

# MISSOURI TIMES

THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF MISSOURI

MAY 2019 VOL. 15, NO. 1

## State Historical Society Prepares for Grand Opening at New Headquarters on August 10

It's almost here.

The State Historical Society is racing to reopen its Columbia headquarters in the new Center for Missouri Studies building after serving its last patron at Ellis Library in April. Collections that have been growing since the Society first occupied Ellis in 1915 must be packed, moved, unpacked, and reassembled. Equipment ranging from microfilm readers and desktop computers to library carts and coffee pots must be rounded up and resettled in new surroundings. And spaces that the Society has never had before—an auditorium, classrooms, climate-controlled galleries designed for its unique artworks—must be readied for public events and uses that have long been projected, but remained, until now, out of reach.

The plan is to have everything in place and as many of the kinks worked out as possible in time for a Grand Opening ceremony on August 10, the 198th anniversary of Missouri statehood. The day will begin with a ribbon-cutting ceremony outside the Elm Street entrance at 10 a.m. and continue inside with a celebration centered in the first-floor auditorium and lobby. Staff members will provide tours of the building until it closes for the day at 1 p.m. All events are free and open to the public.

Elm Street will be closed to motor traffic during the Grand Opening, and space across the street in the University of Missouri's Peace Park is also reserved for the event. The Third Switch, a Columbia-based jazz and blues band, will perform inside, and catered food stations will be on the first and second floors. The public tours will also be on the first two floors, and will include the new art galleries, auditorium, research center, and classrooms.

The Columbia staff will move into the new building before August. Moving trucks from two different companies—one specializing in transporting art—are scheduled for late May, and the staff will follow the trucks to reestablish the manuscript, newspaper, art, photograph, map, reference, and other collections, as well as all other services and programs, at 605 Elm Street.

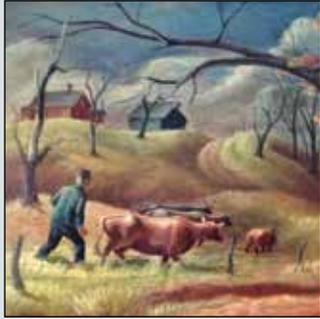
Years of planning have preceded the move, with SHSMO's librarians and archivists drawing up comprehensive strategies to meet the many challenges it poses. They are using math calculations, coding systems, and detailed maps of shelf space in both Ellis and the new building to orchestrate the move. In Ellis Library, overgrown spaces led to fragmented storage of collections, especially as the holdings kept expanding

over the decades. The plans for the move should result in a research center and reference library that consolidate scattered materials and make them easier to find, said Tatyana Shinn, the Society's assistant director for reference.

"There's not a single part of the collections that we haven't touched," Shinn said. "We've had to rethink everything. What collections or materials belong together? Which collections will continue to grow, and how fast? We've evaluated and reorganized so that it's easier to discover what's in the collections, and so we can make the fullest use of the new space. Our patrons might not see all of that, but our staff, and our future staff, will appreciate the more orderly system every time they are helping someone."

The summer will be given over to getting the collections, research library, and art galleries up and running again in bigger and better spaces. By this fall the State Historical Society will also be acting on other opportunities the new building and its facilities will offer, such as expanded and improved public programs and events. In November, for example, the Annual Meeting and Fall Lecture will be held for the first time in the Society's own building.

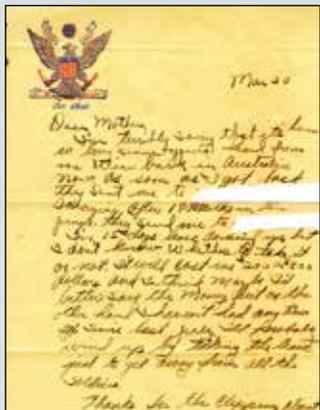
The August 10 Grand Opening will mark an end to the first phase of moving in, and a beginning for growing into the Center for Missouri Studies building and the new possibilities it brings. "This summer will be such an exciting time for us," said Gary Kremer, SHSMO's executive director. "We're on the threshold of a new era not just for the State Historical Society, but for Missouri in its ability to make connections with its past."



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The Center for Missouri Studies construction site at 605 Elm Street in downtown Columbia.

## Letter from the State Historical Society of Missouri President

It was kind of a ceremony at 5 p.m. on April 19. Senior security guard Kevin Walsh locked the door to the art gallery, and moments later Gary Kremer closed the side door to our quarters in the basement of Ellis Library, ending more than a century in which the people of Missouri had access there to the holdings of the State Historical Society.

Had to do it. We had to close to have time to pack every little thing and every big thing for The Move.

The folks who serve our members and other patrons so loyally and so well are now busy inventorying collections and packaging some very rare and fragile materials. Take a collection. Inventory it. Code it. Put instructions on it for the movers. Take another collection. Inventory it. Code it. Put instructions on it. Take another collection . . .

You get the idea. No patrons are coming into our offices looking for help, telling stories, sharing or doing research, making

exciting discoveries—the things that make life interesting and fun for our staff. Instead, it's a drawn-out version of "Two Men and a Truck," but with a lot more people and trucks.

Here are some numbers that might help you understand the scope of the work the staff is doing.

