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COVER PHOTO

Maramec Spring Park, St. James, July 22, 2018, Randy Hughes, photographer.
Our Times

Welcome to the new look of the Missouri Times! We think you will enjoy the expanded coverage of SHSMO happenings and more photographs in a new, eye-pleasing format! We plan to issue the Missouri Times three times a year: spring, fall, and winter.

We have missed seeing you at our six research centers while we work from home to help keep our community safe. We have been closed since March 17 because of the COVID-19 pandemic. At this writing, it is unclear when we might reopen; SHSMO’s staff will follow the lead of our state and local officials while we wait for the danger to pass.

Meanwhile, we hope you have been able to join us on our live Zoom presentations to keep us learning, growing, and staying connected to each other. We are working from our homes on many projects, including educational materials for Missouri’s bicentennial and ongoing expansion of our digital collections, and we are planning ways to keep our patrons and visitors safe as we all rethink the use of our public spaces to reduce the spread of communicable diseases.

None of us has ever experienced anything quite like this, which makes us all both witnesses to and participants in the making of history. As I ponder that reality, I think of some of the momentous historical events I have witnessed, and their impact on me and us: the assassinations of John F. Kennedy and his brother Robert, and that of Martin Luther King Jr.; Neil Armstrong’s walk on the moon; the Vietnam War; Watergate and the Nixon resignation; the Challenger explosion; the fall of the Berlin Wall; the 9-11 attacks; the Iraq and Afghanistan wars; the election of the country’s first African American president. This event that we are party to now could be the biggest of all.

I do not know how or when this pandemic will end, or when we will feel safe again, but I do take solace and strength from the continuing study of our history. We have been through a lot together, we Missourians. We are a resilient, resourceful people. We are Missouri strong. And that will get us through this crisis.

Gary R. Kremer
Executive Director

Missourian Society

We are always looking for ways to let you know how much you are appreciated. Your generous giving continues to support us in carrying out our mission. The George Caleb Bingham Society recognizes donors who give $1,000 annually, but we want to recognize our most loyal supporters who have contributed even more.

In November 2019 the State Historical Society’s Board of Trustees established the Missourian Society. The Missourian Society celebrates and recognizes donors whose cumulative lifetime or deferred giving to SHSMO reaches $25,000 or more.

Missourian Society members are leaders and close friends of the State Historical Society of Missouri. They partner with us in our mission to pave the way for future citizens by lovingly preserving Missouri’s past at all of our research centers throughout the state.

Missourian Society members are invited to special private events throughout the year and throughout Missouri. When you join, you will be recognized on our website and in our Annual Report. For those who already qualify, an invitation will be sent in the coming months. We hope you will accept our thanks and join us to be recognized as a strong supporter of SHSMO.

If you are interested in learning about how you might qualify for the Missourian Society, please contact Cat Adams at adamscc@shsmo.org or 573-882-8415, or Monica Collins at collinsmw@shsmo.org or 573-882-0445.

Thank You!
THE STATE Historical Society is looking forward to having visitors stop by the art gallery at the Center for Missouri Studies to see a special exhibit commemorating the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, which gave women in the United States the right to vote. *Missouri Women: Suffrage to Statecraft* is on display through part of August. At the time of this writing, the gallery is closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but we will welcome back visitors when health officials deem it safe to do so.

Months of planning went into the exhibit, a collaboration between the Society and the Missouri Historic Costume and Textile Collection at the University of Missouri. The displays include period clothing similar to that worn by suffragists and more recent garments of SHSMO trustee Ann Covington, the first woman to serve on the Supreme Court of Missouri and to become its chief justice. Attire worn by Missouri’s first female US senators, Jean Carnahan and Claire McCaskill, as well as clothing worn by US Representative Vicky Hartzler and other trailblazing women is also in the exhibit. Special items on display include the pen used by Missouri Governor Frederick D. Gardner to sign the Presidential Suffrage Bill in 1919 giving Missouri women the right to vote in the 1920 presidential election.

Artworks curated by the Society include *Verdict of the People*, a lithograph designed by George Caleb Bingham showing women participating in a political gathering during the 1850s. An illustration by Gordon Grant from 1912 titled *Which?* shows a college graduate deciding between married life and a life as a suffragist.

“The exhibition is a great introduction to the topic of Missouri women’s history in the suffrage movement,” said Joan Stack, art curator of the State Historical Society. “These images and clothing allow us to explore history that may be less ‘dry’ than reading academic books.”

Nicole Johnston, manager of the Missouri Historic Costume and Textile Collection, said she discovered numerous objects and images during her extensive research for the exhibit. “While learning more about the role of a Maryville women’s band in the 1913 Washington DC suffrage parade, I came across a mention of an actual 1913 wool band uniform in a 2010 post by the Nodaway County Historical Society,” Johnston said. The band uniform is on loan for the exhibition.

Both curators agree that *Missouri Women* is one of the more unique suffrage exhibits, since it encompasses art, textiles, and later roles of women in Missouri politics on loan from ten Missouri collections. Photos and details of the exhibit are now available online at tam.missouri.edu/MHCTC/exhibit_suffrage.html.

