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COVER PHOTO

Evening on Main Street, Hannibal, Missouri, June 9, 2019. Photo by Wanda Parsons.
Kansas City Research Center Gears Up for Move to New Facility

By Lucinda Adams

The Kansas City Research Center is a few short months away from moving into Miller Nichols Library on the University of Missouri–Kansas City campus. Construction work for the center’s new home is under way, and the move from the current facility in UMKC’s Newcomb Hall is on schedule for completion by this fall.

The Kansas City center will expand from 3,100 square feet at Newcomb Hall to approximately 5,100 square feet at Miller Nichols. The bigger space will allow the State Historical Society of Missouri to store most of its Kansas City collections on-site—many of these collections are currently stored at the University of Missouri’s records center in Columbia. An automated system called the Roobot will deliver materials to patrons within five minutes after they are requested. Funding for the new facility was generously provided by the Sunderland Foundation, William T. Kemper Foundation, Miller Nichols Charitable Foundation, and Steve and Marianne Noll.

As construction continues, the Kansas City center’s staff members are busy preparing collections for the move, planning grand reopening events, and building displays to highlight selections from the center’s holdings.

The summer months will be spent recalling off-site collections to Kansas City, completing an updated inventory, and creating a catalog that the Roobot can follow when it retrieves items. The Kansas City staff is already working with the staff at Miller Nichols Library to plan outreach efforts, public programming, and academic classes.

Please be aware that the Kansas City Research Center will be closed from the beginning of July through August to allow time for the move. During this time, collections will not be available at the Kansas City center, and research requests should be sent to one of SHSMO’s other centers.

Lucinda Adams is the associate director of the Kansas City Research Center.
New Grant Helps Society Expand Art Collections Online

By Kimberly Harper

CULTURAL Institutions have faced many challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic; perhaps the most difficult has been engaging audiences from afar. A grant from the Institute for Museum and Library Services is helping SHSMO reach virtual audiences by funding efforts to put more of the Society’s art collections online.

The $141,030 award will allow SHSMO to create more digital copies of artworks, offering easier access and new learning experiences for people in Missouri and beyond. The grant period runs from November 1, 2020, through October 31, 2021. Images digitized during this time will complement exhibitions and programming associated with the commemoration of Missouri’s bicentennial.

Supported by the IMLS grant, the Society’s art department staff is expanding an online library of digitized artworks while also building a catalog with associated metadata. Grant money is being used to purchase equipment needed to create digital copies of 3,000 works, including nineteenth- and early twentieth-century imagery representing the indigenous people and native flora and fauna of the Missouri Territory before statehood. SHSMO is exhibiting works depicting native wildlife found in Missouri in 1821 during the state’s bicentennial year.

Among the most important artworks to be photographed and scanned are 723 photogravures by Edward Curtis, 151 hand-colored lithographs by Karl Bodmer and James Otto Lewis, 25 hand-colored lithographs by George Catlin, and 69 color lithographs by John Mix Stanley, Gustavus Sohon, and Isaac Stevens. The art team will also digitize over 2,000 nineteenth-century hand-colored and colored lithographs associated with portfolios and books by John James Audubon, Henry Lewis, George Catlin, Thomas McKenney, and James Hall.

Kimberly Harper is an editor at the State Historical Society of Missouri.

Missouri Students Compete in National History Day State Contest, Advance to National Competition

FOR THE SECOND straight year, National History Day in Missouri moved its state contest online in 2021. The contest, which culminated in a virtual awards ceremony on April 30, included 436 students presenting 283 history research projects, with 112 judges volunteering to evaluate their work. The students participating in the state contest had advanced from regional competitions around the state that were also virtual events this year.

Sixty students from Missouri will go on to the national contest after placing first or second in their competition categories at the state contest. The national contest will be held online from June 13 to 19.

Missouri’s state contest week included several virtual events in addition to the competition. Current college students met with NHDMO participants via Zoom to talk about their experiences and answer questions about pre-
paring for college. Amanda Morrison, a three-time NHD national competitor who now runs her own nonprofit organization, met online with current contestants to discuss how National History Day influenced her college experiences and career plans. It is not certain yet whether the competition in 2022 will be in-person, online, or a hybrid of the two.

“Although we’ve missed welcoming competitors to the Mizzou campus for the National History Day in Missouri state contest, it was great that there were no geographic barriers to participation this year,” said Maggie Mayhan, coordinator for NHD in Missouri. “Students could take part from any corner of the state and not have to worry about driving to a contest locale.”

**SHSMO Welcomes New Staff Members in Columbia**

Four new staff members have recently begun working for the State Historical Society of Missouri. All four are based at the Society’s Center for Missouri Studies in Columbia.

