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



**The Sixteenth Annual Ozarks Studies  
Symposium**

**“Legacies of the Ozarks”  
September 21-23, 2023**



**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:***

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Missouri Humanities Council  
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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 21, 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

### **King of the Ozarks Exhibit, Joyce McMurtrey, Photographer**

Like her photographs, Joyce McMurtrey has deep roots in the Missouri Ozarks. A native of Columbia, MO, Joyce has spent the past four decades in Wright County. Together with her husband, Joyce farmed 75 acres of grapes near Mountain Grove. After the birth of her daughter in 1986, Joyce bought a camera. What began as an attempt to capture her family's life on the farm grew into a passion that can be seen in her powerful portraits of the people and places she calls home.

King of the Ozarks began from Joyce's curiosity to discover more details about an almost mythical person, H. King Davis, and a wish to meet her neighbors. Over four years, the project evolved into a collection of portraits and profiles from interviews Joyce conducted with this multi-generational African American family who've farmed in southern Missouri since the Homestead Act.

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

## **Friday, September 22, Magnolia Room, West Plains Civic Center**

**8:00-9:00 Refreshments**

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

### **Poster Presentation on Display, Friday and Saturday: Dr. Thomas Kersen, *Duck's Breath Mystery Theater***

Duck's Breath Mystery Theatre was originally from Missouri in the early 1970s. Dan Coffey, a founding member, read about Nelson in a St. Louis newspaper and decided to use the idea of Buck Nelson's Space Convention as a set of skits within a skit. His troupe, Duck's Breath Mystery Theatre didn't make a lot of money during its 14-year run but NPR did use some of their material. Dan would go onto another project "Mr Science" before returning to Iowa to teach. Another troupe member went on to become MTV's Randy of the Redwoods! Dr. Kersen will offer a poster presentation about the troupe.

### **9:15 Susan Croce Kelly, *Ozarks Watch Magazine***

#### ***The Story of Betty and Lucile, the Ozarks' Fearless Female Journalists***

During the 1950s and early 1960s, two middle-aged women, one a photographer and one a writer, traveled back and forth across the Ozarks, covering the news, producing feature spreads on regional celebrations, and sharing information about historic sites and events. The two, Betty Love and Lucile Morris Upton, became widely recognized, and often were far more newsworthy than the stories they covered.

Susan Croce Kelly discusses the legacy of these two hard-charging Ozark women, from the value of the newspaper articles they left behind, to how they raised awareness of Ozarks history, to their standing as role-models for young women. In a time when most women looked forward to marriage, children, or possibly jobs as teachers or nurses, these two independent newswomen forged a place for themselves, and in so doing, they opened the eyes of girls and young women across the Ozarks as to what might be possible.

Audience Questions: 9:40-9:45

**9:50 Alex Primm, Oral and Community Historian, Springfield, MO**

***We Can Make It Here: Survival Strategies by Traditional Ozarkers***

I owe debt to the late Ralph ‘Treehouse’ Brown, of rural Steelville, Crawford County, Missouri, who taught many lessons over the years. Mr. Brown was one of the first people to rent aluminum canoes in the Ozarks. One of the wisest things he said was:

“My mainstay had been working in the timber cutting cordwood for charcoal and stove wood. But back in those days, I learned I could always make twice as much paddling a johnboat with a doctor or an attorney while they did the fishing. They knew my brother Cliff and I were the best.”

Floating Ozark rivers was exotic for me growing up in suburban St. Louis. After serving in 1969 as an editor of an Army newspaper in Vietnam and using the G.I. Bill to earn a Master’s Degree in political science, I was determined to learn more about the Ozarks. My father loved the region and brought me fishing on the Niangua River many times.

I found opportunities to do oral history with a variety of institutions, which helped organize my book *Ozark Voices: Oral Histories from the Heartland*. I worked for the U.S. Army, the Forest Service, the Geological Survey, the National Parks and Missouri organization such as the Department of Conservation and Forest Park Forever in St. Louis.

Teaching oral history workshops in rural schools through the state arts councils in Arkansas and Missouri also taught me about our region. Studies by the folk historian Vance Randolph showed the bodacious Ozarks will remain a conundrum for the future.