This page: Period clothing displayed in the current Missouri Women: Suffrage to Statecraft exhibit at the Center for Missouri Studies. At bottom right is an original 1913 Missouri Ladies Military Band uniform on loan from the Nodaway County Historical Society. Learn more about this band in the April 2019 Missouri Historical Review online at shsmo.org.
MISSOURI is a confluence of different forces in nature. This coming together or meeting at crossroads is part of the state's history, geography, and culture. North met South in Missouri during the Civil War. The state's ragged landscapes and intertwined waterways offer a rhythm and tug, or "bump and hollow," as artist Thomas Hart Benton often described the natural contours of his home state. This tension holds true for the music uniquely made in Missouri or that came out of it.

The Music in Missouri exhibit, which debuted in the Wenneker Family Corridor Gallery at the Center for Missouri Studies in January and runs through the summer months, focuses on the state's distinctive regions and styles of music. SHSMO research center associate Clinton Lawson helped organize the exhibit, selecting the photographs on display and writing descriptions that provide historical context. "Missouri is a repository of different styles of music. There's mid-Missouri's contribution to ragtime, St. Louis's blending of southern blues, Kansas City's remake of New Orleans jazz, and Springfield's honkytonk roots," said Lawson.

Society staff member Kevin Walsh, the former longtime manager of a popular Columbia record store, has studied the influences of music in his adopted state of Missouri for many years. "The musicians didn't always come from Missouri, but their music came together here," said Walsh. "Missouri has become a repository of musical styles that go well beyond European influences. Not every state has parlor music and church singing like we have in Missouri to this day. We are unsophisticated in the very best sense of the word when it comes to music, and that influence is passed to each generation of Missourians."

While the exhibit highlights the works of Missouri musicians such as Scott Joplin, W.C. Handy, Charlie Parker, Buck Clayton, and Chuck Berry, it also introduces relatively unknown performers like Benny Sharp and the Sharpies, featuring Lil' Jessie, who would go on to become a dancer for Ike Turner's band. Featuring images held by the State Historical Society of Missouri, the installation is also a celebration of outstanding photographers like Thelma Blumberg, who meticulously captured the music spilling from St. Louis's Gaslight Square in the 1960s. Her work, along with works by many other photographers, can be accessed through the State Historical Society of Missouri's extensive digital collection. —BP
AMONG the cultural treasures of the State Historical Society of Missouri’s art collection are over 200 original illustrations Thomas Hart Benton created to illustrate novels by Mark Twain. The current exhibition On the Big River: Tom Benton Illustrates Mark Twain displays a selection of these drawings that showcase Benton’s often-ignored genius as an illustrator.

As a founder of the American Regionalist movement, Benton embraced the rolling, cinematic landscape of the Midwest and used its people as currency for his lithographs, paintings, and murals. By the 1930s he had become a cultural historian with a special interest in the circumstances under which history is created, and his Missouri and Indiana murals chronicled the evolution of technological and cultural change in rural America.

Having flirted with a populist brand of socialism in New York, Benton had become more practical by the time he repatriated to Missouri in the late 1930s, espousing Regionalism as an expression of American pragmatism.

At around this time, Benton accepted an invitation from the Limited Editions Club to illustrate the writings of fellow Missourian Mark Twain. The subscription-based book club paired classic fiction with well-known contemporary artists, placing affordable, high-quality illustrated books in the homes of a growing and increasingly culture-conscious middle class.

Tom Benton knew nineteenth-century Missouri, having spent a good part of his childhood traveling the state with his politician father. During these trips he absorbed the essence of Missourians’ everyday language,
music, and culture. Benton’s childhood instilled in him an appreciation for the rhythms of this regional vernacular, and his breezy and relaxed style in the Twain illustrations invokes a gauzy nostalgia for Missouri, which Twain referred to as his “half-forgotten paradise.”

The inspired pairing of Benton with Twain eventually produced illustrations for three books: The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, and Life on the Mississippi. Just as Twain adeptly captured the musicality of Missouri’s rural vernacular in language, the undulating fluency of Benton’s style was in harmony with Missouri’s rolling landscape and ubiquitous waterways. By allowing himself to set aside the rigorous design mechanics of his painterly work, Benton created a series of relaxed, sinuous line drawings sometimes overlaid with washes of ink or opaque watercolor gouache. Benton biographer Henry Adams likens these extraordinary drawings to the work of George Caleb Bingham, another artist who made vernacular life in Missouri his subject.

Visitors can see Benton’s Twain illustrations, together with other works by Bingham and Benton, at the State Historical Society of Missouri’s Center for Missouri Studies.

Kevin Walsh is a senior security guard for the SHSMO Art Gallery at the Center for Missouri Studies. He is the longtime host of a weekly radio show featuring mid-Missouri music, art, and culture on KOPN Radio in Columbia.
Ready for the Road
Bicentennial Photo Exhibit to Go on Statewide Tour

By Nick Hartman

AFTER receiving nearly 1,000 submissions as part of the My Missouri 2021 photograph project, representatives from the State Historical Society of Missouri selected 200 photographs to be featured in a statewide traveling exhibition. The selected photos represent Missouri’s cultural and physical landscape in all four seasons. The exhibition will travel across the state when it is safe for public viewings. Stops are planned at locations including Branson, Cape Girardeau, Independence, Joplin, Kirksville, Poplar Bluff, St. Joseph, St. Louis, and other places. The photographs can also be viewed at missouri2021.org.