Jennifer King began her position as business administration manager in November. Her duties include assisting with the creation of budgets, developing and implementing fiscal and operational policies, managing departmental budgets, and overseeing the yearly audit. A lifelong Missourian, she previously worked as a senior program coordinator and executive assistant with the University of Missouri’s Trulaske School of Business. She holds bachelor’s degrees in business administration and management from Columbia College and in educational studies from William Woods University.

Daniel Haase, a part-time library information specialist at the Columbia center, was a student worker for SHSMO prior to beginning his new position in April. A native of Springfield, Missouri, he holds a degree in English literature from American University and a master’s degree in library information science at the University of Missouri. His previous experience includes volunteer work for MU’s Ellis Library, Daniel Boone Regional Library in Columbia, and Mercy Hospital library services in Springfield.

Isabelle Graves, a library information specialist in the Columbia Research Center, is a native of Chillicothe, Missouri, who grew up in West Virginia. A graduate of West Virginia University, she moved to Columbia in 2020 to pursue a master’s degree in library information science at the University of Missouri. She was a student research assistant for SHSMO’s manuscripts department last year. Her previous experience also includes cataloging archives for the Episcopal Diocese of West Virginia and working on an online music library database for KOPN radio station in Columbia. She began her new part-time position in April.

Aleksandra Kinlen, a manuscript specialist, was born in Fenton, Missouri, and has also lived in Springfield. She holds a master’s degree in history and a BSEd in secondary social studies from Missouri State University, as well as a master’s degree in library information science from the University of Missouri in Columbia. She began her part-time position in April.
More than 200 projects and events across the state are being celebrated this bicentennial year. There are service projects like the one in Holt County, where residents are collecting 200 pairs of socks for those in need. There is a challenge by the Missouri Community Service Commission asking Missourians to donate 200 hours of service to the state. Want to learn more about Missouri history and culture? The Story Center at Mid-Continent Public Library and the University of Missouri Extension Community Arts program have you covered. They offer programs that explore Missouri’s past through storytelling, workshops, and book conversations. Other bicentennial activities include walking tours, a time capsule, roadside markers, concerts, exhibits, and local festivals unique to Missouri.

Major public events are planned to commemorate the bicentennial in St. Charles, Columbia, Jefferson City, and Sedalia in August. There will be a mix of events in person and streaming in a virtual format. All COVID-19 safety measures will be in place, and some events may set limits for in-person attendance. Events and activities are subject to change.

Together for 21 Fest will be held August 5–8 at the Center for Missouri Studies and the University of Missouri campus in Columbia. The festival will include live music featuring the Little Dylan Blues Band from St. Louis, traditional Ozark music by the Kay Brothers, and the Kansas City Latin Jazz Orchestra. The festival will also feature folk art demonstrations, children’s programming, book talks and lectures, documentary film screenings, and bicentennial traveling exhibits, including the My Missouri 2021 photograph display and bicentennial quilts. A new virtual reality experience created by Mizzou’s engineering students and faculty will take visitors on a virtual tour of the 98 paintings in the Missouri: Heart of the Nation collection held at the University of Missouri Art and Archeology Museum. Visitors will experience the gallery through special VR goggles.

On Saturday, August 7, the First State Capitol State Historic Site in St. Charles will host a bicentennial commemoration at the place where Missouri’s first legislature met from 1821 to 1826 before the State Capitol was moved to Jefferson City. Family activities are being planned with festival music, vendors, and displays on Missouri’s statehood.

Bicentennial events are scheduled on Saturday, August 7, Monday, August 9, and Tuesday, August 10 at the State Capitol in Jefferson City. Public events include a Gold Star Memorial dedication on Saturday and the unveiling of the Bicentennial Bridge, which will take pedestrians and cyclists from the Capitol grounds to Adrian’s Island for an interpretive history of the state. On Statehood Day, August 10, the public is invited to a bicentennial ceremony at the Capitol to hear remarks by state dignitaries, poetry by Missouri Poet Laureate Karen Craigo, and music by the Missouri National Guard 135th Army Band and other performers. The Missouri bicentennial stamp, issued by the US Postal Service, will be unveiled and a proclamation signed by all living Missouri governors will be presented. A US naturalization ceremony will follow to welcome new citizens who are making Missouri their home. Visitors can also explore the State Capitol exhibits created for the bicentennial. Traveling exhibits, including the quilts made for the bicentennial, will also be on display. In the afternoon the public is invited to an ice cream social sponsored by Prairie Farms Dairy.

“Our Missouri Celebration” is the theme of this year’s Missouri State Fair as the bicentennial takes the stage August 12–22 with exhibits and activities to commemorate Missouri statehood. While the larger bicentennial events will wrap up at the conclusion of the State Fair, there will still be more to celebrate, such as the Northeast Missouri Old Threshers annual show in September with an expanded show of tractors and steam engines spanning Missouri’s 200 years.

