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**Missouri State University-West Plains  
Ozarks Studies Committee  
presents**



**The Fifteenth Annual Ozarks Studies  
Symposium**

**“Cultural Encounters in the Ozarks”  
September 22-24, 2022**



**Carol Silvey,  
Missouri State University  
Board of Governors**

Missouri State University is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action/Minority/Female/Veterans/Disabilities Employer and Institution.

***The Ozarks Studies Committee is sponsoring this program in partnership with Missouri State University-West Plains, Carol Silvey (Member of the Missouri State University Board of Governors), and The West Plains Council on the Arts***

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***The Ozarks Studies Committee Wishes to Recognize the Following  
Major Supporters of Past Symposiums:***

Anonymous  
Missouri Arts Council  
Missouri Folk Arts Program  
Missouri Humanities Council  
MSU-West Plains Office of Academic Affairs  
National Endowment for the Humanities  
Trillium Trust  
West Plains Council on the Arts  
Community Foundation of the Ozarks

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Each presenter will be allotted 30 minutes; presenters are asked to limit their prepared presentations to approximately 20 to 25 minutes to allow time for questions and discussion.

## **Thursday, September 22, On the Mezzanine, West Plains Civic Center**

**5:30-7:00**      **West Plains Council on the Arts**  
Gallery at the Center – on the mezzanine at the West Plains Civic Center

### **Bob Cunningham, “Photography Around the World”**

An art exhibit titled “Photography Around the World,” by photographer Bob Cunningham will be featured during the opening reception. Cunningham will present nature and landscape photos taken during his many travels, bringing a bit of “from away” culture to our area in a beautiful exhibit. Cunningham’s wonderful photos will take us to places we can recognize and those we’ve only heard of.

Refreshments will be served, and the artist will be available to discuss his work.

## **Friday, September 23, Magnolia Room, West Plains Civic Center**

**8:00-9:00**      **Refreshments**

**9:00**      **Welcome: Dr. Dennis Lancaster, Chancellor, Missouri State University-West Plains**

**9:15**      **Alison Overcash, Park University**

### ***Made in Missouri: Pollution and Politics at the Lake of the Ozarks***

In the book *Red: Passion and Patience in the Desert*, Terry Tempest Williams defines “politics” as a combination of people and place. My creative nonfiction essay uses this equation to explore the political landscape at the Lake of the Ozarks, which has long favored big business and tourism over the environment. I argue that the Lake of the Ozarks is facing an environmental crisis related to water pollution, and it is our responsibility to change the way we interact with the land.

Wastewater management has always been a concern—and years of unregulated development for the sake of tourism has only exaggerated the problem. It is not a radical claim that the water quality of a lake this size can be improved in the long run, but the hard part is getting people to care enough to change their ways. My presentation will consider several approaches to modernizing sewage treatment and regulating shoreline development at the Lake of the Ozarks, culminating in a call-to-action for all attendees to protect the land we love.

Audience Questions: 9:40-9:45

**9:50**      **Dr. Craig Albin, Professor of English, Missouri State University-West Plains**

### ***“Principles of Alignment”***

“Principles of Alignment” is set in the contemporary Ozarks of north Arkansas and concerns the conflicts encountered by protagonist Cliff Murchison, a widower and retired school superintendent, when he lends support to Orie Fairchild, a community college student from a somewhat notorious local family. Murchison endures resistance from his own daughter, herself a teacher, as well as members of Orie’s family. Complicating these tensions is the mystery of a missing pistol, a gun rumored to have been fired a week earlier at an altercation between Orie’s family members. In providing support for Orie Fairchild, Murchison struggles to honor the memory of his late wife while proving to himself that faith in the young Fairchild is justified rather than foolhardy.

Audience Questions: 10:15-10:20

## **10:20 Break**

### **10:35 Dr. Mara W. Cohen Ioannides, Department of English, Missouri State University** ***Joseph Sondheim and his Interaction with the Cherokee***

Joseph Sondheim, a German Jew, was one of the original founders of Muskogee, Oklahoma, but he was there before the town existed. As the largest fur and pecan trader in the West, he had much interaction with the Cherokee. Rumors included a liaison with a Cherokee woman. This talk will consider the interactions that Joseph had with his Cherokee neighbors that are based on reliable information. I will explain why these rumors of a Cherokee wife are part of a colonizer script and debunk the story through documents.

