

Our Missouri Podcast

Title: Episode 13: National History Day in Missouri

Guest: Maggie Mayhan

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KEVIN WALSH: Welcome to *Our Missouri*, a podcast about the people, places, culture, and history of the 114 counties and independent city of Saint Louis that comprise the great state of Missouri. Each episode focuses on a topic related to the state ranging from publications about Missouri's history to current projects undertaken by organizations to preserve and promote local institutions. The *Our Missouri Podcast* is recorded in the J. Christian Bay Rare Books Room at the State Historical Society of Missouri's Columbia Research Center, and is generously provided to you by the State Historical Society of Missouri. And now, here's your host, Sean Rost.

SEAN ROST: Good morning, good afternoon, and good evening, or at whatever hour you are tuning in to listen to the *Our Missouri Podcast*. My name is Sean Rost and I will be your guide as we explore the memories, moments, and misfortunes from our Missouri. Today, we are joined by Maggie Mayhan. She holds bachelor's and master's degrees from Truman State University. Initially working with the Missouri Digital Newspaper Project, Maggie has been affiliated with National History Day since 2012. Presently, she serves as the National History Day in Missouri Coordinator for the State Historical Society of Missouri. Now, spring is an extremely busy time for students and educators associated with National History Day with regional and state contests so we are happy that Maggie took the time to join us today. Welcome to the *Our Missouri Podcast*, Maggie.

MAGGIE MAYHAN: Thanks so much for having me today, Sean.

SEAN ROST: Now, could you tell us what National History Day is?

MAGGIE MAYHAN: Absolutely. National History Day is a unique opportunity for students to explore the past in a creative, hands-on way. They can produce a documentary, an exhibit, write a paper, do a performance, or build a website, all while becoming experts on the topic that they choose.

SEAN ROST: This is across many different states, this isn't just Missouri, right?

MAGGIE MAYHAN: That's correct. It is actually a nationwide program and, indeed, an international program. There are some History Day affiliates abroad.

SEAN ROST: Now, what do you do in your role as the Coordinator for National History Day here at the Historical Society?

MAGGIE MAYHAN: So, my job is focused on growing the History Day program. Getting more students, more teachers, more schools involved. As part of that, I work with the national office, which is based out of College Park, Maryland, and then, also, with all of our regional offices [and] regional coordinators to help reach more students and teachers through workshops, through school visits, through class tours—conference presentations. So, really just getting more students and teachers involved, and helping show them why their History Day participation matters.

SEAN ROST: Now, as we're thinking about students and teachers coming up with the projects and the topics that they're working on, where do these ideas come from? Is there a national outline of this is the theme for this year, or are they kind of had these ideas in advance? How do they come to these projects that they're going to present on?

MAGGIE MAYHAN: Well, each year there is a theme for the program. In 2019, the theme is "Triumph and Tragedy in History." So, students and teachers use that theme sort of as their starting point to select topics. But beyond that, students can choose anything from a very local topic to a global issue. While the program is National History Day in Missouri, Missouri students do not have to choose a Missouri topic. So, we'll see a wide range of both Missouri, national, and international topics. I will say, though, that students who do choose local topics often have a great time finding primary sources.

SEAN ROST: That's very true. Now, as we think of these projects, and as they're kind of going forward—you mentioned primary sources—where do students collect those at? Do they go to the research centers? Do they go to local archives? Where do they go to work on the bones of their project—the backbone of it?

MAGGIE MAYHAN: Well, we definitely promote the State Historical Society of Missouri's Research Guides as a great place for students to start because we have curated topics. If someone is doing a topic on World War I, they can dive in and see what photographs, what newspaper articles, what peer-reviewed articles might already be collected on that topic. Also, our Historic Missourians website is a great place for students to start. In addition to those, we have students using the Library of Congress' Chronicling American project. So, I feel like oftentimes students do start their research looking at sources that are available online, but you mentioned visits—students also arrange visits to different sites, presidential libraries, museums. Springfield's center for the State Historical Society is hosting a National History Day group who will be doing research.

SEAN ROST: Now, this is something that certainly is local, it is at the state-level, it is at the national level, and Missouri is well represented when it gets to the national contest in June. Who are some of the notable projects and winners of the past that have gone on to get national recognition?

MAGGIE MAYHAN: Well, as you say, Sean, Missouri students consistently do well on the national stage bringing home a variety of medals and special prizes. In 2018, two of our documentary students were invited to show their film at the National Museum of African American History and Culture. One of our exhibit students was invited to showcase her exhibit at

the National Museum of American History. We had another group of website students who represented Missouri at the National Endowment for the Humanities' "Breakfast on the Hill." So, even before the contest, these students are being able to share their projects in very public spaces being on a national stage beyond the contest. However, within the contest, Missouri students did extremely well with six finalists last year and a silver medalist. Thinking about some past projects that have done really well. Going a bit further back, in 2015, student Jay Mehta took gold for his individual performance on Winston Churchill, looking at his leadership and legacy. In 2017, Missouri brought home two gold medals. That's a really interesting thing to think about, Sean, because in the senior individual categories there are only five gold medals and Missouri took home two of them. One was Hannah Scott, who now attends Truman State University, and her project was looking at the Monuments Men. One was Erin Lowe, whose performance was looking at suffragettes, especially in Britain.