Shelter Insurance Cos. is the platinum sponsor for the My Missouri 2021 photo exhibition and has covered half the cost for the exhibit’s design and fabrication. The exhibit was designed by PRO Expo Exhibits.

“Shelter Insurance is celebrating our 75th anniversary in 2021, and it is exciting to tie in with Missouri’s bicentennial,” said Anna Hargis, Shelter’s director of advertising. “Our company started in Missouri, and our corporate headquarters is here. While we’ve grown into a group of insurance companies doing business throughout the US and around the world, we haven’t forgotten our roots.”

The public is encouraged to reflect on what Missouri’s past can tell them about the state today as they view the exhibit. The photos invite viewers to discover new places, or to see familiar places in new ways. When the exhibition ends, the photographs will be preserved by the State Historical Society of Missouri and made accessible to teachers, students, researchers, and the general public for years to come.

Nick Hartman is a strategic communications associate for the Missouri Bicentennial.
Continued

My Missouri 2021 Photo Exhibition

Top:
A giant-sized chess set on the rooftop of the Kansas City Public Library, May 25, 2019, George Pettigrew, photographer.

Lightning flashes in the distance over Francis Quadrangle on the University of Missouri campus in Columbia, June 1, 2019, Liv Paggiarino, photographer.

Middle:

Bottom:
Saturday night at the Memorial Dakota Bronc Sisk Rodeo, Barnard, Nodaway County, August 10, 2019, Lori Wilson, photographer.

Minerva Candy Shop in Webb City, May 19, 2018, Alexander Carson, photographer.
“Breaking Barriers in History” Contest Theme Gives New Meaning to Unprecedented Time for National History Day

STERLING BROWN watched with admiration as his son, Devin, persevered with a stomach bug while putting the final touches on his National History Day in Missouri project. Figuring out the destruction of German defenses during D-Day could not wait, Devin Brown needed grit to finish the project in time for regional competition.

“This was a huge assignment, but one that Devin really enjoyed even when he wasn’t feeling very good toward the end,” said Brown, whose son recovered by the time his World War II project was judged at the regional competition.

The younger Brown said he was impressed by the courage needed for the harrowing invasion of Omaha Beach, the cleverness of tactics such as false audio signals and inflatable fake artillery pieces to confuse the Germans, and the heroism of a black medic, Waverly B. Woodson, who saved over 200 men while serving in a segregated US military.

Although Brown did not advance to the state competition, he said it was time well spent exploring history and “bouncing my ideas off my dad.” He expects that the experience will ultimately help him reach his goal of becoming a scientist and continuing to discover new things.

This year’s state competition looked much different from all previous years. After schools across Missouri closed their buildings and switched to remote learning because of the COVID-19 pandemic, NHD in Missouri followed suit. The state contest was held online in April.

Danielle Griego, who coordinates the NHD in Missouri program, said that instead of meeting face-to-face with judges, students presented exhibit panels through PowerPoint slideshows and uploaded their documentaries to the internet. The most significant change was in the performance category. Students provided scripts for judges to review to avoid being close to other actors in a live performance.

Learning that the contest would be moved online instead of being suspended was a welcome relief to students who spent many months preparing for competition. Rachel Kim, a junior at Liberty High School, said the quarantine made it harder to do research with libraries closed, but she found many resources online.

“Someday, students will choose this pandemic as their NHD project because we are living through an unknown moment in history right now. We are seeing the connection between learning about history and being a part of history,” said Kim.

Social studies teacher Derek Frielings of Lafayette High School in St. Joseph said he will miss the adrenaline rush he gets from seeing students cross the stage when their names are announced as contest winners. “Students will still be rewarded for their hard work,” said Frielings, who credits the quick actions of national and state organizers for ensuring the contest would still happen this year.

Winners from the state competition will take part in an online national contest in June. All winners and this year’s sponsors are listed at nhdmo.org. The State Historical Society of Missouri sponsors and organizes the annual contest, which involves over 5,000 students in Missouri each year. —BP
Historians Explore Missouri’s Past Diversity

The 62nd Annual Missouri Conference on History took place in early March, bringing together attendees from colleges, libraries, historical societies, and other institutions. Lindenwood University hosted the conference in St. Louis.

The State Historical Society assists the conference’s steering committee with organizing it each year.

Panel discussions this spring included topics ranging from African Americans in twentieth-century Missouri to dark episodes in Irish history, new perspectives on the presidency of Harry Truman, and looking at World War I through the lens of primary documents.

Students at Truman University presented a session of papers exploring Truman’s victory in the presidential election of 1948, his foreign policy related to Israel and its birth as a modern nation, and his relationship with FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover as the McCarthy era began.