Audience Questions: 11:00-11:05

### **11:10 Jo Van Arkel, Professor of English, Drury University** ***Women and Ozark Folklore and the Making of Historical Flash Fiction: Awakening Old Stories with New Fictional Forms***

Van Arkel's presentation involves discussing the use of Ozark folklore in the writing of historical flash fiction. Van Arkel draws references from Vance Randolph's research in *Ozark Magic and Folklore*, as well as references to *Legends and Lore of Missouri*, by Earl A. Collins, and discusses tales from adjacent cultural contexts in *The Doctor to the Dead*, *Grotesque Legends and Folktales of Old Charleston*, by John Bennett, and *As Old as the Moon*, *Cuban Legends: Folktales of the Antillas*, by Florence Stoddard. In closing, she will read from her own works of historical flash fiction, with stories that depict female characters and their identity in early-twentieth-century Ozark culture, when belief in magic and folk wisdom still influenced women's ways of understanding themselves and their life experiences.

Audience Questions: 11:35-11:40

### **11:45 John C. Fisher, Independent Researcher, Kennett, Missouri** ***French Settlement in the Eastern Missouri Ozarks***

Settlers of European descent first entered Missouri's eastern Ozarks in the late 1600s or early 1700s as the French traveled down the Mississippi River from Canada and the Great Lakes region. The fur trade, search for mineral wealth, and the need for agricultural land drove them to build settlements first on the east bank of the Mississippi River such as Cahokia, Kaskaskia, and Prairie du Rocher. Widening exploration brought them to the west bank of the Mississippi, establishing Ste. Genevieve then pushing westward into the Ozarks in search of minerals. They found silver and gold lacking but discovered vast reserves of lead. Mining operations were established in Washington and Madison counties which brought about the settlements of Old Mines, Mine á Breton, both near present day Potosi, and St. Michael near Fredericktown.

French culture became firmly established in this part of Missouri by the late 1700s. When American settlers reached the middle Mississippi Valley at the beginning of nineteenth century, they encountered a well-established and functioning French society. Even as France abandoned her North American colonies in 1765 following the French and Indian War, Missouri remained French in language and culture. French language, foodways, music, and architecture persisted in areas such as Old Mines and Ste. Genevieve. Old Mines in particular became a stronghold for a French dialect referred to as Pawpaw French even into the twentieth century.

French culture became diluted since the vast majority of new immigrants were Anglo-American. Even so, elements of French culture are still celebrated in parts of the eastern Ozarks with various festivals throughout the year. Attendees can still sample French colonial foods, music, and clothing. cultural tastes.

Audience Questions: 12:10-12:15

## 12:30 Lunch Break

### 2:00 Dr. John J. Han, Professor of English and Creative Writing, Missouri Baptist University

#### *Nature Meets Civilization: The Arcadian Myth in Harold Bell Wright's Ozarks Novels*

In *Back to Nature: The Arcadian Myth in Urban America* (1969), Peter J. Schmitt discusses the back-to-nature movement led by middle-class urbanites from the turn of the twentieth century to shortly after World War I. While the movement leaders viewed nature as a healer and restorer for humanity, they embraced a romanticized conception of nature—nature removed from the toughness of country living. The pastoral impulse also spawned what Schmitt calls wilderness fiction by authors such as Gene Stratton Porter, Dallas Sharp, and Harold Bell Wright. The heroes of wilderness fiction “were not primitive woodsmen but sophisticated intellectuals who valued nature’s ancient grandeur and a simple life denied to most Americans” (126).

Indeed, Wright’s Ozarks novels reflect the Arcadian myth of the country in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. An outdoor enthusiast, Wright sees the Ozarks as a place where the Creator resides and ecotherapy takes place. At the same time, he adopts an Arcadian view of the countryside as a backward, ignorant, and even degenerate place that needs to be enlightened and cultivated through education and mentoring. Unfortunately, Schmitt offers only cursory remarks on Wright as a wilderness fiction writer.