Vance carried out a huge variety of projects, but also lamented the traditional ‘hill crofters’ he befriended along the Arkansas border and elsewhere were dying out. Modernization in the form of automobiles, tourism and electricity was changing life in the region as it did elsewhere. But at the end of his life, Dr. Randolph found that, although old ways were changing, the region seemed to attract and hold independent-minded people who valued the region for their own unique reasons. This migration of new residents into the Ozarks has particularly fascinated me.

What makes our region unique? Have old traditions been forgotten or just gradually changed? Everyone here has different ideas about that. It’s the kind of topic we can debate and research well into the future. Oral history is one way to do this.

Cultural change can be a fascinating topic, I realized as I worked on my manuscript. But I didn’t want just a collection of local color articles and interviews. I needed a focus. How people have made a living in the region created a focus that makes oral history an important methodology for the region’s future.

Audience Questions: 10:15-10:20

**10:20 Break**

**10:35 Dr. Mara W. Cohen Ioannides, Ozarks Studies Association**

***The Legend of the Man who always Paid in Gold***

*Uncle Joe Paid in Gold* is an historical fiction novel based on the life of Joseph Sondheimer the Jewish founder of Muskogee, Oklahoma. He was known for paying everyone, regardless of race, with gold coin and for never carrying a weapon, even in the notorious dangerous early Muskogee. Arriving in the US by the age of 13 with nothing, he eventually arrived in what was to become Muskogee and became a wealthy man, leaving much of his wealth to city organizations upon his death. He was a fur trader, who raised three children on his own. This presentation will be a reading from the working draft of the novel.

Audience Questions: 11:00-11:05

## **11:10 Chuck Davis, Visual Artist and Independent Curator**

### ***Avoidance of Othering: Ozark Giraffe Homes***

Visual representation by mass media has othered people of the Ozarks. The origin of othering has many observers; however, discussion of visual representation and othering of the Ozarks has less voice among scholars. Yet it's hard to imagine othering without images, either static or moving pictures. Even theatrical presentation has othered the Ozarks.

Chuck Davis is a photographer and independent curator working in Ozark themes, engaged in topics of intergenerational tension and conflict. His practice as a photographer has spanned nearly fifty years, beginning as a photojournalist for the Fort Worth Star-Telegram and currently embraces historical methods of photography such as tintypes, ambrotypes, and calotypes. Beginning in 2023, Chuck is beginning a multi-year project to photograph stone-stacked and stone-sided homes, churches, and public buildings within the vernacular description of Ozark Giraffes. These “mixed masonry” structures will be documented, and residents interviewed, with the intent to interpret a popular mindset by comparison to the cultural reference to handmade, masonry-sided structures. Chuck will be working in a variety of photographic mediums to interpret Ozark Giraffes at the intersection of othering, using pinhole cameras, field view cameras, and contemporary digital recording devices.

This presentation will unpack the approach and steps to interpretation while seeking feedback and discourse into the remediation of othering.

Audience Questions: 11:35-11:40

## **11:45 Charity Gibson, Associate Professor of English, College of the Ozarks**

### ***The Role of the YMCA in the Ozarks***

This presentation covers the history and continued presence of the YMCA within the Ozarks. There are only six YMCA facilities in the United States that offer a resort facility. One of these is the YMCA of the Ozarks, located in Potosi, MO. The Ozarks Regional YMCA consists of 9 different locations. This promotion of the Y as something with a specifically Ozark connection is noteworthy because many of the early facilities were built in urban areas to offer recreation opportunities to inner city children and families. The shift to endorsing rural YMCAs was originally termed “country work.” Today, Y facilities operate in urban, suburban, and rural locations.

Miller notes that part of the local Y’s mission is to find ways to connect with its community, “The YMCA particularly uses a variety of ideographs in its rhetoric to engage with publics and affirm its identity as an organization.” Thus, though the Y did not originally have strong connections with the Ozarks, in an effort to serve the Ozarks, it has sought ways to identify with the region. As the cultivation of self-esteem is an important part of the Y’s mission, facilities located within the Ozarks are calling upon a sense of place and rootedness in the community by naming their Y branches accordingly. Tom Beernsten notes that each Y prioritizes capitalizing on what is effective for their demographic, “The unique genius of the YMCA is that each community decides what programs and facilities are needed and are only limited by the creativity and generosity of local leaders.” The activities, programs, and distinctiveness of the facility various Y programs offer are all tied to the specific community and its needs and interests.