“I found it intriguing how the president’s passion for history was in some ways a handicap when it came to formulating policy and interacting with his advisers,” said Jason McDonald, professor of history at Truman University, who moderated the panel.

Despite not having a college education, Truman served as his own historian in office without seeking the counsel of a professional scholar. Throughout his life, the president wrote and spoke often about history, and his study of the past gave him ethical and moral guidance during his years in political office. The student panelists agreed that their research led them to consider Truman a great president. “All of our leaders have flaws,” said panelist Benjamin Smythe. “But looking back, Truman was in many ways ahead of his time.”

Jason Roe, digital history specialist at the Kansas City Public Library and member of the conference’s steering committee, sat in on a panel that discussed women’s suffrage activities in Missouri during the
late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Roe said he was surprised by how little history was recorded by suffragists in Warrensburg, who were quite active in the movement. Their untold stories were rediscovered by undergraduate students at the University of Central Missouri during a project supervised by UCM history professor Sara Sundberg.

“I enjoyed the discussion related to the movement that our library and many organizations are celebrating this year with the passage of the 19th Amendment giving women the right to vote,” said Roe. “It’s neat to learn of their team approach that focuses on field research beyond the walls of the classroom.”

The conference’s keynote speaker, Walter Johnson, professor of history and African American studies at Harvard University, delivered his talk via Skype due to his university’s travel restrictions put in place before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in the Midwest. Johnson, who grew up in Columbia, Missouri, spoke on “Empire and the Limits of Revolution: St. Louis during the Civil War.”

Awards were given to two history students for papers presented at the conference. The Missouri Conference on History Student Paper Prize went to Cho-Chien Feng of Saint Louis University for “Order and Liberty: The Conservative Liberty in New York Loyalist Political Persuasion.” The Lynn and Kristen Morrow Missouri History Student Prize was awarded to Shannan C. Mason of Southern Illinois University–Edwardsville for “Nature Much Improved: The Curation of a Nineteenth-Century Neighborhood and Green Space.”

The conference awarded its annual Book Award to Brooks Blevins, Noel Boyd Professor of Ozarks Studies at Missouri State University, for A History of the Ozarks, Volume 2: The Conflicted Ozarks. The Lawrence O. Christensen Article Award went to Gregg Andrews, author of “A Pike County Lawyer Goes to the Penitentiary: The Strange Case of ‘Miss Lou’ Collins, 1921–1923,” published in the Missouri Historical Review.

As the conference ended, participants were enthusiastic about reconnecting with others in the state who have a passion for history, including Nancy Ehrlich of Independence, who has been coming to the conference for the past decade. Brought up mostly by her grandparents after her mother died, Ehrlich said she absorbed the conversations between her grandfather and uncles in the 1940s who liked to talk about history and politics, including a few stories about their infamous outlaw (distant) relatives Frank and Jesse James.

“This is vacation for me and I’m having a lot of fun here!” said Ehrlich. “I’ve presented on topics in the past, including this year, and I like the feedback that I get at the conference. It has improved my work.”

Another independent scholar, Laura Burnham, has been living in England for the past 10 years and recently came back to her home state. “This conference is a connection with my Missouri roots that I haven’t had in so long,” said Burnham after presenting her work on the civil rights movement in black history museums.

Next year’s Missouri Conference on History will be hosted by the State Historical Society in Columbia on March 10–12, 2021. —BP
We need your help! The State Historical Society is documenting how Missourians are experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020. Please consider submitting your story, journal, poetry, artwork, photos, and video to SHSMO’s online portal. Your contribution will give future historians, students, and other researchers a better understanding of this historic moment. Not in our lifetime have we seen daily life altered so drastically—stay-at-home orders have changed everything as we try to prevent more illnesses and deaths from this health crisis.

How has the pandemic affected your life? Your job? Your school and community? Where do you get your information about the pandemic? Have your opinions changed over time about the government’s response to the deadly virus? What are your fears and hopes as you look to the post-pandemic future? These questions are a few of the writing prompts we offer that can get you started as you consider your own observations.

Digital and scanned materials can be submitted online at shsmo.org/collections/covid in a variety of formats. Or if you have physical materials to contribute, a mailing address on the site tells you where to send them. You may remain anonymous, or you can add your name to the material donated. You can also add restrictions if you don’t wish for your material to be made available to the public for a certain period of time. Adults and also children with parental consent are welcome to submit their story. We encourage all ages to participate in this collection!

We are looking for materials that document your experiences such as self-isolation/quarantine, working essential jobs, working from home, and homeschooling, as well as what you might be willing to share about your personal medical experiences during this time. What are you doing at home to keep yourself entertained and connected to family and friends while you keep to “social distancing?” Are you doing something to help others in need at this time? What acts of kindness are happening in your community?