SEAN ROST: Yeah. The suffragette one was interesting because that was also the jujitsu one.

MAGGIE MAYHAN: Yes! Yes. So, women who were—as police were starting to break-up these women's protest they wanted to be able to defend themselves and to make sure that as they were fighting for their rights that they were able to hold those meetings and demonstrations and show how important that was.

SEAN ROST: Before we return to our conversation, let's take a step back in time with Bob Priddy to an event from this week in history in a "Missouri Minute."

BOB PRIDDY: I'm Bob Priddy with this "Missouri Minute" about an upsetting time when the government that the people liked, which had no taxes or military service, which allowed people to have slaves—a government that respected cultural diversity and institutions—suddenly ceased to exist. The capitol of Missouri in its earliest days as American property was in Vincennes, Indiana. Some citizens didn't like that, and their uneasiness eventually led to statehood. Early maps show Missouri was shaped differently from what it is today when the Americans took over custody of it. At one time, New Madrid County was one of five counties [and] it included most of what's now Arkansas. But in 1804, several prominent citizens petitioned Congress for a change. They wanted self-government and they wanted schools. Congress decided on March 26, 1804, [that] the District of Louisiana would become the Territory of Louisiana with a capitol in Saint Louis. So, now the area had more of its own identity, more of its government. It was an important step towards statehood that came in 1821 when Congress divided the Louisiana Territory into two areas—one of them the District of Louisiana in 1804. I'm Bob Priddy for the Center for Missouri Studies.

SEAN ROST: Now, as we think of the state contest coming up here at the end of April, we're really kind amassing and getting ready for it. People have asked me as I've been out-and-about about National History Day and the state contest and about being judges. Now, as we're looking for judges for the contest, what are some of the qualifications that people might need in order to register to be a judge?

MAGGIE MAYHAN: Well, first you need to be available on April the 27th to come out and judge for the state contest. We recruit a variety of people to our judging teams—educators,

historians, writers, filmmakers, community members. We also invite graduate students and some select undergrads to our team. You're ultimately giving thoughtful feedback to students. Talking through what's going very well with their projects, and things that they might think about to strengthen them as they move forward.

SEAN ROST: How can people apply to be a judge? Where do they need to go to fill out that information?

MAGGIE MAYHAN: So, on our website—which is nhdmo.org—there is a judges tab at the top of the page. If they click on that, there is a register button right there above the fold that they can fill out. If they prefer to call in, they could do that as well. We're happy to take their registration over the phone. They can call: 573-882-7083.

SEAN ROST: Now, finally, as we think of National History Day, and we've talked about students and their projects. We've talked about judges. But, some schools don't have National History Day. Even when I was going to school—not that long ago—but when I was going to school I didn't know it existed. I would have loved to have done National History Day when I was a high school student, but I didn't know about. So, how can schools get started with a National History program? How do they get that going?

MAGGIE MAYHAN: Well. It definitely varies from school to school. Any school can start a History Day program simply by reaching out, by just sending an email to nhdmo@shsmo.org or, again, by calling 573-882-7083. Oftentimes, teachers have questions just about, "How is this going to look in my classroom?" "What are some tips that you have for getting started?" And so, if they want to have sort of that conversation, we're always excited to share information with them. We also—many of our veteran teachers are always happy to share their lesson plans or to serve as mentors for new History Day teachers. We've followed that model several times where a veteran teacher has helped a new teacher through the process and sort of share their wisdom about guiding History Day project. We often encourage teachers to start small if they are brand new to the program. To try History Day projects with a smaller group of students and sort of go through the process once before taking through all of their classes. Ultimately, we invite teachers to come judge. We feel that by coming out and judging for the contest they will see a wide-range of projects. They'll see the questions that judges are asking. They'll get a chance to interact with those students and see these students—their creative work, their excitement, and their pride that they've seen these project through to the end and have been able to bring them to competition.

SEAN ROST: Some of these regional contests have already ended, but for people who are thinking about next year or how to formulate this in the coming years, where are the regional sites at throughout the state where they could not only see student projects but also have a chance to be a judge too?

MAGGIE MAYHAN: Absolutely. We host contests in Maryville at Northwest Missouri State University. We have a contest at Truman State University. One at Kansas City that's hosted by the Truman Presidential Library. We have one right here in Columbia hosted by Missouri State Archives, but the event is actually happening at Columbia College. At University of Missouri-Saint Louis. At Missouri Southern State University. At Missouri State University in Springfield.

In Rolla at Missouri University of Science & Technology. At Southeast Missouri State in Cape Girardeau. So, we have a wide range—ultimately nine locations—that are hosting contests. So, we will have statewide representation of students on April 27th.

SEAN ROST: Fantastic.