Meanwhile, in *Shepherd of the Hills Country: Tourism Transforms the Ozarks, 1880s-1930s* (1999), Lynn Morrow and Linda Myers-Phinney discuss Wright’s *Shepherd of the Hills* (1907) as an Arcadian novel instrumental to the rise of the Ozark Mountains as a popular tourist destination, which is true. However, their observation that “[t]he presumption of the Arcadian myth, that rurality was intrinsically superior to urbanity, was the foundation of Wright’s story” (28) is only half-true. Wright admires the Ozarks but still retains an outsider’s view of the region: despite its beauty, nature lacks civilization.

Based on Schmitt’s balanced view of the Arcadian myth in Wright’s time, this paper analyzes *The Shepherd of the Hills*, *The Re-Creation of Brian Kent* (1919), and *Ma Cinderella* (1932), contending that Wright is an Arcadian novelist who both loves and otherizes the Ozarks.

Audience Questions: 2:25-2:30

### 2:35 J. Brett Adams, Collin College-Celina Campus

#### *A History of the Ouachita National Forest*

First established by President Theodore Roosevelt in December 1907 the then Arkansas National Forest was in western Arkansas south of the Arkansas River. In the second decade of the twentieth century the Forest Service began buying land in Oklahoma to add to the Arkansas National Forest. In 1926 President Calvin Coolidge officially changed the name of the forest to the Ouachita National Forest. Today the Ouachita National Forest is the largest and oldest national forest in the American South. My presentation will recount the years from establishment of the National Forest through the 1930s.

It was in the opening years of the twentieth century that people at the state and federal level began the push for the establishment of national forests in Arkansas. As mentioned above their efforts came to fruition in 1907. By the 1920s the addition of land in Oklahoma to the Arkansas National Forest, set the stage for President Coolidge to change the name. During the Great Depression, the Ouachita National Forest was the site of multiple Civilian Conservation Corp Camps and projects. My presentation will attempt to describe these early years of the Ouachita National Forest by examining both how the Ouachita National Forest fit into the larger narrative of conservation and forest policy in the Progressive Era, the 1920s, and the Great Depression, and how the local population experienced the creation of the Ouachita National Forest and the Forest Service policies and regulations that often-challenged local customs.

Audience Questions: 3:00-3:05

**3:10 Dave Malone, Poet/Screenwriter, West Plains**

***Poetry Reading: Glory Days, Train Rides, and Restless Cashiers***

In keeping with the conference's theme, I will read poems from my book *Tornado Drill* (Aldrich Press, 2022) and a new manuscript, *Hymn*, that feature cultural encounters in the Ozarks. The poems relate narratives of youth culture vs adult, local culture vs. the tourism machine, local religious culture vs. mysticism, and family culture vs. poverty.

Audience Questions: 3:35-3:40

**3:45 Denise Henderson Vaughn, Journalist and Independent Media Consultant**

***Controversy in Cave Country: An Endangered Fish, Landowners, and the Feds***

An hour's drive south of St. Louis along the Ozarks' eastern edge is Perry County, Mo., land of 700-plus caves and thousands of sinkholes. There, a county-wide controversy erupted over efforts to designate a small fish as endangered. But this dispute turned into good news when the community cooperated to creatively resolve the problem. Federal, state, and city government, plus landowners, cavers, and other individuals all played roles, helping to save the cave-dwelling grotto sculpin.

Over the course of five years Vaughn followed this story, conducting interviews, collecting data, and slogging through cave streams, while shooting video and photos. The project culminated in an 18-minute documentary that highlights the county's many karst features: caves, springs, sinkholes, and sink basins. This video has been shown at the National Karst and Cave Management Symposium (10/2019), the Mo. Natural Resources Conference (2/2020), the national Natural Areas Association conference (10/2020), and on the PBS affiliate in Cape Girardeau (6/2021). This documentary will comprise most of Vaughn's presentation.