Missourians are resilient and helpful people who look out for their neighbors and communities. As we began the 199th year of Missouri statehood, did we ever imagine that a world pandemic would touch our lives so closely and without borders? Thank you for considering our request to help us document this crisis. If you have questions, please email us through the link provided on the COVID-19 collection site and we’ll get back to you.
Donated Newspapers Provide Valuable Records for Wayne County

By Bill Eddleman

A recent donation to the Cape Girardeau Research Center greatly improves the State Historical Society’s newspaper holdings from Wayne County and its vicinity. David Bollinger, president of the Wayne County Historical Society, donated over 70 issues he recently acquired of Missouri newspapers dating from 1865 to 1901. The donated issues were not in SHSMO’s collection, so they are a welcome addition that will aid researchers. Also included in this donation were three books by Cletis R. Ellinghouse that relate to Wayne County.

The historic newspapers provide valuable insights into the time period just after the Civil War. Divisions in the area were deep during the war, and the donated issues help reveal how the region dealt with these ruptures during Reconstruction. Additionally, legal notices and other records in the papers may not be available elsewhere, because Wayne County’s courthouse burned down, along with its county records, in December 1892.

Few Wayne County newspapers published prior to 1895 still survive. In fact, when Ellinghouse wrote *Swindled: Wayne County’s Turbulence*, 1868–1904, he had to rely on finding Wayne County newspaper items reprinted by other newspapers for the earlier time period.

Bollinger said the newspapers were discovered in a barn. The staff at the Cape Girardeau Research Center carefully flattened the papers. Some of them will require conservation work due to their fragile condition. All issues are currently in Columbia in preparation for microfilming, and the microfilm reels will eventually be available to the public.

Bill Eddleman is the associate director of the Cape Girardeau Research Center.

Missouri History College Class Begins at Center for Missouri Studies and Ends Online

M-I-Z-ZOOM! That became a new cheer—or cry—on the University of Missouri campus this spring as students turned to the online platform after the COVID-19 pandemic shut down in-class learning in March. The History of Missouri class taught by Sean Rost, SHSMO’s oral historian, completed the semester in a virtual classroom. Thirty-one undergraduates enrolled in the class, which was the first to be held in the Plassmeyer family classroom at the Center for Missouri Studies.

“The Plassmeyer classroom was great for our class as it allowed for a more intimate setting rather than a large lecture hall. Plus the Smart board allowed our students to interact with materials immediately,” said Rost. “I was hoping to bring in more materials from the stacks, but we were forced to go online before we could fully utilize the documents held at the Columbia Research Center.”

Students did get an opportunity to view items in SHSMO’s collections, including a Civil War diary of J.H.P. Baker, a Texas medical doctor who traveled with Confederate General Joseph O. Shelby and wrote about the war in Missouri, the Southern cause, and President Lincoln’s assassination, among other important subjects.

Rost said teaching the class reinforced his knowledge of the history of his own state. He recalled happening upon the grave of Moses Austin in Washington County on a trip to record an oral history interview in southeast Missouri. “We had just discussed Moses Austin and the establishment of mining in Missouri’s lead belt in class,” said Rost, who encourages all of us to find our own connections with the past. —BP
Once commonplace, Kewpie dolls are now highly prized collectibles found in flea markets, antique stores, and internet shopping sites. Wildly popular in the early twentieth century, the whimsical naked baby doll with a short top ponytail began as a cartoon character created by author and illustrator Rose O’Neill.

One of the most successful artists and illustrators of the early twentieth century, O’Neill moved from New York to the Missouri Ozarks and remained there for much of her working life. Her papers and some of her books are held at the State Historical Society, and some of her work was recently exhibited in the Center for Missouri Studies Art Gallery.

Before photographs became more widespread in magazines, illustrators provided many of the images accompanying articles and advertisements in popular publications. O’Neill worked frequently for Ladies’ Home Journal. In June 1909 she responded to a letter from the magazine’s editor, W. Martin Johnson, asking her to develop a character to compete with “The Brownies,” popular figures of small fairy-like men from Scottish folklore who appeared in comic strips and books. O’Neill responded by creating the Kewpie.

“For such a Palmer Cox page as you have in mind,” she wrote next to a sketch of her new character, “these little persons should engage in a series of exploits, shouldn’t they?” O’Neill believed the drawings should be accompanied by verses telling a story, which she would write. “Do not doubt me,” she wrote to Johnson, in case he was unsure whether she could write the verses herself.

When Kewpies were introduced in the December 1909 issue of Ladies’ Home Journal, O’Neill wrote the story that appeared with her drawings. “I have for a long time called these persons Kewpies—diminutive for Cupids—and it seems to me the name spelled so, might be amusing to children,” wrote O’Neill. She suggested that Kewpies should engage in mischievous antics, but be “innocent unsophisticated souls perpetually amazed at their own exploits and discoveries.” O’Neill disclosed that Kewpies were inspired to adopt their hairstyle from turnips they found in a barn, “and after that, in calm or gales, [they] waved their little turnip-tails.”

By 1912, dolls based on O’Neill’s illustrations were being manufactured in Germany, and “Kewpies” soon became a household name. O’Neill’s professional and personal letters from 1860 to the 1940s, including the letter to her publisher, document the rise to fame for herself and her creation. The collection, housed at the Springfield Research Center, is available online at digital.shsmo.org.