Our manuscript collection at the Center for Missouri Studies in Columbia totals almost 20,000 cubic feet. We also have 143,000 books and periodicals, and almost 58,000 reels of microfilm holding about 54 million

pages of newspapers. There are more than 8,000 maps; more than 147,000 photos; 342 paintings, drawings, and prints by Thomas Hart Benton and 83 works by George Caleb Bingham; not to mention thousands of other pieces of art, including almost 16,500 editorial and other cartoons. And 69 sculptures and ceramics.

These are not things we can throw into a shopping cart and trundle over to the new building on Elm Street. Some of this is

high-security stuff, and police and private security companies probably would find pushing shopping carts demeaning anyway. So we have to pack with great care and have a major reorganization plan for the new building.

Incidentally, Gary tells me that during the packing done so far, we have found some things we didn't know we had. And some things we wonder why we have. This mix of excitement and bewilderment is called history.

Regardless, this complicated business of moving a century of accumulating by the State Historical Society of Missouri is plain drudgery, folks. But on August 10, Grand Opening Day, our staff will be glad to show you the new place. We won't be able to tell how hard they have worked, and they'll be too excited about the event to tell you how hard their last three months have been. But for the rest of their lives, every time they go back in the stacks or help a patron find a book or a roll of microfilm or show them our great works of art, they'll know. And I hope they'll always be proud.



Bob Priddy, SHSMO president

## Missouri 2021 Endorsement Program Adds Projects to State's Bicentennial Celebration

Through its Endorsement Program, Missouri 2021 offers official recognition for local communities, nonprofit organizations, and government agencies engaging in projects, programs, or events that promote a better understanding of Missouri and its regions, communities, and people, both past and present. A number of exciting projects are already underway across the state.

- **Missouri Bicentennial Paint-for-a-Cause** is a project of Best of Missouri Hands artists Aaron Horrell and Barb Bailey. In 2019 and 2020, Horrell and Bailey will assist thousands of Missourians across the state in painting a large composite aluminum panel mural featuring Missouri state symbols. The panel pieces will be taken to at least fifteen cities across Missouri, providing as many people as possible—of any age or ability—

the chance to participate in painting the mural. The goal is for the final painting to have a permanent home in a state office building in Jefferson City.

- The **Bicentennial Bridge** to Adrian's Island project will provide a pedestrian and bike linkage between Jefferson City and Adrian Island, reconnecting and restoring Jefferson City's historic relationship to the Missouri River. Interactive exhibits on the bridge will interpret transportation systems, including the river, rails, and roads, that affected the development of Jefferson City. The Bicentennial Bridge is slated for completion in the fall of 2020.
- **Missouri Remembers: Artists, 1821–1951** is an initiative of the Spencer Art Reference Library of the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. The project will create a biographical dictionary of visual artists who lived in, or spent part of their careers within, Missouri between 1821 and 1951. The Spencer Art Reference Library is building partnerships throughout the state to assist with the project, which the library expects to appear online in November 2019.

To learn more about these and other projects, programs, and events endorsed by Missouri 2021, visit [missouri2021.org](http://missouri2021.org).



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## SHSMO Receives Significant Regionalist Painting from Longtime Supporter

State Historical Society volunteer Ann O'Dell has been helping to update the editorial cartoon database in the SHSMO art collection for many years. This winter Ann's father, Boyd O'Dell, made a major donation to the art collection with the gift of several artworks. The works include a large painting by the Missouri Regionalist artist Fred Shane (1906–1990), a mountain landscape by Missouri-born painter Hanson Puthuff (an artist best known for his California scenes), and several historical portraits documenting the O'Dell family.

"My father donated these artworks to the State Historical Society because of its focus on Missouri artists and because of the impeccable care that this artwork will receive there," Ann O'Dell said.

Boyd O'Dell, a professor emeritus of biochemistry at the University of Missouri in Columbia, passed away on April 21 at the age of 102. He and his late wife, Vera, were avid art collectors, and O'Dell knew Fred Shane personally.

The Shane picture, *Landscape with Cows*, is dated 1939. It was included in the 1982 Fred Shane retrospective exhibition and catalogue, *Fred Shane: Paintings 1923–1979*, organized by the State Historical Society of Missouri and the MU Museum of Art and Archaeology.

A classic example of Missouri Regionalism, the painting depicts a farmer leading cows from pasture to barn on an overcast autumn day. Shane focuses the viewer's attention on rural labor as well as the farmer's intimate interaction with his livestock, his land, and the seasonal climate.



*Landscape with Cows*, by Missouri Regionalist artist Fred Shane, was one of several artworks recently donated by Boyd O'Dell.

The gift is a testament to Boyd and Vera O'Dell's lifelong interest in the Missouri arts community, and to their support of Missouri's cultural heritage.

## State Historical Society Awards Brownlee Grants to Missouri Cultural Institutions

The State Historical Society of Missouri has awarded 2019 Brownlee Grants to ten Missouri cultural heritage institutions across the state. The grants, for up to \$500 per institution per year, support efforts to preserve historic material or provide programming on local history topics.