Audience Questions: 4:10-4:15

**4:20 Faith Collins, Missouri State University-West Plains**

***Historical Logging in the Ozarks***

Made possible by the advent of the railroad, followed by hardship after its end, creating the situation which led to conservation in the Ozarks, the wholesale historical logging experienced in the Ozarks between the 1880s and 1920s had far-reaching consequences. The logging companies harvested the native short-leaf pine forests and intermixed hardwood, and then they left. Afterwards, wildlife populations fell dramatically, and heavy erosion took place. Conservation efforts were made, but were they the perfect answer? This presentation attempts to show what the consequences of the logging were but also to explore the cure of conservation.

Audience Questions: 4:45-4:50

**5:30pm**

**Missouri State University-West Plains Alumni and Friends  
Keynote Address**

**Dr. Blake Perkins**

Associate Vice Chancellor for Academics and an Associate Professor of History  
Arkansas State University-Beebe

***Hillbilly Hellraisers: A Closer Look at Rural Ozarkers'  
Damn-Government Defiance in History***

The nationally circulated media photo of 61-year-old Gravette, Arkansas, resident Richard “Bigo” Barnett occupying Nancy Pelosi’s office chair with his foot propped on the House Speaker’s desk during the January 6 Capitol Riot seemed to reinforce longstanding images of the Ozarks as an exceptional bastion of anti-government—and especially anti-Washington—sentiments that date at least to dramatic tales of gun-toting moonshiners resisting the feds in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Is there something special in the Ozarks waters, or otherwise some unique mountaineer heritage in the hills and hollers that explains this “damn gov’ment” defiance? Just how much do the likes of “Bigo” Barnett today and those belligerent Ozarkers of yesteryear have in common? Not nearly as much as you might imagine. Historian Blake Perkins’s book *HILLBILLY HELLRAISERS: FEDERAL POWER AND POPULIST DEFIANCE IN THE OZARKS* probes deep into real-life stories of white working-class Ozarkers who clashed with the federal government and its authorities in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It finds far more complexity—and surprises—than typical stereotypes suggest, as well as significant change over time in the ways working-class Ozarkers viewed the proper roles of federal power. Perkins’s talk will look at several different case studies, ranging from moonshiners colliding with U.S. marshals, small farmers’ run-ins with federal agricultural officials, and rural folks resisting the military draft during the First World War, to better understand the truly local dynamics behind such explosive confrontations. It will also chart how major economic and social transformations in the region during the second half of the twentieth century actually shaped new political attitudes about government among Ozarkers that began forming the more recent roots of today’s widespread enthusiasm for Donald Trump’s dominance of the Republican Party.

Blake Perkins, PhD, is the Associate Vice Chancellor for Academics and an Associate Professor of History at Arkansas State University-Beebe. He is the author of *HILLBILLY HELLRAISERS: FEDERAL POWER AND POPULIST DEFIANCE IN THE OZARKS*, which was published in the University of Illinois Press’s Working Class in American History series in 2017, and editor of a reprint of *YESTERDAY TODAY: LIFE IN THE OZARKS* by Catherine S. Barker in the University of Arkansas Press’s Chronicles of the Ozarks series in 2020. An eighth generation Ozarker, he, his wife Jodie, and their two boys, Maddox and Rylan, live in Lynn, Arkansas, and raise cattle on the family farm.

**7:30-10:00**    *Missouri State University-West Plains Alumni and Friends*  
**Social Hour at Wages Brewing Company (1382 Bill Virdon Blvd., in the East  
Towne Village Center, West Plains, [www.wagesbrewco.com](http://www.wagesbrewco.com) )**

Please join us for drinks and food at West Plains' finest microbrewery. Wages  
Brewing serves both alcoholic and nonalcoholic drinks. All are invited!



