanegin. “It was a professional change that took me down a satisfying road for the rest of my career.” Next, Flanegin moved to a position in the university’s College of Arts and Science, followed by positions with the Office of Gift Planning. She retired from MU after 20 years of service, with her last job as executive director of planned giving.

In retirement, Flanegin enjoys kayaking on mid-Missouri lakes with her husband, discovering local artworks, and spending time with their son, John, who lives in Lenexa, Kansas. “The joy of this place is the incredible resources,” said Flanegin, who is researching family members using the Columbia Research Center’s newspaper archives. “There’s still much to learn, even at my age.”

Looking Ahead

Music at Noon

2nd Fridays in May, June, and July, Center for Missouri Studies

This summer, the State Historical Society will host a free Music at Noon series on Hirsch Plaza at the Center for Missouri Studies, featuring talented local musicians. Join us for acoustic rock on May 9 with Rochara Knight and Caleb Alexander, old-school country performed by Anthony Wilkerson on June 13, and "hillbilly jazz" played by the Bait Shop Boys on July 11. Bring a lawn chair for the music, then come inside the Center for Missouri Studies and check out new exhibitions!



Men of No Reputation: Robert Boatright, the Buckfoot Gang, and the Fleecing of Middle America

June 10, Noon-1 p.m., Center for Missouri Studies

Author and SHSMO editor Kimberly Harper will talk about her new book, *Men of No Reputation*, examining Robert Boatright, one of the greatest con men of the early 20th century, along with the Buckfoot Gang, which operated out of towns in Jasper County, Missouri, and extended its large criminal syndicate throughout the Midwest. Harper describes the series of missteps that brought Boatright's criminal enterprise to an end. Sponsored by Missouri Humanities.



Dynamic Duo: Danforth and Eagleton Work Across the Aisle

Now through December, Center for Missouri Studies

A new exhibition in the Wencker Family Corridor Gallery offers insight into the careers and lives of two influential senators from opposing parties in Missouri. Senators Tom Eagleton and John Danforth served alongside each other in the U.S. Senate from 1977 to 1987. The exhibit focuses on the relationship between two colleagues who stayed true to their political beliefs while working together to benefit Missourians.



Mail Carrier with a Camera

Now through September, Center for Missouri Studies

A new exhibition opened this spring at the William Guitar Little Missouri Gallery of Art featuring about 80 photographs of Burford Royston, a mail carrier who documented mid-twentieth-century rural life in southern Howard County. The images were selected from over 800 slides donated to the State Historical Society by Royston's family. The exhibition coincides with the 250th anniversary of the U.S. Post Office, founded in 1775.

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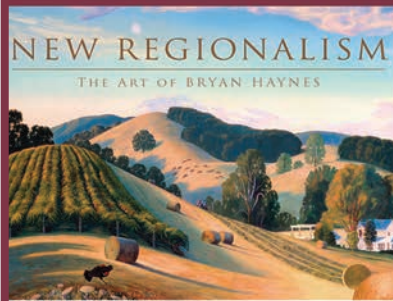
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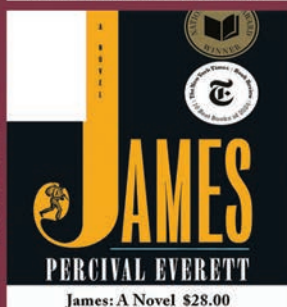
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