The 2019 grants will help fund projects at the following institutions:

- Clay County Archives and Historical Library—purchase of a Fujitsu SV600 overhead scanner for digitization of documents, maps, newspapers, photos, and other materials
- Cole County Historical Society and Museum—archival preservation materials for maps, posters, photos, and scrapbooks
- Historic Florissant, Inc.—archival preservation materials for photographs and documents
- Jackson County Historical Society—supplies needed for processing collection donated by Rufus Burrus II, a friend of Harry Truman and a former US Army officer and Jackson County official
- Lawrence County Historical Society—safe storage supplies for fragile collections, particularly of Civil War-era materials
- Randolph County Historical Society—storage and preservation materials for plat maps, letters, newspapers, photos, and other collections
- St. Joseph Public Library—storage and preservation materials for the Eugene Field Collection and other collections such as personal correspondence of the city's founders
- St. Louis Genealogical Society—purchase of Fujitsu SV600 overhead scanner for making digital images of records dating to 1865 from the Buchholz Mortuary and previous funeral homes acquired by Buchholz

- Ste. Genevieve County Library—new boxes for microfilm reels preserving archival issues of the *Ste. Genevieve Herald* and materials from the Ste. Genevieve Archives
- Sappington-Concord Historical Society—materials needed to store archival collections on site rather than relying on off-site storage

The grants, named in memory of Richard S. Brownlee, the Society's executive director from 1960 to 1985, are available to Missouri cultural institutions, with preference given to local historical societies. Individual grants may be made for up to \$500 per year, with a maximum of \$5,000 in total awarded each year.

Brownlee Grants were first awarded in 1986. Until recent years, the awards were presented as grants to individuals or organizations proposing to publish works on Missouri and Missourians.

For more information, including how to apply for grants for the 2020 calendar year, visit [shsmo.org/awards/brownlee](http://shsmo.org/awards/brownlee), or contact SHSMO at 573.882.7083 or via email at [contact@shsmo.org](mailto:contact@shsmo.org).

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## Top Missouri Students Meet in Columbia for National History Day State Contest



The contestants came from across Missouri. Their research projects covered the globe. More than 600 students in grades 6 through 12 traveled to Columbia for the National History Day in Missouri state contest on April 27, competing under the theme of “Triumph and Tragedy in History” for the chance to advance to the national contest in College Park, Maryland, from June 9 to 13.

Sixty-four of the students will represent Missouri at the national contest. The array of topics among the top-ranked projects included everything from the Berlin Wall to the Transcontinental Railroad to Tiananmen Square; Freedom Summer and the Greensboro Four to the civil rights story of Garrison School in Liberty, Missouri; Leonardo da Vinci to Mother Jones to Missouri figures such as journalist and civil rights activist Lucile Bluford and Milly Sawyers, an enslaved woman who sued for and won her freedom in Springfield in 1835.

The participants in the state contest advanced to Columbia from regional contests across Missouri. In all, more than 5,000 Missouri students took part in National History Day in 2019—a number that might provide the best measure of the program’s impact, said John Brenner, managing editor for the State Historical Society of Missouri and a judge at the state contest.

“It’s a case of the journey being more important than the destination,” Brenner said. “Not everyone can win at region or state, and not everyone will win at the national contest. But then again, they all win by engaging at length and so thoughtfully with our shared history. It’s inspiring to see so many young people developing this kind of understanding and appreciation for the people and events that shaped our world as it is today. They teach me new things every year.”

To follow news about the Missouri delegation at the national contest and for other information about National History Day in Missouri, visit <https://www.nhdmo.org/>.



Dallin Attwooll of Nixa High School received the Digital Public Library of America special prize at the 2019 National History Day in Missouri state contest for his website on “The Holodomor: A Dictator’s Triumph over a Starving Nation.”



Karen Lomax of Westview Middle School in St. Louis was awarded a Strickland African-American History Prize for her paper, “The East St. Louis Massacre: The Tragedy of the Century.”



Sonia Carlson, Sydney Stamps, and Johanna Jeyaraj of the Thomas Jefferson Independent Day School in Joplin received the Joplin Regional History Prize for their group exhibit, “The Impact of the Infamous: The Triumph and Tragedy of the Public Enemy Era.”



Destiny Coleman of North County Christian School in Florissant with her exhibit on the March on Washington in 1963.

## Columbia Research Center Nears End of an Era with Departure from Ellis Library

In the winter of 1913 Francis Asbury Sampson, secretary of the State Historical Society of Missouri, was worried. He was concerned about the safety of the Society's fledgling collections housed in the University of Missouri's Academic Hall (now Jesse Hall), built after its predecessor was destroyed by fire in 1892. Sampson penned an urgent plea to the Missouri General Assembly asking legislators to appropriate funding for a fireproof building. His wish was partly granted, and two years later the Society was given space in the university's new library.

The move in August 1915 to what was then called University Library put Sampson at ease, although the man who would soon succeed him, a staff member named Floyd Shoemaker, was perhaps already dreaming of something bigger in a yet to be constructed "east wing" addition. (The east-wing dream finally came true more than four decades later as Shoemaker neared the end of his long tenure in 1960.) The Society hired fifteen men to move its holdings to its new home; among them was a young law student and future SHSMO trustee and president, Rush H. Limbaugh, who was paid \$13.80 for his labor. Such wages have grown considerably in the 104 years between the State Historical Society's first days in Ellis Library and its last.