MAGGIE MAYHAN: I would encourage—whether it's students or teachers—to hop on the website and take a look at student projects and stories. I think often by seeing other people's work that helps people get started with the program. I really love reading the students' stories. Some students they absolutely love History Day and they love the process. But, one of my favorites is actually a student who had to do History Day for a class. She was not really that excited about doing it, but she ended up doing a project on the Dust Bowl and just becoming fascinated by all the photographs that she was finding in her research. And that now she actually is considering going into environmental law all from her History Day project.

SEAN ROST: Wow.

MAGGIE MAYHAN: And so, I think some of those stories about the impact of History Day beyond the classroom, beyond the contest, as students are looking forward, is something that is really important. I also encourage students as they're looking ahead to college applications, to scholarship applications, doing this hands-on, creative, in-depth research project is something that certainly looks good to admissions offices and really shows what students are capable of. Getting the chance to do that at a younger age, I think is really important. We've had several History Day students come back and say that they've gone on to college and their classmates were maybe uncomfortable writing a thesis or didn't know what an annotated bibliography was, but they were like, "Oh, no, we did that for History Day." So, it really sort of helped ease them into their coursework. So, really talking to teachers and students about National History Day as a pathway to higher education.

SEAN ROST: I think that's a good concluding point. Thanks for being with us, Maggie.

MAGGIE MAYHAN: Thanks so much again for having me today.

SEAN ROST: Thanks for listening to this week's episode. As always, I am your host, Sean Rost. The show's producer is Brian Austin. The opening and concluding credits are narrated by Kevin Walsh. If you are interested in more of the people, places, culture, and history around our Missouri, check out the following upcoming events:

If you're in the mood for a little bluegrass music to kick off your summer, Rolla is the place to be on May 19th for Ozark Pickin' Time. This afternoon of music and memories will be held at the Cedar Street Playhouse in Rolla and features Jimmie Allison and Midnight Flight, Jerry Rosa and the Rosa String Works Band, and Marideth Sisco and Accomplices. This event is free and open to the public, though registration is appreciated. While you're there, be sure to check in with staff from the State Historical Society of Missouri to learn how the Historical Society is preserving the state's rich musical history.

With the State Historical Society of Missouri's Columbia Research Center slated to be closed from spring to midsummer 2019 for the move to the newly constructed Center for Missouri Studies, you only have a few weeks left to view three featured art exhibits. In the corridor gallery, the exhibit "Work Artwork" consists of art by staff members and volunteers from the Historical Society's six research centers across the state. In the Main Gallery, visitors will find two exhibits, "Benton's Perilous Visions" and "The Aesthetic of the Monumental Figure." To learn more about these, and other, exhibitions, please visit shsmo.org/art/exhibits/.

National History Day in Missouri is looking for educators, historians, writers, filmmakers, museum staff, and community members to join them at this year's state contest to judge student projects. The state contest will be held on April 27, 2019 at the University of Missouri-Columbia. To thank you for your essential participation in National History Day in Missouri 2019, the State Historical Society of Missouri will provide a light breakfast and lunch, plus a travel stipend of up to \$50 for judges whose round trip mileage exceeds 75 miles. National History Day in Missouri is a unique opportunity for middle and high school age students to explore the past in a creative, hands-on way by producing a documentary, exhibit, paper, performance, or website on a topic of their choosing. To learn more about National History Day in Missouri, including judge orientation and how to start a program at your own school, please visit shsmo.org/nhdmo/.

On April 4th, join the State Historical Society of Missouri and the Center for Missouri Studies fellow Heidi Dodson at the Cape Girardeau Public Library for a public presentation entitled, "Building the Bootheel: African American Workers and Waterways." In her talk, Dodson will explore the important role African Americans played in the transformation of the region's water landscapes and how rivers, swamps, and ditches have shaped the history and culture of the Missouri Bootheel.

The month of April will also feature two events connected with the African American Experience in Missouri Lecture Series. On April 2nd, join Gary Kremer, executive director of the State Historical Society of Missouri, for a look at the history of one of the state's most important African American institutions, Lincoln University. On April 30th, join Debra Foster Greene, professor emerita of history from Lincoln University, for her presentation entitled, "To Educate and Elevate: The African American Press in Missouri." Both presentations will be held at the Memorial Student Union's Stotler Lounge on the University of Missouri's campus and are sponsored by the Missouri Humanities Council, the University of Missouri's Division of Inclusion, Diversity & Equity, and the State Historical Society of Missouri.

Finally, coming up this summer, the *Our Missouri Podcast* will launch a four-part series celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 mission and the moon landing. In an effort to document the history of the moon landing and grow the Historical Society's oral history archive, we will be collecting stories from listeners who are interested in speaking about their memories of this historic event. These "Memories of the Moon Landing" conversations will be preserved in the Missouri Innovation & Exploration Oral History Project (C4352), with some of the stories being featured on the podcast. In you are interested in contributing your story, please contact us by email at "ourmissouri@shsmo.org."

KEVIN WALSH: Thank you for listening to the *Our Missouri Podcast*. If you would like to learn more about the podcast, including past and future episodes, information about guests, and upcoming events, please visit our website at shsmo.org/our-missouri.