The purpose of my talk is to spread awareness of the history of the YMCAs in the Ozark as well as their current contributions to the area.

Audience Questions: 12:10-12:15

**12:20 Dr. Vanessa Garry, Associate Professor, College of Education, University of Missouri-St. Louis, and Missouri Speakers Bureau of the State Historical Society of Missouri**  
***President Ruth M. Harris: Educating Missouri's Black Teachers During the Progressive Era***

Prior to 1865, the year the Civil War ended, it was unlawful for Black children to attend public schools in Missouri. The Missouri General Assembly replaced the 1847 law that prohibited Black children from attending public schools with the 1865 law allowing them to enroll in segregated schools. After public schools opened for Black children, Black leaders petitioned the school districts for Black teachers. St Louis Public Schools (SLPS) acquiesced by hiring its first Black teachers in 1877. SLPS opened a segregated normal school in 1890. Its normal school and Lincoln University in Jefferson City were the only 2 segregated higher education institutions in Missouri. SLPS initially housed the normal school, later named Stowe Teachers College (Stowe) in the high school and later moved it to a new facility in 1940. During that same year, SLPS hired Ruth M. Harris as the college's first Black female president. Harris' appointment as president of Stowe made headlines in Black newspapers such as The Pittsburgh Courier.

This historical narrative illuminates Harris' leadership from 1940 to 1954 and her contributions to the training of Black educators that served SLPS, other districts throughout Missouri, and beyond its borders. Harris, with degrees from the University of Chicago and Columbia University, wasted little time collaborating with faculty and community to implement progressive practices. Hallmarks of her tenure included curriculum development, remedial programs for freshmen, work/study community programs for students, and accreditation for the college. In 1954, the year the Supreme Court decided the Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka case and the district combined the segregated colleges, she relinquished her duties as Stowe's president. Harris' most noteworthy contributions include securing accreditation for the college (now Harris-Stowe State University) and being one of the few female presidents of a college or university during the early 20th century.

Audience Questions: 12:45-12:50

**1:00 Lunch Break**

**2:00 Dr. John J. Han, Professor of English and Creative Writing, Missouri Baptist University**  
***Harold Bell Wright's Civil Religion: God and the Groceryman***

*God and the Groceryman* (1927) is the last novel in Harold Bell Wright's trilogy about Dan Matthews. Matthews plays a minor role in *The Shepherd of the Hills* but becomes the main character of *The Calling of Dan Matthews*, in which he renounces his pastoral ministry to become a businessman. At the beginning of *God and the Groceryman*, he appears as a millionaire miner in Kansas City. Having made enough money, he intends to try "a practical Christianity" (p. 439) and to help "save America [...] by the worship of God" (p. 419)—in the imaginary Ozarks city of Westover. His ministry strives to "get a little Christian religion into the business of our country" (415) so that irreligiosity in the United States does not lead to "an appalling moral bankruptcy" (418). In *God and the Groceryman*, the word *church* appears 450 times, but the term mainly highlights how the main character's ministry has little to do with institutional Christianity. The words *denomination* and *denominational* appear 318 times in the novel, but Wright uses them in a negative sense, which implies his Restorationist aversion to sectarianism. *God and the Groceryman* reflects Wright's Social Gospel, as well as the anti-creedal impulse of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), to which he belonged. Some members of the Organized Charities of Westover in the novel are Christians, but what prompted them was "not a sense of Christian but of civic duty" (chapter 7). As Carroll F. Burcham notes, *God and the Groceryman* is "a sermon as well as a [fictional] story" (174). This paper discusses Wright's idea of civil religion, as opposed to doctrinal religion, by borrowing insights from Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *The Social Contract* (1762) and Robert N. Bellah's *Varieties of Civil Religion* (1980).