Erin Smither is the senior archivist at the Springfield Research Center.
Strict Enforcement Measures Saved Lives in St. Louis during the 1918 Influenza Pandemic

By A.J. Medlock

In the fall and winter of 1918–1919 a strain of influenza, commonly known as the Spanish Flu, wreaked havoc across the globe, leading to nearly 50 million deaths worldwide. In the United States, it disrupted daily life in ways that would not be seen again until the current COVID-19 outbreak.

Hardly any city or town was spared from the effects of the virus. With no vaccine or palliative treatments to combat the disease, the difference between life and death depended on nonpharmaceutical interventions, such as quarantines and social distancing measures to halt the spread of the virus. The city of St. Louis, under the direction of City Health Commissioner Max Starkloff, was one of the few local governments willing to impose these measures early enough to contain the virus and save lives.

After appearing initially in the early months of 1918, the virus began to dissipate in the spring and summer, only to reappear in late summer in military camps. With victory in World War I within sight, massive troop movements in the United States likely accelerated the disease’s transmission.

By October 4, 1918, nearly 500 influenza cases had been reported at Jefferson Barracks south of St. Louis. On that day Starkloff was granted emergency powers to contain the disease by St. Louis Mayor Henry Kiel and the city’s Board of Aldermen. The aldermen also approved an ordinance requiring physicians to report new cases of influenza, enabling Starkloff and the Health Commission to determine where the virus had spread. Starkloff, was one of the few local governments willing to impose these measures early enough to contain the virus and save lives.

Starkloff and the Medical Advisory Committee on October 6 that included Kiel and members of the business community, the Red Cross, and the US Public Health Service.

With the full support of Kiel, the Board of Aldermen, and the Medical Advisory Committee, Starkloff issued a proclamation on October 7 ordering all schools, churches, lodges, movie theaters, conventions, dance halls, and related public venues to close. Throughout October of 1918, Starkloff expanded these closures to include public attractions such as Forest Park and the St. Louis Zoo.

Starkloff and the Medical Advisory Committee complemented the measures with a robust educational
campaign that included distributing circulars and newspaper articles written by Starkloff.

By the time the virus dissipated in 1919, only 3,691 St. Louisans had died from influenza, compared to 14,000 deaths in Chicago, where city leaders had been slower to impose social distancing measures. The St. Louis example proved that proactive, nonpharmaceutical measures, backed by health professionals, politicians, and the public, could effectively impede a deadly virus.

A.J. Medlock is the senior archivist at the St. Louis Research Center.

The common name “Spanish Flu” came from news coverage of King Alfonso XIII of Spain, who fell ill from the disease early in the pandemic. The press was able to report freely on the king’s illness since Spain was not involved in World War I and was not under the censorship that blanketed countries at war. King Alfonso recovered from the deadly influenza, but the name for the illness stuck even though the virus did not originate from Spain.

Feuds, Runaways, and Route 66
Memories of Miller County

By Kathleen Seale

A new collection of papers at the Rolla Research Center tells the story of several early Miller County families who were the descendants of George Burton Morrow and his wife, Ethel Skaggs Morrow. Their story is told through personal papers, genealogical research, and photographs.

There are a number of interesting stories in the collection, including one about Ethel’s grandfather, Freeman Skaggs of Knox County, Tennessee. The elder Skaggs was a...
Confederate sympathizer who rode with General John Hunt Morgan in his final raid during the Civil War. Sometime after the war ended, a neighbor’s son came to Skaggs’s house. Thinking the man to be drunk and threatening, Skaggs shot through the door, killing his neighbor. As the family papers describe, there were obvious bad feelings between Skaggs and his neighbors after the shooting, so he sold his property and moved his family to Miller County in 1866.

In Missouri, Freeman Skaggs’s son, Gordon, met Mary E. Ponder, and they married in 1876. Gordon Skaggs became a prominent farmer and a presiding judge of Miller County. After 46 years of marriage, however, Skaggs went missing. The local newspaper speculated that he had been unable to get over the recent death of a son, reporting, “While no definite reason is known for his leaving, yet it is thought that his mind has been infected for a year or more.”

A 1922 newspaper article reported that Gordon Skaggs burned his personal belongings, including his beloved violin, and left home in his Ford Model T. A few weeks later a letter he had written to his son Herman arrived from Colorado Springs. In the letter he apologized to his family for leaving them and instructed that everything he owned be given to his wife and children. A few days after the postmark date on the letter, Gordon Skaggs was found dead on a trail on Pike’s Peak outside of Colorado Springs.

Another notable tale involves the Thompson-Crismon family feud in Miller County during the 1920s. Unsurprisingly, the feud’s origins are unclear and perhaps differ depending on which side is asked for the story. One report within the collection claims the family patriarchs, Grant Thompson and Fred Crismon, had a falling-out due to disagreements over Sunday school and school matters. After numerous altercations, the feud culminated in the deaths of Grant and Fred’s son Francis. The community and surviving family members seemed ready to let bygones be bygones—although Grant had died from a shot to the head, the official inquest, which apparently went unchallenged, lists his cause of death as exposure.