Learn more by visiting missouri2021.org and following @missouri2021 on social media. We hope you make plans to experience this once-in-a-lifetime celebration as Missouri comes together for ’21.

Beth Pike is senior strategic communications associate for the Missouri Bicentennial.
A NEW BICENTENNIAL program encourages families, friends, and individuals to learn more about the history of the Show-Me State by visiting some of the places that make Missouri unique. Participants in the Missouri Explorers Program will receive merit buttons for completing challenges to visit designated locations within the state. They are also asked to take a photo of each stop and share photos on social media using the hashtag #MoExplorers.

When the program launched in early spring, it received enthusiastic support from Missourians. By the middle of March, a St. Louis family had completed the Get Your Kicks in St. Louis challenge, becoming the first to earn a Missouri Explorers badge.

Organizations across the state are taking part in the Explorers Program to promote their cultural and historical heritage. Other program challenges include visits along the German Heritage Corridor and on the famous Mother Road, Route 66. Explorers can learn about Missouri’s native peoples by taking the Native American Heritage Challenge. Another destination is the Boone’s Lick Road, the first main road to the west from St. Charles into Howard County. There are also challenges to tour historic Missouri cemeteries and towns and discover the innovators, entrepreneurs, and leaders who helped shape the state’s history and culture.

“We’re so excited by the level of interest, and how families, especially, are using the challenges to learn and pass along the heritage of our state to the next generation,” said Morgan Dennehy, bicentennial projects coordinator and self-described “den mother” of the Missouri Explorers program. “After this year-long period of isolation during the pandemic, we hope to encourage Missourians to travel safely, spend quality time together, and get to know their state and their own hometown a little better.”

The Missouri Explorers Program is free and open to the public, but registration is required to receive merit buttons. Guides to each challenge are listed on the missouri2021.org website under Missouri Explorers. Organizations interested in sponsoring a new challenge may inquire about the program by sending email to contact@missouri2021.org. —BP

Missouri Explorers participants earn merit buttons for completing the program’s challenges.
A PATCHWORK OF PLACE

WHEN THE State Historical Society of Missouri began planning for the bicentennial, its staff was looking for ways to connect Missourians through their common interests and shared values. What organizers found, however, is that Missouri can be a pretty diverse place. It’s hard to put a finger on what that “shared somethingness” might be, said Michael Sweeney, bicentennial coordinator for the State Historical Society. But one idea was to create a bicentennial quilt that stitched all parts of the state together.

“I was making my way across the state, talking to folks in every county,” said Sweeney. “I asked how they would like their county to commemorate Missouri’s 200 years and shared our idea of making a Missouri Bicentennial Quilt that would bring us all together.” Sweeney said most counties were eager to join the effort that would become a patchwork quilt representing all 114 counties and the independent city of St. Louis.

Quilt block submissions were accepted through late summer of 2019. Meanwhile, the State Historical Society teamed up with Missouri Star Company, in partnership with the Missouri State Quilters Guild, to piece the quilt together. A committee chose 115 blocks from the 203 submitted. The quilt also features six special blocks that represent the project’s key supporters. The blocks form a patchwork of place, offering a unique view of the people, events, and stories that have shaped Missouri through its first 200 years of statehood.

There are the fall colors of a beloved champion Burr Oak designed for a quilt block representing Boone County. The tree, the largest of its kind (tied with another in Kentucky) took root near what is now the town of McBaine a century before Lewis and Clark passed nearby on the Missouri River.

Further upriver in St. Joseph, the designer of Buchanan County’s quilt block created an abstract impression of the jumping-off point for pioneers heading west on the Oregon Trail. Six light-colored diagonal blocks depict the road, while adjacent blue squares represent the dangers of the trip. The dark brown triangles symbolize the Big Muddy—the Missouri, longest river in North America.

Dunklin County’s quilt block represents southeast Missouri’s Little River Drainage District, constructed in
the early part of the twentieth century to drain swamp-lands for farming. Rice, corn, cotton, and other agricul-tural products are featured in the block to illustrate how the largest drainage district in the United States contrib-utes to Missouri agriculture.

From the state’s southwest corner, Newton County’s quilt block displays a portrait of George Washington Carver. Born into slavery, Carver became famous for his scientific research with peanuts, sweet potatoes, and other undervalued crops. Meanwhile, in the quilt block representing Missouri’s largest city, the words “St. Louis, Missouri” are written in braille to represent the home of the Missouri School for the Blind. Established in 1851, it was the first educational institution to adopt braille and the home of the first braille printing press.

While the quilt’s colors and patterns tell stories about what it means to be a Missourian, Sweeney said it is the people who created each block that make the bicenten-nial quilt special. “A teenager in Oregon County worked with her 72-year-old grandmother to design their county quilt block,” Sweeney said. “Douglas County, home of the Missouri Fox Trotters, features the horse ‘Duke,’ who was the block-maker’s father’s horse.” The block includes a photo of the father sitting in a saddle on his horse. “That made it extra special to see the inspiration behind this quilt block at a personal level,” added Sweeney.