As the Society prepares to leave Ellis, staff members are sifting through more than a century of the organization's history along with its accumulated collections. Many changes have taken place in and around the building over the years, and a visitor from 1915 might find only a few familiar landmarks in 2019. Parking, in recent years an elusive commodity, once existed right outside the Society's north entrance on Lowry Street, but the creation of Lowry Mall, a pedestrian plaza, reduced street parking in the early 1980s. On the building's south side, visitors could park in Kuhlman Court, a

small residential area that housed private homes, faculty offices, and storage buildings. After Kuhlman Court was demolished in 1984 to make way for the southern addition to Ellis Library, parking became even scarcer.

Entrances to the Society changed when additions were made to Ellis Library in the late 1950s and mid-1980s, requiring reconfiguration of the headquarters during the administrations of executive directors Richard Brownlee (1960–1985) and James Goodrich (1985–2004). Once located on multiple floors of the building, the Society ultimately was consolidated on the ground floor.

During Brownlee's tenure the women's liberation movement brought change to the employee dress code. Female employees, previously required to wear dresses or modest skirts, were permitted pantsuits so long as they were color-coordinated.

In 1915, four full-time employees staffed the Society's research library; in 2019 there are 35 full- and part-time staff members in Columbia. In 1915 there were 688 unique newspaper titles; in 2019 there are 4,604. Originally arranged in large stacks wherever there was room on floors and shelves, newspapers are now preserved on microfilm. A number of significant bound volumes remain, but the days of researchers carefully turning cotton rag pages in the reading room are gone. Instead of sitting at oak carrels, thumbing through the card catalog, and taking meticulous handwritten notes, researchers use microfilm readers, save scans on flash drives, and use an online card catalog. The art collection, which in early times consisted of a handful of portraits that lined the walls of the research library, has grown into one of the nation's finest collections of Missouri-related art.

For those who wished to join the Society as members, the fee in 1915 was one dollar, where it remained until the 1960s. Today an individual membership is \$40.

Members still receive quarterly issues of the *Missouri Historical Review*, which was first published in 1906, but now also get the *Missouri Times*, first published in 2005. Books are no longer loaned by mail to "reputable citizens," but holdings can be requested at any of the Society's six locations across the state.

With the move to the Center for Missouri Studies building still

in progress, it is too soon to place the State Historical Society's time in Ellis Library in proper perspective, said Gary Kremer, the Society's executive director since 2004. "It's long past time for us to leave, but this has been a special place for many years to the people who have worked here or come to visit," Kremer said. "It will always be an important part of our history."



The State Historical Society of Missouri's first reading room in Ellis Library, photographed in 1915. The room housed much of the Society's art collection as well as its books and other reference works.



The north entrance to the State Historical Society in Ellis Library as it appeared in 2009.

**JUNE****National History Day National Contest**  
**June 9–13 | College Park, Maryland**

Finalists from Missouri will compete in the national contest on the campus of the University of Maryland in College Park. Contestants will also take part in scheduled events in nearby Washington, DC. Past Missouri delegates have brought home national medals, spoken at Breakfast on the Hill, and displayed their history projects at the National Museum of American History and the National Museum of African American History and Culture. Follow NHDMO on Facebook and Twitter to stay posted on the 2019 Missouri delegation's experiences.

**JULY****Marlin Perkins: Wild Life**  
**July 5 | 10 a.m. | Chesterfield**

SHSMO archivist Miles Jenks will present this program on Missouri native Marlin Perkins, the accomplished former director of the St. Louis Zoo and host of popular television programs *Zoo Parade* (1949–1957) and *Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom* (1963–1988). Pulling from the more than 2,000 photographs housed in the St. Louis Research Center's Marlin Perkins Papers, Jenks will explore some of the most legendary, dangerous, funny, and touching moments of Perkins's life as they were captured on camera and in writing. The presentation highlights Perkins's contributions to wildlife conservation through his work at the zoo, on television, and in the wild. The event, hosted by Choice Program, a partnership between Aging Ahead and the St. Louis County Library, is free and open to the public. It will be held at the Samuel Sachs Branch of the St. Louis County Library, 16400 Burkhardt Place, Chesterfield.

**CARTER Center for K-12 Black History Education Conference**  
**July 26–27 | Columbia**

SHSMO is sponsoring the second annual CARTER Center for K-12 Black History Education Conference at Muriel Battle High School, 7575 E. St. Charles Road in Columbia. The CARTER Center focuses on research projects and professional development for teachers engaged in black history education for students in kindergarten through high school. The conference is designed for school-based educators, community educators, or anyone interested in the learning and teaching of black history. Workshops will focus on the conference's theme, 400 Years and Counting: Teaching Slavery and Its Afterlife.

**AUGUST****Grand Opening, Center for Missouri Studies**  
**August 10 | 10 a.m. | Columbia**

Join SHSMO for the Grand Opening of the Center for Missouri Studies as the Society begins a new chapter in its institutional history. A ribbon-cutting ceremony at 10 a.m. will be followed by an open house that will include guided tours of the research library, art galleries, assembly hall, archives, and other state-of-the-art facilities in the new headquarters at 605 Elm Street. The event, which is free and open to the public, will honor the 198th anniversary of Missouri statehood while looking to the future for our study of the past.