Less tragic stories in the Morrow and Skaggs family papers reveal family businesses owned and operated by George and Ethel Morrow along Route 66 west of Springfield, including a combination gas station, café, and barber shop. The family business kept going in the Great Depression until the late 1930s. Their youngest son, Johannas, opened a trucking company after becoming fascinated by the big trucks he saw daily on Route 66. Johannas’s drawings of trucks as a child are in the collection. In addition to running the trucking company, he hauled freight on the nation’s highways for more than three decades. Many of his trips were on Route 66, and materials in the collection bear witness to the changes along the Mother Road and its successor, US Highway 44.

Kathleen Seale is the senior archivist at the Rolla Research Center.
Foundations Commit $2.8 Million to New Headquarters for Kansas City Research Center

ADENE MORTON remembers the first time she visited the archives of the State Historical Society of Missouri’s Kansas City Research Center. It was 2009, and Morton was researching the first of four books she would write about the city she calls home. The Kansas City author remembers trying to find the research center’s obscure location on the top floor of Newcomb Hall on the University of Missouri-Kansas City campus. But first there was a hill to climb from the parking lot, and then a long flight of stairs.

“Coming back down from the building with materials in hand, I felt like a pack mule,” said Morton. That experience has her excited about the center’s plan to move to UMKC’s more accessible Miller Nichols Library, where there is plenty of easy parking nearby.

The Kansas City Research Center is another step closer to its goal of relocating to Miller Nichols as part of the library’s renovation plan. The Sunderland Foundation recently awarded $2 million and the William T. Kemper Foundation-Commerce Bank, Trustee granted $500,000 to fund the move and renovation work that will put the State Historical Society’s collections in proximity with other significant Kansas City archives housed at Miller Nichols.

Previously, the Miller Nichols Charitable Foundation awarded $250,000, and Steve and Marianne Noll have committed $50,000 to the $3 million project. The State Historical Society plans to raise an additional $2 million to create an endowment for its Kansas City Research Center.

The proposed new center will have 5,100 square feet, a significant increase from the 3,100 square feet available in Newcomb Hall. The larger space will allow the Kansas City center to store most of its collections on-site, with an automated system providing five-minute retrieval times to patrons requesting materials. The center currently stores many of its collections at the University of Missouri’s records center in Columbia, and delivery of materials can take up to two weeks.

For Morton, the quicker retrieval service will make it easier to meet her publishing deadlines. The larger space will also allow the State Historical Society to increase its public programming in Kansas City. Patrons and visitors will enjoy expansive views of the city’s downtown skyline.

Lucinda Adams, SHSMO’s associate director at the Kansas City Research Center, sees the move as an opportunity to attract generations of patrons to use the center’s resources. “We hold the largest local collection in Kansas City, with thousands of architectural drawings, the Jewish Community Archives, and photographs and other unique collections that document the vibrant history, growth, and development of Kansas City and Missouri,” said Adams. She envisions the new location as a gathering space for scholars, students, and community members. —BP
To honor the 75th anniversary of V-E Day on May 8, State Historical Society staff, students, and volunteers worked steadily behind the scenes to complete the digital collection of World War II letters now available to the public. The final letters in the collection went online on February 13.

In 2016, SHSMO began an ambitious project to provide online access to a large manuscript collection of World War II letters written by over 3,000 enlisted men and women from nearly all 50 states. The collection has been widely used by genealogists and historians who visit the Society’s research center in Columbia.

The collection began to take shape in September of 1945 when Kansas City radio broadcaster Ted Malone, the host of the nationally syndicated ABC show Between the Bookends, asked listeners to send in wartime correspondence to be considered for a book of war letters edited by University of Missouri professor W. Francis English. People from all over the United States were soon contributing letters written by their loved ones who had served in the war.

Although the book was never finished, the original promise to share these stories is now being fulfilled 75 years later by putting the letters online at digital.shsmo.org. Over a three-year period, dedicated volunteers, staff, and student workers scanned, transcribed, and added essential metadata to ensure the letters are keyword-searchable and easily accessible. Visitors to the site can group letters by date, location, and hometown of the service member. Researchers and scholars can tailor their searches to explore how the war impacted families and service members depending on where they were from and when and where they served.

The State Historical Society will continue to add to its World War II Digital Collection from other related manuscript collections. The Jean Schwarting Anderson papers, for example, provide a fascinating glimpse into the day-to-day life of a member of the Navy WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service) during the war.

The collection contains the correspondence of Jean Schwarting, who wrote letters home to her family in St. Louis and Mexico, Missouri, nearly every day of her training in Massachusetts and her service in Washington, DC, where she worked in communications. The lively and informative letters offer numerous details and insights into her experiences as a WAVE, providing a glimpse into the world of military women during World War II. Letters from family members add further perspective on life for Missourians on the homefront.

Heather Richmond is an archivist at the Columbia Research Center.
CAROL FULKERSON has spent her life showing up. It may be the causes she supports, her career in social work, or her time as a volunteer that drives her to be a good steward of people, the environment, and her beloved flock of more than 90 sheep. The shepherdess of Birch Cove Farm has been volunteering at the State Historical Society of Missouri for about ten years.