The quilt is traveling across the state and is on display in 2021 along with other quilts made for the bicen ten-nial by organizations such as Missouri 4-H and Missouri State Parks. Several counties have also created their own quilts to commemorate the bicentennial. To see all the quilt blocks designed for the Missouri Bicentennial Quilt and where it will be traveling this year, visit missouri2021.org.

**Scoops Across Missouri:**
Statewide Ice Cream Social
Added to Bicentennial Plans

ICE CREAM aficionados have much to claim in Missouri. Towns across the state boast that they have the best ice cream. Period. You can trace the state’s tradition to the 1904 World’s Fair in St. Louis, where ice cream cones were such a hit that many believed they were invented there. It’s no wonder that state lawmakers named the ice cream cone as the official state dessert of Missouri in 2008.

As plans for Missouri’s bicentennial were put in motion, State Historical Society trustee Anne McGregor made a suggestion that would put this sweet frozen treat at the forefront of a statewide celebration. McGregor’s idea was for the Bicentennial Commission to back an ice cream social that could be held throughout the state in any community that wished to participate. Whether at parks, on porches, in backyards, or out to the ball game, Missourians sharing the experience of an ice cream social on Statehood Day seemed like a perfect way to celebrate Missouri’s 200th birthday.

“Our history is complex,” McGregor said. “An ice cream social is a way to take a moment to pause as family, friends, and neighbors, and to reflect on where we’ve come as Missourians these past 200 years. Between the challenges, failures, and triumphs, we have learned to make Missouri ours to own. A shared ice cream social is a very sweet way to recognize that.”

If your community or organization would like to organize an ice cream social on August 10 and be part of the official bicentennial celebrations, register your event at missouri2021.org and send us your photos when it happens. We will be sharing photos from ice cream socials under the hashtag #ScoopsAcrossMissouri. Please follow recommended precautions for social distancing.  —BP
IN RECENT YEARS, history scholarship has grown beyond traditional regional subfields such as the South, the West, and the East Coast and engaged more meaningfully with other parts of the United States. The Ozarks and its distinctive past has become an inviting subject for a variety of scholars. One of the region’s most prominent historians is Brooks Blevins, the Noel Boyd Professor of Ozarks Studies at Missouri State University. A native of Violet Hill in the Arkansas Ozarks, Blevins’s books include the first two volumes of his History of the Ozarks trilogy (the final volume is planned for release later this year). He also serves on the editorial advisory boards of the Missouri Historical Review and the Arkansas Historical Quarterly. State Historical Society of Missouri editor Kimberly Harper interviewed Blevins this spring for the Missouri Times. Their conversation, reproduced here, has been edited for length.

Who or what inspired you to become a historian? Why Ozarks history?

I have no idea why, but I can’t remember ever not being interested in history. It probably helped that I grew up a quarter mile from my grandparents on the family farm, in a community filled with their siblings and other kinfolk, many of whom liked to tell stories about the old days. Whether we were working in the fields or eating dinner under the oaks on Decoration Day, the past and the present entwined in an almost imperceptible fashion. Why Ozark history? Most scholars and writers are on paths of self-discovery. For me that path has been a regional one—exploring the place where my ancestors settled more than two centuries ago. It’s baldly self-indulgent.

Scholars have paid relatively little attention to the Ozarks until recently; why?

The literature on the Ozarks, like Appalachia, was so dominated by folklorists and local colorists that historians pretty much ceded that ground until the 1970s/80s. Besides, regional history (outside of the big ones like South and West or a place like New England, which generations of scholars treated like the United States in miniature) wasn’t really much of a thing until comparatively recently. The New Social History movement opened the door for this and so many other kinds of history we take for granted today.
What areas of Ozarks history are the most overlooked?

There is no shortage of overlooked and undercooked portions of regional history, but the first one that comes to mind is women’s history. Janet Allured’s unpublished 1988 dissertation (“Families, Food and Folklore”) at the University of Arkansas was ahead of its time, but there’s been very little follow-up. Slavery is another topic that deserves more attention, as do religion, political history, and the immigration of Latinx, Asians, and Africans in the past three decades. There’s a good dissertation and/or book waiting to be written about the Depression/New Deal in the Ozarks, too.

What collections at the State Historical Society of Missouri were useful when you were conducting research for your History of the Ozarks trilogy?