## **Saturday, September 24, Magnolia Room, West Plains Civic Center**

### **8:30 Dr. Carla Kirchner, Associate Professor, Southwest Baptist University** ***Encounters with Haints and Booger Dogs: Writing Ozarks Ghost Stories***

In his 1947 *Ozark Superstitions*, folklorist Vance Randolph argues that the telling of ghost tales among Ozarkers is “much more common than it is today,” attributing the loss of the genre to the loss of “lonesome,” romantic places that breed such stories. While ghost stories are certainly still a popular form of entertainment for many, most contemporary tales rely on generic characters, nonspecific settings, and recycled themes. To revive the decaying Ozarks ghost story, my novel-in-progress pulls events and characters from traditional tales which themselves draw inspiration from both Native American and European folklore. In this presentation, I will discuss my process of creating new Ozarks ghost stories by sharing examples of traditional Ozarks ghost-lore, examining the folkloric roots of Ozarks ghosts, and reading sections of my own work.

Audience Questions: 8:55-9:00

### **9:05 Tim Nutt, Director of the Historical Research Center, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences**

#### ***And.....Action! Movies and Television Shows Filmed or Set in the Ozarks***

Throughout the years, the Ozarks Mountains have been used as settings in feature films and television shows. Some have appealed to both critics and the public, while others have been elevated to cult status because of their awfulness. But there are some that have almost been completely forgotten because of bad acting, terrible production, or a poor script. This presentation will showcase the good, bad, and ugly of those movies and television shows that have the Ozarks as a common theme.

Audience Questions: 9:30-9:35

### **9:40 Vincent S. Anderson, Baxter County Library, Mountain Home, Arkansas** ***Our Buried Past Revealed***

Discover the original Ozark cemeteries in the White River Valley prior to the Bull Shoals Dam construction. Preview the 74-year-old, Army Corps of Engineers’ negatives brought into vivid color as we uncover Ozark gravesites & burial traditions.

Audience Questions: 10:05-10:10

### **10:10 Break**

### **10:30 Dr. James Fowler, Professor of English, University of Central Arkansas** ***“Second Growth”***

The story “Second Growth,” from the collection *Field Trip* (Cornerpost Press: 2022), takes place in northwest Arkansas in the late 1990s, a time of significant Hispanic influx in the region. Emmet Hollings, a retired widower, suddenly finds himself a neighbor to one such family that has moved from Texas to start a Mexican restaurant in town. Though comfortable with the culture he’s known all his life, Emmet is not as reactionary as some of the old guard and gradually gets drawn into the extended circle of the outgoing, dynamic Rodriguez family.

Audience Questions: 10:55-11:00

### **11:05 Larry M. David, Certified Wildlife Biologist**

#### ***Wildlife Conservation from the Perspective of One Ozark Family***

I'm a professional wildlife biologist, but I descended from a family of poachers. It is often common for the poaching tradition to be transmitted from generation to generation. So our family may be a rare exception.

I will link the wildlife conservation story in Missouri to my family's story.

Before 1937 the state fish and game agency was controlled by state politics. Wildlife habitat and wildlife populations had declined sharply. Even in the Ozarks the ravages of timber harvest, woodland burning, and erosive farming had depleted the once ample game populations.

I'm here to confess that my paternal grandfather was part of the problem back in those days. He told me that hunting wild turkeys was easy. He said he shot six on a pond bank while on horseback. Nothing to it, he said. That was probably in the 1920s.

My maternal grandfather was more of a law-abiding sportsman. He was one of the lucky 400 Missouri hunters who legally killed a deer in 1937, the last year the season was open for deer until 1945. He shot it with a rifle his Carter County in-laws had used for market hunting years before. He told me it had 70 notches in the stock representing the number of deer killed with it.

By about age 14 I was regularly hunting quail with Dad over his bird dogs. He bought me my first hunting license and taught me about season dates, daily bag limits, and legal methods.