**LOOKING AHEAD****James Neal Primm Lecture in History: Mound City: The Place of Indian Past and Present in St. Louis****September 9 | 7 p.m. | St. Louis**

Center for Missouri Studies Fellow Patricia Cleary will explore St. Louis's complicated relationship with its Native American past in this program centered on the destruction of the Big Mound by 1869. The talk by Cleary, professor of history at California State University, Long Beach, will be held in Lee Auditorium at the Missouri History Museum, Lindell and DeBaliviere in Forest Park, St. Louis. Cleary's lecture is supported by the State Historical Society of Missouri's Center for Missouri Studies fellowship program. The Primm Lecture Series is sponsored by the University of Missouri–St. Louis History Department and the Missouri Historical Society in St. Louis in honor of the late UMSL history professor James Neal Primm.

**Annual Meeting Weekend**  
**November 1–2 | Columbia**

Join SHSMO in November for its first Annual Meeting in the new Center for Missouri Studies building! The event will culminate with the annual business meeting and awards presentations, luncheon, and Center for Missouri Studies Fall Lecture. Stay tuned for further information in the August issue of the *Missouri Times*. Updates also will be posted on the Society's website at [shsmo.org/thecenter/lecture/](http://shsmo.org/thecenter/lecture/).



Courtesy of the Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis

## New Staff Members Join State Historical Society in Columbia and St. Louis

SHSMO welcomed four new staff members this spring. In Columbia, Monica Collins and Cristal Backer have joined the development team headed by Cat Adams, assistant executive director for advancement. Beth Pike is the newest member of the editorial department in Columbia, and Miles Jenks has joined the staff at the St. Louis Research Center.

Collins, the new director of advancement, began her position on April 15. Her duties will focus on working with donors and major gifts to the Society. She previously served as director of advancement for the Chancellor's Fund for Excellence at the University of Missouri in Columbia, where she also trained and mentored fundraisers.

Backer joined the staff on April 1 as advancement officer for membership and annual giving. She will be responsible for optimizing gift processing, expanding the membership program, and increasing annual gift revenue. Backer previously worked for the Food Bank for Central and Northeast Missouri, where she served as regional coordinator.

Pike began her new position as senior strategic communications associate on May 6. A freelance field producer for television news and educational programming, she has also produced award-winning documentary films through Orr Street Productions, a company she

cofounded, and served as an adjunct faculty editor for the University of Missouri School of Journalism. Her assignments for the Society will include coordinating media relations and public information, serving as lead editor and writer for the *Missouri Times*, and planning and managing public programming.

Jenks began her new position as part-time archivist in March after serving for two years as a graduate assistant at the St. Louis Research Center. Before pursuing a master's degree in museum studies at the University of Missouri in St. Louis, she previously worked for the Missouri History Museum as a collections management intern.



SHSMO's newest staff members (left to right): Monica Collins, Cristal Backer, Beth Pike, Miles Jenks.

## Vandivort Family Papers Offer Insights into Everyday Lives in Twentieth-Century Southeast Missouri

Too often, potential donors of manuscript collections talk themselves out of donating because "No one would want my old papers. We probably should just throw them away." It is not surprising that some people might consider only papers of noteworthy or famous people to be "worth" donating. But stop to think for a minute. Wouldn't you like to have the everyday paperwork and letters of an ancestor who lived in, say, 1840? They probably thought their papers were of little value as well, and some child or grandchild likely threw them away. The truth, though, is that historians of all sorts have all kinds of interests in what life was like in the past. These insights are in the papers of ordinary people, but official documents or papers of "important" people may lack them.

One example is a recent donation to the Cape Girardeau Research Center. The collection, the Vandivort Family Papers (CG0025), consists of papers illuminating life for one Cape Girardeau family before, during, and just after World War II.

The head of the family, Leon Vandivort, was born in Cape Girardeau on February 19, 1890, to Elizabeth Brown and Samuel Arthur Vandivort. After Leon's father passed away on August 19, 1891, his mother remarried, wedding William Edwin Sorsby on December 29, 1914. Leon married Naomi Ruth Davis on November 5, 1917. They had four children: Arthur Clayton Vandivort, Nancy Vandivort (Morrow), William Sorsby Vandivort, and Artie Lee Vandivort (Britt). Around 1910 Leon worked in the state of Oregon as a surveyor

for the Woodlawn Land Company, followed by a stint as an automobile salesman. In 1944 he worked for the Oregon Shipbuilding Company. He passed away on June 8, 1963, in Mount Vernon, Missouri, and is buried in New Lorimier Cemetery in Cape Girardeau.

The Vandivort Family Papers contain a variety of documents. The collection includes work correspondence for Leon Vandivort, a letter acknowledging his acceptance to Cape Girardeau Normal School in 1906, his delayed birth certificate, and a memorial book from his funeral. Also included are marriage licenses, commencement invitations, and census records.