I must have made use of more than two dozen SHSMO collections for the trilogy—and probably skimmed that many more. Given my concentration on the Ozarks, the Rolla Research Center became ground zero for me during my research. There were a number of collections I used extensively: the John James Sitton Collection, the Rountree Family Diary and Reminiscences, the Roller Family Papers, the Henry Beeson Flanner Collection. There were others that I researched heavily, even if that research shows up only sparingly in the trilogy: the Robert S. Wiley Collection, the Paul A. Wobus Papers. But I also benefited from collections housed at Columbia, like the Dunlap Family Papers. I probably spent more time in the Leo Drey Papers (which were shipped to Springfield from St. Louis) than in any other single collection.

What do you enjoy more—research or writing?

That has changed over the years. As a young scholar I think I derived more pleasure from doing research, but as I’ve gotten older, while I still enjoy archival work and other research, I really look forward to writing. I suspect that’s a pretty natural progression. As a young scholar you have to put in that time in order to have something meaningful and substantive to write about. And you have to learn the intricacies of writing well. I feel a greater mastery over that process now—and often a greater impatience. I despise having to break the rhythm of writing to cobble together a long endnote, but I reckon that’s still how we do things.
What’s something that got cut from one of your books that you wish you had kept?

A couple of things come to mind. In an early draft of *Ghost of the Ozarks* one of my chapter-opening vignettes featured a brief story on a traveling circus in the rural Ozarks. I took it out after one of my readers thought it was a poor fit. But I really liked that intro and think it worked well; I wish I had trusted my instinct more in that situation. More recently, I severely reduced a substantial section on the Public Enemy era in the Ozarks for volume 3. There’s still a little bit in there, but it’s not nearly as fleshed out as it was. In this case, it was simply a matter of space. I had to cut more than eighty thousand words from my first draft to whittle it down to match the size of the first two volumes. I could do a fourth volume just from the “outtakes.”

What do you hope readers take away from your books?

Most of my books sit at the intersection of myth and reality. Almost everyone has been exposed to the stereotypes of the Ozarks, so we think we know what the region is all about. But the real story is always different from the popular image.

What book are you reading right now?

I remember years ago watching an interview with historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr. on C-SPAN 2’s Book TV. When asked that same question, he admitted that he rarely read anything that didn’t pertain to whatever project he was working on at the time. It made me feel like less of a dolt, because I tend to be the same way. Plus, I usually read multiple books at once. It sounds confusing, but if you situate them just so on the table, it works. So, most recently I finished several books on eugenics history and literature, including Christine Rosen’s *Preaching Eugenics*, and I read Elisabeth George’s 2019 dissertation on gay and lesbian life in southwest Missouri—with a sidebar in Michael Montgomery’s *Dictionary of Smoky Mountain English*. More importantly, while waiting in the grocery store checkout line, I discovered *I Am Captain Kirk*. It’s a quick read with attractive illustrations. Chekov gets short shrift, but it’s a surprisingly useful primer for anyone preparing to binge watch the 1960s *Star Trek* or the ’70s animated series. Well done, Little Golden Books.

What books would you recommend our members read?

I’ll stay in my lane and stick with the Ozarks—or at least the hills and mountains. The late cultural geographer Terry Jordan-Bychkov’s *The Upland South* is a brief book that deserves a bigger audience. Some of the best cutting-edge scholarship on the Ozarks of the last generation has been written by historical archaeologists, both in Missouri and Arkansas, but these studies rarely make it into the hands of historians. The various publications emanating from Fort Leonard Wood are good examples. The departed Ozarker who most deserves a rediscovery in the twenty-first century is Ethel Strainchamps. I love her 1965 memoir, *Don’t Never Say Cain’t*.左：隆·乔丹在阿肯色州范农顿的一张照片来自温斯·兰多夫的《Ozark Folksongs》。右：一个“文化事务组”在密苏里州森尼卡，大约1900年。
Are there any fiction books or movies that you believe capture the Ozarks well?

Donald Harington’s fictional Stay More is on the Arkansas side of the region, but it’s the closest thing we’ve got to an Ozarks Yoknapatawpha—and Harington’s The Architecture of the Arkansas Ozarks is at the top of the heap of Ozarks novels. Daniel Woodrell is best known for Winter’s Bone, but I’m partial to Tomato Red, which is also set in his fictional version of West Plains. You can’t go wrong with Winter’s Bone, a film that captures the gritty, cluttered poverty of the backroads, even if the meth-dealing subculture at its heart remains foreign to most of us. The ’70s saw a handful of low-budget films shot in the Ozarks, including movies starring Robert De Niro and Peter Fonda, but my favorite is Charles B. Pierce’s 1974 film Bootleggers. It was shot on location in the White River country of Arkansas, it featured lots of locals as extras, and it introduced the few people who saw it to Jaclyn Smith, before Charlie’s Angels made her a star. Slim Pickens made a brief appearance on screen, too. Checkmarks across the board.

Besides home, what’s your favorite place in the Ozarks?