“I spend most of my time these days working on our sheep farm,” said Fulkerson. “Twice a week, I look forward to helping the State Historical Society and working with our staff, who are bright, inquisitive, and really fun to be around.” Much of Fulkerson’s volunteer work involves proofreading transcripts of oral histories.

Fulkerson compares her life’s journey to a long train ride with a few bumpy tracks but many interesting stops along the way. When she was younger, she didn’t think she would end up on a farm and enjoy it. That was the furthest thing from her mind while growing up as a cattle farmer’s daughter in Clinton County, Missouri.

“Oh, how I hated being isolated on a farm growing up,” said Fulkerson, who had dreams of college and big-city living. She did make it to college, studying sociology at the University of Missouri. And to the big city, finishing a master’s degree in social work at Washington University and then remaining in St. Louis after graduate school.

Fulkerson says her undergraduate work at MU was a watershed moment in her life. She attended the Columbia campus from 1969 to 1972 during the height of protests against the Vietnam War. She remembers being among the protesters on Francis Quadrangle along with her sociology professors. The peace movement gave her a chance to act on her long-held belief in racial and social equality. Fulkerson smiles broadly as she recalls riding to Washington in the backseat of a friend’s Volkswagen for a demonstration at the National Mall and a chance to listen to Country Joe and the Fish and Jefferson Airplane perform in front of 300,000 peaceful protesters.

Now retired, Fulkerson’s professional career once included clinical casework at hospitals in Missouri. In the 1980s she was the statewide coordinator for education and counseling in a program that helped families of children who had died from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome. She later taught sociology courses at William Woods University and eventually started Birch Cove Farm near Fulton with her husband, David Coplen, a retired librarian.

Under their care, Birch Cove Farm has grown from five acres to 80 acres today. Fulkerson and Coplen have rebuilt the soil on land that had been heavily strip-mined. Their Katahdin Hair sheep—raised for meat—play an important role in bringing their land back into productivity. The sheep feed on sweet clover seeds, helping to establish vegetation on the property. Through rotational grazing, the sheep are naturally restoring the land to fertile soil. Fulkerson and Coplen are committed to sustainable agriculture and have placed their farm in the Greenbelt Land Trust of Mid-Missouri so that it will continue to be designated as farmland after they are gone.

Raising sheep takes much time and effort, especially during birthing season from late January into March. With 85 ewes and a half-dozen rams to care for, the couple and their Maremma guardian dogs protect the flock and operate a successful business. When not tending sheep, Fulkerson and Coplen enjoy hopping a train for “Roots on the Rails,” expeditions that take them across parts of the country while listening to daily live concerts inside a vintage train car. Fulkerson finds time to squeeze in art classes and enjoys painting landscapes and abstracts. Some of her art has been on display at the Art House gallery in Fulton. She also loves to knit and shares her talent with the people she cares about.

“I’m not sure how many baby hats I’ve made, but I sure enjoy knitting a little stocking cap when I hear one of our staff members at the Historical Society is expecting a baby,” said Fulkerson. As she does with shepherding sheep, Fulkerson finds purpose in her volunteer work at the State Historical Society and the people who care for Missouri’s history. —BP
Looking Ahead

With the closure of the Center for Missouri Studies due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the current spring/summer exhibition schedule is being revised. Please check shsmo.org for updates on openings and closings.

Missouri Women: Suffrage to Statecraft
Art Gallery, Center for Missouri Studies
The State Historical Society of Missouri and University of Missouri Historic Costume and Textile Collection commemorate the centennial anniversary of women’s suffrage with the collaborative exhibition. Displays include clothing and artwork from statewide collections that highlight roles of Missouri women in the national suffrage movement, as well as trailblazing women in Missouri politics before and after ratification of the 19th Amendment.

On the Big River: Tom Benton Illustrates Mark Twain, Installment Three
Art Gallery, Center for Missouri Studies
This is the final installment of a yearlong exhibition showcasing examples of Thomas Hart Benton’s original watercolors and drawings for the Limited Editions Club publications of The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, and Life on the Mississippi. As a Missourian, Benton brought his own understanding of the landscape and people of the state to his illustrations, creating perceptive images that complement Twain’s prose.

Battle Lines: World War II Cartoons by Daniel Fitzpatrick,
The Final Years of World War II: May 1943 to August 1945
Art Gallery, Center for Missouri Studies
The St. Louis Post-Dispatch’s two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist, Daniel Fitzpatrick, chronicled the progression of WWII as it happened with powerful and poignant editorial cartoons. This final installment of a yearlong exhibition presents visual commentary on the final years of the war.

David Plank: Missouri on the Wing
Art Gallery, Center for Missouri Studies
Artist David Plank has devoted his life to the artistic study of Missouri’s birds. He recently donated many of his painting and drawings to the State Historical Society of Missouri. This two-part exhibition presents a selection of these artworks, and includes watercolors, field studies, and preparatory sketches.

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SAVE THE DATE
SHSMO Annual Meeting: November 7, 2020