The real centerpiece of the collection is extensive correspondence from Leon and Naomi's son, Arthur Clayton "Van" Vandivort, from 1941 to 1944. Van joined the US Army on June 12, 1941, and served with the 503rd Parachute Infantry Regiment. The letters to his parents include one in which military censors clipped out mentions of locations. There are also numerous condolence letters written after he perished on July 23, 1944, during fighting at Noemfoor,

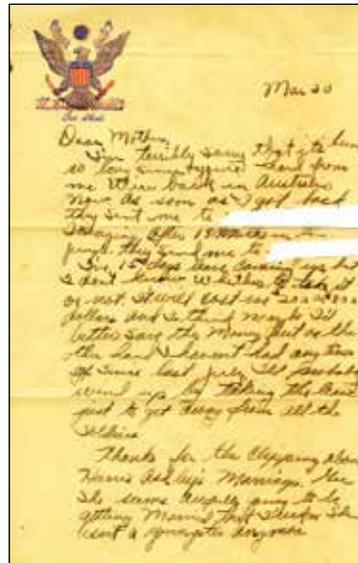
Dutch New Guinea. The following excerpt concerning the circumstances of Van's death is from a letter sent by H. William Miller, a fellow soldier, to a Mrs. Owen, a friend or relative of the Vandivort family:

"Van's platoon had contacted a strong enemy position and he decided to attack. He was leading his men forward when he was hit. For his gallantry in action, he was awarded

the Silver Star. I later saw the position and it certainly did take the American guts and courage to attack it. His body was placed in an Allied cemetery [sic], and impressive ceremonies were held when we were back in camp. The cemetery is located in a beautiful white coral terrace on the beach, surrounded on three sides by palm trees, and the fourth side is open facing the ocean. All the graves have small white crosses on them and it is really a pretty spot."

Van was reinterred at New Lorimier Cemetery in 1948.

If you don't think your papers are notable enough to donate, reconsider. They may contain just the things a historian or genealogist may need!



This letter from Lieutenant Arthur C. Vandivort to his mother did not escape the attention of a military censor.

## Admissions Ledger in New Collection Tells Stories of Child Welfare in St. Louis a Century Ago

In December 2018 the St. Louis Research Center accessioned the records of the Christian Women's Benevolent Association (S1235). The records contain Christian Women Benevolent Association Board Meeting Minutes (1899–1952); Christian Old People's Home Ledgers and Meeting Minutes (1915–1949); Christian Hospital of St. Louis Board Meeting Minutes (1923–1959); and scrapbooks, photographs, and ephemera. Most notably, the records include admittance ledgers from the Christian Orphans' Home as well as the Mothers' and Babies' Home of St. Louis from 1899 to 1933.

The years surrounding the turn of the twentieth century saw an increase in homeless children in the United States due to escalating urbanization, excessive poverty, and rapidly advancing industrial technology that lessened the demand for child labor. Advocates for children, many of whom were linked to the Progressive movement, responded by seeking child welfare reform.

In 1886, Sarah Matilda (Mattie) Hart Younkin gathered five women, including Fannie Shedd Ayars, for a prayer circle in the basement of First Christian Church in St.

Louis. From this prayer circle rose a goal: to establish an institution that was different from typical asylums, and to protect children while creating a loving, family-like environment for teaching self-reliance and instilling Christian values. These women founded the National Benevolent Association of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in 1887. Their first home, the Christian Orphans' Home, opened in 1897.

The Mothers' and Babies' Home opened in St. Louis on June 1, 1899, as an expansion of the Christian Orphans' Home, with Ayars at the administrative helm. Memorial funds for a separate room within the Christian Orphans' Home to care for babies had accumulated until the women voted to establish a separate home that accepted children under two years of age. To accommodate the Mothers' and Babies' Home, a larger house was rented and eventually a hospital section was added. In the first six months of its existence, the Mothers' and Babies' Home cared for 85 babies, adopted out 15, secured work for 25 women, and gave temporary shelter to 31 others.

The admittance ledgers from the Christian Orphans' Home and the Mothers' and Babies' Home of St. Louis are a particularly rich source of genealogical information. The ledgers contain applications for entry into the home. Details such as date and place of the child's birth; vaccination records; parents' full names, birthplace and occupation, and nationality and religion; and location of the nearest living relative are listed.

Notes in the ledgers unfurl the personal stories of those admitted to the homes. Five-month-old Stella Pearl Nichols was admitted to the Christian Orphans' Home in 1899 by her father, James Nichols, a blacksmith of Welsh-Irish heritage from Jefferson County, Missouri. The

reason for admittance reads: "Mother, dead, no one to care for her." Stella's mother, Rachel, had died from "childbirth and blood poison." Like many who appear in the ledgers, Stella only temporarily boarded at the Christian Orphans' Home—she was returned to her father in 1901. But not everyone returned to their family—Emma Albertine Frey, born in St.

*The admittance ledgers from the Christian Orphans' Home and the Mothers' and Babies' Home of St. Louis are a particularly rich source of genealogical information. The ledgers contain applications for entry into the home.*

Louis in July 1899, was admitted to the home that October by her Swiss American father, who worked in a machine shop on Chouteau Avenue in St. Louis. Emma died in November at the age of just four months.

In 1911, Ayars parted ways with the National Benevolent Association and founded the Christian Women's Benevolent Association, which administered the Mothers' and Babies' Home and later established two Christian hospitals and a home for the elderly in St. Louis. The reasons for the split were twofold. Ayars's stance was that all women and children, regardless of marital status and circumstances of conception, should be admitted. Admission ledgers indicate that mothers, including unmarried ones, were admitted to the Mothers' and Babies' Home until they could find work. Not all of the founding women shared Ayars's liberal views, however, and this conflict contributed to her departure. The second cause of the split was discrimination against female leadership—the National Benevolent Association had recently enacted policies that eliminated women from management positions.

The Christian Women's Benevolent Association remained active, and entirely led by women, until its dissolution in 2018. Its mission of caring for youth in St. Louis persisted through the 1980s, when the focus turned to managing homes for the elderly. The National Benevolent Association of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) remains active today, with a headquarters in St. Louis, and recently celebrated its 130th anniversary.