Audience Questions: 2:25-2:30

**2:35 Vincent S. Anderson, Baxter County Library, Mountain Home, AR**

***Neck Discoid Gravestones: Migration Patterns in the Ozarks***

Ozark migration paths are not only recognized from past communities, crossings, and trails, but we can also see these treks reflected in cemeteries and their gravestones. The Neck Discoid gravestone is fashioned comparable to a flat, human effigy with a distinct neck and a rounded head atop the marker. Although we can trace the stone's origin and shape back to Scotland and the Ulster region of Ireland, we can also discover its migration from these countries. In America, it is documented that these Old-World, effigy stones date back to the 1700s in Tennessee. As the West opened up, descendants of these regions journeyed to the Ozarks, harvested native sandstone, and carved gravestones of remembrance for family and friends. Today, these eroding stones are being documented using the 75-year-old, Army Corps of Engineers' negatives produced prior to the Bull Shoals Dam construction in the early 1950s. These Neck Discoid gravestones reside in both abandoned and working cemeteries. These cemeteries document past migrations and communities. Anderson has currently located 54 Neck Discoid markers in the Ozarks, and he will document his findings and show examples within Ozark cemeteries.

Audience Questions: 3:00-3:05

**3:10 Carla Kirchner, Associate Professor of Language and Literature, Southwest Baptist University, Bolivar, MO**

***Folk and Fiction: Anatomy of a Contemporary Folkloric Narrative***

Folktales create a common history for a region and can, therefore, forge bonds between the past and contemporary readers and between contemporary readers themselves. As a fiction writer, I've long been interested in the intersection of folktale and contemporary fiction and in the retelling and reuse of folktale in twenty-first-century stories. In this presentation, I will share a few examples of contemporary authors who harness the legacy of folktale; discuss the ways in which Ozark folklore and folk belief shape my fiction; and trace the development of "The Sin Eater," one of my own folklore-based stories.

Audience Questions: 3:35-3:40

**3:45 Steve Wiegenstein, Author, Columbia, MO**

***Legacy of Intolerance: Initial Observations on the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s Missouri Ozarks***

The first half of the 1920s was a period of resurgence for the Ku Klux Klan in the United States, particularly in the Midwest and West, and the Ozarks did not escape this trend. Kenneth Barnes' book *The Ku Klux Klan in 1920s Arkansas: How Protestant White Nationalism Came to Rule a State* provides an excellent survey of this period in Arkansas, but no similar work has yet been produced for the Missouri experience. This presentation gives a sketch of the level and type of Klan activity in the Missouri Ozarks, although at this point it makes no claim to be complete or comprehensive. Rather, it provides a general picture of the Klan's presence in the Missouri Ozarks during this critical period, with indications of how the organization exercised its influence and what kinds of activities it engaged in. This overview was compiled using the resources of the State Historical Society of Missouri's Digital Newspaper Archive.

Audience Questions: 4:10-4:15



**4:20** **Crockett Oaks III, Vice Chancellor of Business Support Services, Missouri State University-West Plains, and Kevin M. Cupka Head, Director, Center for Archaeological Research, Missouri State University, Springfield**  
***Restoring Sadie Brown Cemetery – Its Cultural Significance and Lasting Impact on a Community***

As far back as the mid 1800's, a 2.5-acre plot of land located north of West Plains, Missouri at the intersection of Highway 14 and Highway 63 North, has served as a cemetery. This cemetery became known as Sadie Brown Cemetery, named after Saint Legar Brown, an African American Methodist Minister and Farmer and perhaps his wife Sarah Brown, who was granted the land as a part of the Homestead Act of 1862. Sadie Brown Cemetery's origins is as the final resting place for African American citizens in the Howell County area. Due to circumstances beyond its control, the cemetery fell into a state of disrepair over the years. Missing headstones, among other problematic issues, affected its operational use. In 2021, an extensive effort was embarked upon to restore Sadie Brown Cemetery using scientific technology afforded by Missouri State University's Center for Archeological Research. Through restorative efforts, the steadfast support of the community and descendants of those interred there, Sadie Brown Cemetery's transformation serves as a beacon of hope for its community.

Audience Questions: 4:45-4:50

**4:55** **Dave Malone, Multi-Hyphenate Creative, West Plains, MO**  
***For Love of the Game: Celebrating the Legacy of Sport in the Ozarks through Poetry***

“Ozarkers took their baseball games [seriously in 1892]. They were more than casual athletic contests: on the conduct and performance of a team rode the pride and prestige of an entire community.”

—Robert K. Gilmore

I will read a selection of poems celebrating the legacy of sport—from baseball to boxing—in the Ozarks.