Audience Questions: 11:30-11:35

### **11:40 Joseph Hutchison, Williams Baptist University**

#### ***Vigilante Justice in Northern Arkansas: The Murder of Thurzia Baker, the Rape of Eliza Morgan, and the Trial of Robert Inness***

During the October Term of 1887, a man by the name of Robert Inness stood trial at the Sharp County courthouse in Evening Shade, Arkansas. The accusations against him were the murder of Thurzia Baker and the rape of Eliza Morgan. At first glance, this case seems like an unfortunate, yet rather common, affair in a small, southern town, populated by an influx of new people due to the railroad industry. However, if one looks past the singular case brought against Inness, one will find one of the most elaborate and unique crimes in the history of Sharp County, if not the state of Arkansas. Williford, the scene of the crime, was a fast-growing timber and railroad town. Booming towns such as Williford often brought an influx of new people, which often lead to violence and an uptake in crime. The case brought against Robert Inness spanned several years as the search for Inness lingered on. Inness had been in trouble before and was known as an interesting character, giving the trial a sense of popularity and importance. While Inness' case (the only existing legal documentation regarding the ordeal) provides the best insight to the crimes of 1887, several newspaper articles from papers in Evening Shade to Arkadelphia show that the overall case was much deeper. A band of nine men took part in the rape and murder, all motivated by a bounty delivered by Eliza Kellett, a widow residing in Williford at the time. The reason for Mrs. Kellett's actions remains unknown, but ancestral information, including a potential familial connection between several key figures in the case, provides room for theorization. When the legal proceedings regarding the various crimes were finished, several trials had occurred and several men had gone to jail for their involvement in the case, including Inness. This case is not only interesting by itself, it could also prove useful in the historiography of vigilante justice in the American South. Several vigilante groups, such as the Ku Klux Klan, the Bald Knobbers, and the Graybacks, ruled the backwoods of the South in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. However, the gang involved in the events of July 8<sup>th</sup>, 1887 still proves unique. None of the clan's actions were racial in nature; in fact, one of its members was an African American man named Ned May. Also, the whole series of events was set off by a widowed woman, seemingly inspired by jealousy. This case is also massive, spanning several people, separate trials, and various areas. The seemingly simple case of Robert Inness, found at the Northeast Arkansas Regional Archives, uncovers a much deeper occurrence in the now-desolate town of Williford, Arkansas.

Audience Questions: 12:05-12:10

## **12:10 Lunch Break**

### **1:30 Dr. Elisabeth George, Independent Researcher and K-12 Educator/Administrator** ***Lesbian and Gay Life in Southern Missouri in the Twentieth Century***

Lesbian and gay life in southern Missouri in the second half of the twentieth century was largely characterized by coalition building, the creation of shared identities, and the development of a myriad of tactics for everyday survival and political activism. In this presentation, I build on recent midwestern and southern lesbian and gay scholarship outside of major cities by moving beyond the traditional narratives of homonormativity and metronormativity that place coastal metropolises like New York and San Francisco at the center of lesbian and gay politics and activism. Oftentimes, places like southern Missouri have been glossed over or completely erased as potential centers of gay and lesbian community building and political activism. In order to combat such erasure, I situate this talk within a context where people traveled between the rural hinterland and semi-urban landscapes. While the New Christian Right had a stronghold in the “buckle of the bible belt,” the region’s lesbian and gay population pushed back in several ways. They formed service organizations, created new ways to traverse the sexual landscape, and met outspoken critics of homosexuality with equally fiery resistance. Ultimately, I will show how lesbians and gays in southwest Missouri developed a sense of belonging in the communities in which they lived in the latter half of the twentieth century in order to navigate complicated relationships in their lives, extreme loss during the AIDS crisis, and their engagement with an ongoing public debate over the morality of homosexuality.

Audience Questions: 1:55-2:00

### **2:05 Bob Cunningham, Norfork Natural Resources Consulting** ***Exploring Turn-of-the-Century Logging Railroads in the Missouri Ozarks***

During the later portion of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, some of the nation’s largest lumber companies operated in southern Missouri. Extensive railroads, called trams, transported logs, equipment, and crews between the logging camps and the sawmills. All have been abandoned for over 100 years. Today, the use of LiDAR imagery provides insight into the hidden locations of trams and their construction techniques.