For as long as Betty Henson is still there, Champion, Missouri. And Bruno, Arkansas. I have my reasons.
New Collections Expand Understanding of Maplewood Business History

By Zack Palitzsch

Among the newest collections available at the St. Louis Research Center are the papers of the Fennell and Kalb families. Both families hailed from Maplewood, Missouri, and owned businesses that served the local community for generations.

The Fennell Family Papers begin with Katherine Carpenter (1880–1963) and Floyd A. Fennell (1880–1923), who married in 1904. Fennell owned and operated F. A. Fennell Landscape and Gardener, a landscaping business on the eastern corners of Laclede Station Road and Rannells Road in Maplewood. This property also served as the home for the Fennells and their five children. The house was located on the northeast corner; the southeast corner was where they kept their stables with several horses and wagons for hauling equipment, sod, and plants. The Richwood Terrace apartment complex now occupies the site.

Following Floyd’s death in 1923, Katherine remained on the property with her children, but the landscaping business folded. Their son Robert followed in his father’s footsteps by opening R. W. Fennell Landscaping, which he operated part-time while holding other jobs such as serving on the Maplewood Police Department and working as an inspector for Cupples Aluminum Products.

The Fennell Family Papers contain photographs, correspondence, a contract book, and diary entries pertaining to family members and their businesses. Among the notable items are photographs of Floyd Fennell’s landscaping business and Nancy Fennell Hawkins’s self-published memoir, I Remember When: Memories of Growing Up in Maplewood, Missouri, 1936–1954.

The Kalb Family Papers document the people behind another long-standing business in Maplewood. After its founding by Ralph Tennent Kalb Sr. in 1909, the Kalb Electric Company was operated by three successive generations of Kalbs. The business, still in existence, is on Big Bend Boulevard near Manchester Road and features a vintage “Kalb Electric Since 1909” sign on its storefront. Kalb also served on the Maplewood City Council from 1941 to 1955. He convinced the council to charge an entrance fee for access to Maplewood’s public pool, and to use that extra income to purchase the city’s first fully equipped ambulance. In the early 1950s, Kalb suffered a heart attack while running for election as Maplewood’s mayor, causing him to withdraw from the race. The same ambulance he convinced the council to purchase transported him to the hospital.

Kalb stepped down from the council in 1955 and passed away in 1956. The family remained involved in the business until 2012. The Kalb Family Papers contain advertisements, correspondence, patents, photographs, and a scrapbook on the Kalb family and Kalb Electric Company. For more information about these Maplewood families and businesses, contact the St. Louis Research Center at stlouis@shsmo.org.

Zack Palitzsch is an archivist at the St. Louis Research Center.
HOUSED in the Cape Girardeau Research Center’s Regenhardt Family Papers are a postcard and program from William Howard Taft’s historic visit to Cape Girardeau. The US president’s flotilla of twenty steamboats was traveling down the Mississippi River to attend the Great Waterways Convention in New Orleans when it made a brief stop in the Missouri river town on October 26, 1909. The trip was part of a 13,000-mile presidential tour of the western and southern states that began on Taft’s fifty-second birthday, September 15, in Boston.

On October 25, boats carrying almost 3,000 dignitaries launched from St. Louis. Governors from 32 states and 177 US senators and representatives were among those who accompanied Taft. The purpose of the event, sponsored by the St. Louis Business Men’s League and the Lakes-to-Gulf Deep Waterway Association, was to give the president and other officials a firsthand look at “the commercial necessity and possibilities of deepening the Mississippi River.” The entourage made stops in Cape Girardeau; Cairo, Illinois; Memphis; Helena, Arkansas; and Natchez, Mississippi, before disembarking in New Orleans for the Great Waterways Convention from October 30 to November 2.

The group’s arrival was a momentous occasion for Cape Girardeau, as no previous sitting president had ever visited the community. Thousands of people greeted Taft when he arrived, with many arriving the day before on special trains.

Taft arrived at 6 a.m. on October 26 and was escorted to the State Normal School (now Southeast Missouri State University) by an honorary bodyguard and local businessmen Edward F. Regenhardt, Fred Naeter, and W. H. Harrison. Mayor Merit E. Leming introduced the president, who gave a twenty-minute speech before planting a tree. Taft then departed at 7 a.m. for Cairo. His visit is memorialized today in one of the vignettes painted on the city’s floodwall. Since Taft’s visit, Cape Girardeau has been visited by Presidents Reagan, Clinton, and Trump. In addition to the materials on Taft’s visit, the Regenhardt Family Papers also include items such as documentation for the Regenhardt Construction Company, records of the family’s involvement in the construction of Academic Hall on the campus of Southeast Missouri State University, and muster rolls of Company B, 56th Enrolled Missouri Militia during the Civil War.