The Christian Women's Benevolent Association Records are a valuable source of information for genealogists and also tell a vital story about the history of St. Louis, social reform, child welfare, and Progressive women.



Fannie Shedd Ayars in a portrait by Missouri artist Eloise Frazier Mikkelsen (1904–1996). The work is now housed within SHSMO's art collection.

## Boller Brothers Architectural Records Offer Insights into Leading Firm for Theater Design

The State Historical Society of Missouri's Kansas City Research Center is home to numerous collections concerning the built environment. Visitors will find the records of architectural firms, the papers of local architects, and nearly 16,000 sets of architectural drawings documenting residential, commercial, industrial, and institutional structures in Greater Kansas City and across the Midwest. The Kansas City Center recently finished processing the Boller Brothers Architectural Records (K0065), which cover the careers of Carl and Robert Boller, who specialized in designing movie theaters during the first half of the twentieth century.

Carl (1868-1946) and Robert (1887-1962) Boller formed the firm of Carl Boller and Brother, later renamed Boller Brothers. They were born to German immigrants Charles William and Pauline W. A. Grutzmacher Boller in St. Joseph, Missouri. Little is known about their early years, and it is unclear whether either brother received formal architectural training.

In 1905, Carl Boller opened an architectural office in Kansas City, Missouri. Robert began working as a draftsman for the office that same year. Together the brothers secured several commissions for nickelodeon and movie theaters throughout the Midwest, primarily in Missouri and Kansas, between 1905 and 1917.

When Robert Boller was drafted into the US Army Corps of Engineers after the United States entered World War I, Carl kept the business running until his brother's return. By 1919 the brothers had designed approximately 65 theaters across the Midwest. In 1920 the firm's name became Boller Brothers.

Believing that theater designs should be elegant yet economical, Carl and Robert Boller intended their theaters to be both luxuriant and comfortable. Many of their theaters adopted decorative motifs from Spanish and Italian architecture.

The brothers' work ethic, attention to detail, and willingness to provide ornamentation at affordable prices helped make Boller Brothers the premier architectural firm for theater design in the United States. The firm expanded during the 1920s, and by the end of the decade the Bollers had designed or remodeled at least 88 theaters in the Midwest. The firm fell on hard times, however, after the stock market crash of 1929. With mounting expenses and few new construction projects, the firm dissolved in 1931 after having designed or remodeled nearly 300 theaters. Carl Boller passed away in 1946, and Robert died in 1962.

The Boller Brothers Architectural Records consist of personal and business correspondence, business publications, advertisements, personal photographs, and military and architectural certificates issued to Robert Boller. Additional material includes a family history, "Turning the Blues into Bluebirds," written by Robert Boller's wife, Dorothy, in 1932. The records also contain 65 sets of architectural drawings of theaters

constructed in the Midwest between 1912 and 1953.

Another recently processed collection offers further information on the Boller Brothers and the buildings they designed. The Noelle Louise Soren Papers (K0525) contain research notes, photographs, correspondence, architectural drawings, and other materials



An undated photo of the Midland Theatre, 1228 Main Street in Kansas City, designed by Boller Brothers and completed in 1927.

related to Soren's research regarding the careers of Carl and Robert Boller. Her project culminated in a two-volume work, *Windows to Wonderland: The Cinespace Creations of the Boller Brothers, Architects*, published in 1999. Patrons may view the Soren Papers and the Boller Brothers Records at the Kansas City Center or at one of SHSMO's other research centers by requesting them in advance.

## Films Found at Thrift Store Offer Scenes of Springfield and Southwest Missouri in the 1950s and 1960s

In 2017, fourteen reels of home movie footage were donated to the State Historical Society of Missouri's Springfield Research Center after they were discovered in a thrift



store. The footage, dating from 1957 to 1964, is believed to have been filmed by Pauline Neagles, a nurse who worked for St. John's (now Mercy) Hospital in Springfield. The films capture work scenes at St. John's as well as social occasions outside the hospital and excursions to other places in southwest Missouri.

Pauline Neagles was born in Illinois in 1924. She attended nursing school in St. Louis and was a member of the US Cadet Nurse Corps during World War II. After the war she

moved to Springfield to attend Drury College. Neagles held nursing positions in Kentucky, St. Louis, and Mount Vernon, Missouri, before working as a nursing instructor at the St. John's School of Nursing in Springfield. By 1962 she was the assistant director of the hospital's nursing services.

The St. Louis-based Sisters of Mercy founded St. John's in 1891. The hospital began with three nuns in a two-story house. By 1905 the sisters had opened a second facility consisting of forty beds and a nursing school.

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Nurses and nuns took part in this 1957 fire safety demonstration at St. John's Hospital conducted by the Springfield Fire Department and captured on film by Pauline Neagles.

## Missouri Musicians Featured in 2019 Ozark Pickin' Time Event in Rolla

SHSMO's Rolla Research Center was preparing to host Ozark Pickin' Time as this issue of the *Missouri Times* went to press. The event, inaugurated last spring and continued this year, showcases musicians from bands that personify the talent and breadth of music in the Ozarks.