Audience Questions: 2:30-2:35

### **2:40 Dr. Sean Rost, The State Historical Society of Missouri** ***The African American Heritage in the Ozarks Project: An Overview***

In 2021, The State Historical Society of Missouri was awarded an American Rescue Plan Act grant through the National Endowment for the Humanities and Missouri Humanities for a project titled “African American Heritage in the Ozarks.” This project aims to gather and organize an ample collection of primary and secondary sources related to African American life, provide public programming in multiple communities in the Ozarks, develop physical and digital exhibits, and preserve the voices and memories related to traditions, genealogy, and firsthand accounts of the people who have lived in the region. The Missouri Ozarks, as defined in this project, cover roughly 1/3 of the state of Missouri, and are bordered by the St. Francois Mountains to the east, the Lake of the Ozarks to the north, the Osage Plains to the west, and the state border of Arkansas to the south.

In this presentation, project members will discuss several key components of the project, including excerpts from audio/video oral histories, the creation of the “Emancipation Day in the Missouri Ozarks” interactive map and “The Thunderbird Spirit” episode of the Our Missouri Podcast, and the developing of the upcoming “African American Heritage in the Ozarks” exhibit that will premiere in 2023.

Audience Questions: 3:05-3:10

**3:15    Mariah E. Marsden, The Ohio State University**

***Textual Encounters in the Ozarks***

Growing up in the rural Missouri Ozarks, we often had piles of paper around the house: clippings of local news sent over by my grandmother; pamphlets from the neighboring Mennonite church left inside our mailbox; bulletins my father had saved from his visits to the nearby agricultural experiment station. My mother still adds to her collection of magazines from our electric cooperative, which she saves for the recipes and weather lore that preface each issue. When I returned to the region as a folklorist and graduate student, I was struck by how people turned again and again to print materials when talking about their traditions and sense of place. They shared books of family histories, xeroxed copies of old newspaper articles they'd pulled from local archives, and collections of proverbs that were typed and printed on their home computer. These observations inform my current project, which traces a topic that has yet to receive focused critical attention: rural print culture.

I propose a connection between print culture and folklore studies that can offer new insights into the communicative and cultural resources of a region shaped by its rurality. Rather than centering popular publications with broad circulation, I take a folkloristic approach to explore how Ozarkers create, collect, and share news, traditions, and knowledge through everyday genres of print that are often imagined on the periphery of media networks. By examining specific case studies of Ozark print culture, I demonstrate how people make use of print, both as a technology and as a modality tied to history and tradition, to envision and negotiate regional narratives in creative and unexpected ways.

Audience Questions: 3:40-3:45

**3:50    Lou Wehmer, Independent Scholar, West Plains**

***Southern Missouri's Most Hated Man***

Colonel William Monks played an outsized role in the partisan clashes of the Civil War and Reconstruction eras. Lou Wehmer guides the audience through his tumultuous life as "Southern Missouri's Most Hated Man."

Audience Questions: 4:15-4:20

**4:25    Prof. Mark Spitzer, Associate Professor of Creative Writing, University of Central Arkansas**

***Cryptozarkia***

Tall tales and embellished narratives of supernatural creatures are signature conventions of "cultural encounters in the Ozarks" that contain rich, colorful backstories. Though apocryphal in nature, this tradition has historically supplied the communal imagination with a lot of highly debatable material to recycle while also suggesting psycho- and sociological motives for inventing fabulous cryptozoological fabrications. My forthcoming collection *Cryptozarkia* explores such im/possibilities through the mode of "investigative poetics," which is a postmodern collaging of scholarship, history, folklore, science, excerpts from various texts, and imagery. In a PowerPoint presentation that focuses on the making of modern regional monster-mythologies, I will talk about and present research on "Crab Tick" conspiracies, the Nixa Hellhound, Big Al the murderous mutant alligator gar, and more.