Garret Kremer-Wright is an archivist at the Cape Girardeau Research Center.
WHEN James Longstreet Cleveland died on July 1, 1938, newspapers across the country took note. In Indiana, the South Bend Tribune’s headline read, “Death Takes Self-Styled Hapsburg Son.” The St. Louis Post-Dispatch asserted, “Missourian Who Denounced Claim to a Throne Dies.” The Philadelphia Inquirer reported, “Hapsburg ‘Heir’ Dies in Colorado.” Cleveland’s story captured the imagination of the country, as stories of tragic royal romances are prone to do. But in this instance, the subject was a small-town farmer and political hopeful from Boone County, Missouri, whose papers are held at the State Historical Society.

James Longstreet Cleveland was born James Cleveland Longstreet on June 19, 1889, in Hot Springs, Arkansas. According to press accounts, he was the product of a romance between Crown Prince Rudolf, son of Emperor Franz Joseph of Austria, and Princess Yourievsky, the youngest daughter of Russian Tsar Alexander II. The crown prince, who had several mistresses, died months earlier on January 30, 1889, in an apparent suicide pact with one of them, the Baroness Mary von Vetsera of Austria. It was during this time that the Russian princess, supposedly another of Rudolf’s romantic flings, fled to the United States to give birth to a son, James. Princess Yourievsky returned to Europe, and James was placed in St. Ann’s Orphan Asylum in St. Louis on November 4, 1890.

Being an orphan did not hold James back. He was taken in by John and Sarah (Sally) Lyons of St. Louis, whose own child had died, and treated as a son. Sally’s father was James C. Gillaspy, a sheriff, tax collector, mayor, and state legislator from Boone County.

By 1913 James Longstreet was living in Port Townsend, Washington. During World War I he enlisted and served overseas in the US Army Corps of Engineers. After the armistice, he was a member of the American Peace Commission in Paris. He returned to the state of Washington after the war and ran as a Democrat for the US Senate in 1922. Longstreet lost that race, and by 1925 he had returned to Missouri, where he worked for the Gillaspy family in Columbia.

He proceeded to make a life for himself in Providence, Missouri, a once-bustling Missouri River town south of Columbia. Longstreet is listed in the 1930 census as a forty-year-old farmer; local newspapers reported he owned most of Providence. For reasons left unexplained, he changed his surname to Cleveland in 1932. On July 6, 1933, he married Jessie Gertrude Perry; the couple had one son, also named James. Cleveland unsuccessfully ran for Congress in 1932 and the US Senate in 1934 and 1938.

Unfortunately, Cleveland did not enjoy good health. He spent time in the West trying to recover from various ailments, but the change in climate did not do much to help. Cleveland died in Colorado Springs on July 1, 1938, at the age of forty-nine. During his congressional races, his possible ties to Hapsburg royalty were often mentioned in the papers. Upon his death, the story exploded again.

Cleveland never publicly confirmed nor denied his royal heritage. He was reportedly encouraged by Countess Maria Larisch of Austria to claim his lineage as the son of Crown Prince Rudolf. He indicated little interest in pursuing the claim when he was quoted in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch on July 31, 1934, as saying, “I would rather be a dirt farmer in Boone County than Emperor of Austria even if I could attain the throne.” While the Cleveland-Gillaspy Papers at SHSMO’s Columbia Research Center do not answer the mystery surrounding Cleveland’s parentage, they offer correspondence, legal papers, photographs, and miscellany to researchers interested in the life of this Missouri enigma.

Laura R. Jolley is assistant director, manuscripts, at the State Historical Society of Missouri.
MISSOURI has a deep history of private academies in rural communities that valued education. The state’s small towns were once populated by schools like Ursuline Academy in Arcadia, Union Independent Academy in Laketon (now Lake Spring), and Dadeville Academy in Dadeville. As expressed in Dadeville Academy’s 1899 catalog, educators who opened these schools believed “no place [was] better suited for the location of a school that aims at the harmonious development of body, mind and morals, than the quiet American village.”

The State Historical Society holds numerous collections documenting these now-defunct schools. One example is the Iberia Junior College Collection, housed at the Rolla Research Center. The school was founded in Miller County by G. Byron Smith and his wife, Mabel, who came to Missouri in 1889. It was officially incorporated on March 30, 1891. The original charter and subsequent amendments required that at least two-thirds of the board members be Congregationalists.

One notable structure on the twenty-acre campus was an old log cabin that originally belonged to Frank and Ester Schell. Born into slavery, the Schells moved from Arkansas to Miller County after the Civil War and raised their three children on a small farm. The Schell property was purchased by the school in the early 1890s, and the cabin became a laundry facility and place for weaving instruction.

