



Columbia Scholar Awarded Center for Missouri Studies Fellowship in 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

COLUMBIA, MO, Dec. 5, 2019 – The State Historical Society of Missouri will award two Center for Missouri Studies fellowships in 2020 to scholars studying Missouri’s early statehood. One of the fellowship projects will examine Jesuit ties to slavery with the early state, while the other will explore the treaties with Native American tribes for land that became Missouri. Each will write a scholarly essay for publication in the *Missouri Historical Review* and may make a public presentation of their work.

Scholar and author Greg Olson of Columbia received a fellowship for his proposal, “White Man’s Paper Trail: Extinguishing Indigenous Land Claims in Missouri.” In his study, Olson will examine the treaties with Native Americans through which the United States sought legal claim to the land within Missouri. When Missouri petitioned for statehood in 1817, indigenous nations had ceded the rights to only a fraction of the land within the future state’s borders; clearing title to the rest took until 1837 and required negotiating 20 treaties with 13 Native nations.

“Many people think the land that became Missouri was bought from the Louisiana Purchase. But, that deal only gave the U.S. government the right to negotiate land from 13 different Native tribes,” said Olson. “Scholars and historians haven’t written about all of the work and documentation that went into the title of land in our state, so I hope this fellowship will be a piece of the larger picture on how Missouri became a state.”

Olson will explore the legal foundations behind U.S. claims to Native American property, as well as how the treaties became intertwined with the military and commercial interests of the state’s leaders, some of whom served as treaty negotiators.

Kelly L. Schmidt, a doctoral student at Loyola University in Chicago, was awarded a fellowship for her proposed study on how enslaved communities near St. Louis and St. Charles helped establish the Catholic Church in the region. Jesuit missionaries helped bring Catholicism to this region, but were among the French colonizers who introduced slavery within the territory that became Missouri.

The Center for Missouri Studies is the State Historical Society’s vehicle for carrying out its mission to promote and disseminate study and teaching of the state’s past. Founded in 1898, the Society collects, preserves, publishes, and makes available material related to all aspects and periods of Missouri history. SHSMO also provides educational programs on the cultural heritage of the state through its research centers in Cape Girardeau, Columbia, Kansas City, Rolla, St. Louis, and Springfield.

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