Audience Questions: 4:50-4:55

**5:00 Dr. Tom Kersen, Associate Professor of Sociology, Jackson State University**  
***Columba Krebs: The Story of an Ozarks Spiritual Saucerian and Cosmic Artist***

As a region, the Ozarks offers many things to fascinate a scholar. Focusing on the creative side of the Ozarks, I wish to look at one person, Columba Krebs, who lived on the margins of American culture and created alternative worlds through her art and worldview as a “Spiritual Saucerian.” It is this marginal or liminal space, as anthropologist Victor Turner wrote is filled with men and women such as “Prophets and artists [...] strive with a passionate sincerity to rid themselves of the clichés...” such as those posed by mainstream society. I first learned about Krebs from Kat Yronwode, founder of the intentional community called Garden Joy Blues in Shannon. Kat told me that Columba was like a godmother to many of the countercultural folks around the country and even in the Ozarks. Her father was a celebrated circuit lecturer who exposed paranormal charlatans even though he held paranormal beliefs. He would later marry Margorie Main, of Ma Kettle fame. Columba was a devoted theosophist who later was connected to the “I AM,” Unarians, and other UFO cults. She had her own outer space comic book in the 1930s filled with little elf like people who escape their dying planet to find a new home on Earth. In the early 1960s, she was the editor of *The Clarion Call!*, a paranormal newsletter out of Arizona. She attended Buck Nelson’s Flying Saucer conference for several years. After leading a very colorful and well-traveled life, she moved to Willow Springs. She even sought to build a “cosmic art shrine” near Buck’s homestead.

Audience Questions: 5:25-5:30

**5:35 Alex T. Primm, Community and Oral Historian, Springfield, Missouri**  
***A Visit to Ginny and Leonard Hall***

This paper will focus on the work of Leonard Hall and his wife Virginna of Caledonia, Mo. The couple was involved in environmental issues of the late twentieth century. My parents had a cabin near their Possum Trot Farm in the Belleview Valley, so I had a chance to know them well. Leonard wrote a half-dozen books and Ginny danced in the Broadway theater. Their enthusiasm for their community and the Ozarks needs to be forwarded into the future.

Audience Questions: 6:00-6:05

**6:15 Screening of *Ozarks Deep Art and Culture Trails: West Plains Story Tour***

A documentary film about West Plains history. Popcorn provided!

[OZARKS DEEP: ART AND CULTURE TRAILS | West Plains Council on the Arts  
\(westplainsarts.org\)](https://www.westplainsarts.org)

*Elder Mountain: A Journal of Ozarks Studies*

Published by the Department of English at Missouri State University-West Plains.  
Volumes 1-9 are available for sale at the Symposium's book table.

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**Ozarks Studies Program at Missouri State University-Springfield**

The Ozarks Studies Program is an interdisciplinary minor course of study allowing students to concentrate on the geography, history, literature, and cultures of the Ozarks. The minor provides students with an understanding and appreciation of the environment and cultures of the Ozarks region, past and present.

# Sixteenth Annual Ozarks Studies Symposium, 2023

## Call for Proposals

The Ozarks Studies Committee of Missouri State University-West Plains seeks proposals for its 16th annual symposium to be held at the West Plains Civic Center on September 21-23, 2023.

The theme of the 2023 symposium is “**Legacies of the Ozarks.**” This broad theme is intended to accommodate consideration of a wide variety of topics. The committee is also happy to consider a variety of supplemental topics or approaches related to the Ozarks.

For purposes of this symposium, the Ozarks is defined broadly to encompass much of southern Missouri and northern Arkansas and adjacent portions of Oklahoma, Kansas, and Illinois.

Community members, historians, oral historians, folklorists, artists, writers, scholars, or students representing any discipline or field are invited to propose presentations consistent with this theme. Each presenter will be allotted 30 minutes; presenters will be asked to limit their prepared presentations to approximately 20 to 25 minutes to allow time for questions and discussion. Presentations may take the form of conventional conference papers or any other form suitable for such a symposium.

Proposals should be approximately 200 to 300 words in length and should include a preliminary summary of the content of the proposed presentation and a list of any audio-visual or other technological requirements. They should also include the submitter's name, institutional affiliation and/or professional title, and complete contact information.

Student Sessions: The Ozarks Studies Symposium encourages students of all levels to contribute proposals, including poster session proposals related to the theme.

Email proposals to Dr. Jason McCollom, Associate Professor of History at Missouri State University-West Plains, at either [jasonmccollom@missouristate.edu](mailto:jasonmccollom@missouristate.edu). To be given first consideration, proposals must be received by July 1, 2023.