The featured performers scheduled for 2019 include Jimmie Allison, who grew up in Phelps County listening to his dad and grandpa play at family gatherings. He started playing guitar at the age of eight and became serious about performing by his late teens. He played with his father, Fred Allison, and his uncle, Charley Allison, in the band Riley Creek from 1990 to 1992. His style of music is traditional bluegrass and country.

Allison's first foray into the "business of music" came with Midnight Flight in the early 1990s. Midnight Flight played together until the band members went their separate ways after about ten years. Allison later played in other bands including Sinkin' Creek, Beverly's Hillbillies, and the Ozark Rounders. He has performed across the United States and Canada, and plans to tour in the northwest United States later this year.

In early 2019 the remaining members of Midnight Flight reunited. The group features Allison and Roger Mathews on banjo from the original band with James Rinck on mandolin, Ali Maze on bass, and Michael Smartt on fiddle. More on Allison's music career can be found in the Jimmie Allison Papers (R1444) housed at the Rolla Research Center.

Another scheduled performer, Jerry Rosa, first became interested in music while growing up in Phelps County and listening to his uncle, Don Brown, play at family gatherings. Rosa

attended practice sessions with Brown, John Hartford, and Norman Ford, the original Ozark Mountain Trio. Unable to afford an expensive mandolin as a young man, he taught himself how to build his own instruments. Today he creates custom guitars, fiddles, and mandolins.

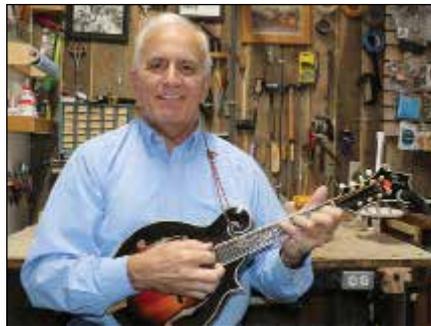
Rosa's style of music is bluegrass with a little country. His bluegrass strays more toward contemporary than traditional in his own songwriting. When he plays with his band, Rosa String Works, the music selection is a mix of traditional bluegrass, country, contemporary bluegrass, occasional rock 'n' roll, and some gospel. Musicians who perform with him include Gary Heavin on guitar, Beverly Spenser on dobro and bass, Don Davis on bass and guitar, and Leon Prewitt on banjo. In his career, Rosa has opened for many notable acts, including Diamond Rio, Merle Haggard, Patty Loveless, and the Charlie Daniels Band.

Scheduled performer Marideth Sisco's great uncle, Tom Ferguson, first pulled her into the music world at the age of three. He taught her songs and took her with him to the auction house where he worked. During

lulls in activity, he put her up on a chair and had her sing. Stage fright was never an issue for Sisco, and the life of a musician and performer was now before her. She and her mother accompanied her father, a journeyman electrician, around the country on his various construction jobs, which helped introduce her to many styles of music. Her music style leans toward folk and old time bluegrass and country, and her performances often feature her as singer-songwriter. Along with her music career, Sisco is also a three-time Missouri Master Storyteller and the host of the acclaimed series *These Ozarks Hills* on regional public radio station KSMU-FM in Springfield. She has also worked as an investigative and environmental journalist at the *West Plains Quill*.

Her band, Marideth Sisco and Accomplices, consists of members from the Blackberry Winter Band, which played on the soundtrack for the Oscar-nominated film *Winter's Bone*. Band members slated to perform with her at Ozark Pickin' Time include David Wilson on strings, George Horne on bass, and Bo Brown on guitar, mandolin, and dobro.

Missouri musicians Jerry Rosa (left), Jimmie Allison, and Marideth Sisco.



## Films Offer Scenes of Springfield and Southwest Missouri —continued from page 10

In 1952 a third hospital opened at the hospital's current location in central Springfield.

The films document intimate moments such as birthdays, vacations, and time spent with friends and family. From the labels on the film cans we know the first names of some of the people in Neagles's life. One person who is clearly identified is Edythe West, a longtime Drury College art professor; Drury still offers a scholarship in her name to art students. Neagles is listed in the 1951 Drury *Sou'wester* yearbook as a member of the art club, an organization sponsored by West, so it would appear the two met at Drury and that they remained in touch after Neagles graduated and embarked on her nursing career.

There is also footage of the nursing staff and nuns of St. John's. One scene from October 1957 shows nurses and nuns taking part in fire safety instruction provided by the Springfield Fire Department. The women extinguish burning barrels and also climb aboard a fire truck. Another scene shows Santa Claus visiting children at the hospital.

Though their work at the hospital was serious, the film also features more lighthearted moments. In one scene, filmed in 1959, a car full of nuns cruises down Route 66. Along the way, the women stop at a filling station in Cuba, Missouri. One of the nuns appears to be delighted by the sight of a pair of red long underwear hanging from the gas pump.

The collection also includes valuable footage of the Ozarks, including the construction of Table Rock Dam, which was completed by the US Army Corps of Engineers in 1958, and scenes shot in Eureka Springs, Arkansas.

Pauline Neagles passed away in 2011 at the age of 86. The films have been digitized with funding provided by Mercy Hospital. Patrons may view the films, now designated as the Ozarks Area Amateur Film Collection (SP0021), at the Springfield center, or at any of SHSMO's other research centers by requesting them in advance at [shsmo.org/research/request](http://shsmo.org/research/request).

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