During World War II, shortages of labor and materials as well as limited funding linked to the school’s tradition of low tuition meant that the campus was in sore need of maintenance and repair. In 1947, Smith resigned the presidency due to age and health concerns and turned the job over to Dr. Forrest Brown. Over the next four years, Brown sought to revitalize the school by rebranding it as Conservation College. The school was beyond reviving, however, and closed its doors after its final thirteen graduates celebrated commencement in 1951. Iberia merged with Drury College, and Drury transferred all course work to its Springfield campus and also absorbed the school’s alumni activities.

In 1980 the four remaining buildings—a dormitory, a gymnasium, the administration building, and the president’s house—were listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Today only the administration building remains intact, a lone surviving testament to the hopes and dreams of the school’s founders. Researchers interested in the Iberia Junior College Collection should contact the Rolla Research Center at rolla@shsmo.org.

Kathleen Seale is the senior archivist at the Rolla Research Center.
Volunteer Spotlight
Mahree Skala

BY KIMBERLY HARPER

It probably came as no surprise to Mahree Skala’s friends and family that after she retired from a long career in public health—first as a field epidemiologist and administrator at the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, and then as executive director of the Missouri Association of Local Public Health Agencies—she chose to devote her time to serving others. Skala volunteers with numerous organizations, including her church and the Literacy Action Corps, the League of Women Voters, and United Way in Columbia. She began volunteering at the State Historical Society of Missouri in 2017.

Skala said her choice to volunteer at the Society stems from her interest in the past. “My appreciation of history has grown as I’ve gotten older,” she said. “I’m especially interested in the World War II generation because that was such a formative event in my parents’ lives.”

At SHSMO she has transcribed materials ranging from World War II letters to property records in early nineteenth-century Howard County and interviews of Bootheel Missourians recorded in the 1980s and 1990s for Marshall Dial’s The Stories They Tell radio program. Dial’s interviews featured longtime residents of southeast Missouri who could talk about growing up in the region in the early twentieth century.

Skala noted that collections such as the Dial interview transcripts and the World War II letters connect us to our history in ways that would not be possible without such firsthand accounts. “The soldiers’ personalities really come through,” she said of the wartime correspondence. “There was one young officer who wrote over 600 letters to his mother, all very self-absorbed, lots of complaints about his laundry and other inconveniences. I didn’t have to type all 600, fortunately! Then there was a WAC who ran a radar site in Arkansas where pilots were being trained and who kept up a correspondence with a USO hostess she had met in Kansas City. Probably the cutest was a young soldier who had been raised in an orphanage and wrote to his priest because he was getting married and needed guidance. He said he understood the spiritual aspects of marriage but could really use help with the physical aspects, and asked the priest to please send him a pamphlet.”

In addition to her activities as a volunteer, Skala takes Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes classes in history, literature, and current events, and devotes time to her “favorite pastimes,” reading and knitting. “I think I have knitted more in the last year than in the 10 years before the pandemic!” she said.

Other activities, such as the two choirs she sings in, have been put on hold during the past year. “I thought volunteering to do transcription work was perfect for me, since I can do it at home at odd hours,” Skala said. “Since the pandemic, it has been one of the few ways I could volunteer.”
Looking Ahead

Please check the Society’s website at shsmo.org for further announcements on upcoming events.

Together for 21 Fest
August 5–8, Center for Missouri Studies and University of Missouri–Columbia campus
This festival at multiple Columbia locations kicks off celebrations of Missouri’s bicentennial in August 2021. Events include live music, children’s programs, folk art demonstrations, documentary film screenings, book talks, and bicentennial traveling exhibits.

Bicentennial Commemoration at First State Capitol
August 7, First State Capitol State Historic Site, St. Charles
Activities at the site where the Missouri General Assembly met from 1821 to 1826 will include festival music, vendors, and displays on Missouri’s statehood.

Bicentennial Events at the Capitol
August 7–10, State Capitol Building, Jefferson City
Three days of bicentennial celebrations will culminate on Statehood Day, Tuesday, August 10, with a ceremony at the Capitol featuring remarks by dignitaries, a proclamation signed by all living Missouri governors, a reading by Missouri Poet Laureate Karen Craigo, and music performed by the Missouri National Guard 135th Army Band and others. Events during the three days will also include traveling exhibits, the opening of the Bicentennial Bridge, and an ice cream social sponsored by Prairie Farms Dairy.

Our Missouri Celebration at Missouri State Fair
August 12–22, State Fairgrounds, Sedalia
The 2021 Missouri State Fair will feature exhibits and activities commemorating the bicentennial of statehood under the theme of “Our Missouri Celebration.”

Join Us Online SHSMO.ORG
Free Digital Collections, Virtual Programs, Workshops, and More!

SAVE THE DATE
SHSMO Annual Meeting
November 6, Center for Missouri Studies
Main Street in Anderson, Missouri, 2017. For more on the Ozarks, see the interview with historian Brooks Blevins inside. Photo by Kimberly Harper.