Audience Questions: 5:20-5:25

**5:30pm**

**Keynote Performance  
West Plains Civic Center Auditorium**

**Dr. Dawn Larsen**  
Professor of Theatre, Francis Marion University

***Granny's Fixit: An Ozarks Guide to Healing the Body and Soul***

Dawn grew up in Forsyth, MO, a town very much like Mayberry. Her Grandpa was a county official who worked at the courthouse. There was a town drunk, a Barney, and a town doctor who made his own medicines. When Doc Threadgill wasn't available, he would defer to an older native, a granny woman. Granny women were healers/midwives/seers found in Appalachia and the Ozarks. As a little girl, Dawn knew one. She finds these women fascinating so she took the stories of five real Ozark granny women and created a character who, according to one audience member, "tells the story of all women." You might be surprised at how relevant Granny's issues are today.

Featuring traditional songs and original music from her second CD, *Hillbillyland*, she has been described as "part Patty Griffin... part Todd Snider...part Linda Ronstadt...ALL honest, soulful lyrics combining Americana, alt-Country, Blues, and Folk musical styles while exploring life as a progressive hillbilly girl living in the deep south."

We all know, or we should, that women's stories have often been excluded from history. Women, especially older women, are treated as if we are invisible. Well...Dawn, who is entering into her crone years, thinks we have something to say....She does anyway and this show celebrates the crone, the granny woman and brings her out of the holler and into the light! Combining several historic granny women into one character, to tell a story of women in a solo show that features original and historic, music, spoken word, comedy, and images to transport audiences to the place she calls home.

For more information about me: DawnLarsenMusic.com. You can get a taste of the show at [dawnlarsenmusic.com/solo-shows](http://dawnlarsenmusic.com/solo-shows).

**7:30-10:00 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's finest microbrewery. Wages Brewing serves both alcoholic and nonalcoholic drinks. All are invited!

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

### **8:00 Craig R. Amason, Associate Director, Ozarks Folklife Festival, Missouri State University Libraries**

#### ***The Impact of Immigration in McDonald County in the 21st Century***

McDonald County is in the southwest corner of Missouri in the multi-state Ozarks Region. Since 1998, the county has seen a significant increase in ethnic diversity in its population. Immigrants and refugees from Central and South America, Somalia, Sudan, Micronesia, and Myanmar have settled into the county, primarily attracted by employment at the chicken processing facility in the small town of Noel. The largest portion of the county's immigrant population is Hispanic, but the influx of people from Africa and Oceania has created a unique community by comparison to most of rural Missouri in the Ozarks. In the 21st century the population has outpaced the growth of the county's infrastructure. Most of these immigrants speak limited English, reducing their ability to acculturate and find social and economic independence.

This presentation will explore how people of various ethnic backgrounds found their way to McDonald County. The presentation will also demonstrate the impact their presence has had on the economic, political, social, and religious fabric of the county and how they are continuing to adjust to life in southwest Missouri.

Audience Questions: 8:25-8:30

### **8:30 Cassie E. Brown, MSW, LCSW, Author, Social Worker, and Advocate**

#### ***Meth and Magic: Writing the Modern Ozarks Through a Folkloric Lens***

The Ozarks has long produced a rich harvest of folklore, healing, and folk magic traditions. From carrying buckeyes to drinking sassafras tea, the Ozarks provide ample fodder for storytellers. Author, social worker, advocate, and former psychotherapist Cassie E. Brown (she/her) writes fiction, essays, and poetry influenced and inspired by Ozark folklore, myths, and magic, but her characters reside in the world of today. Whether tackling the twin risks of the opioid and meth epidemics, grieving an uneasy political climate, or deeply observing nature, she writes through a personal inheritance of, as well as finely researched, mythos of Ozark magic. Her writing is stubbornly rural, pointedly queer, and, in the finest Ozark cultural tradition, proudly raw. In this session, Cassie will share writing, both published and unpublished, that weave Ozark folk traditions into fiction and essays addressing modern fears of poverty, addiction, and sociopolitical displacement, as well as more traditional themes of family, grief, and belonging. She will also share how her family's relationship to the Missouri Ozarks shapes her perspective and written voice.

Audience Questions: 8:55-9:00

**9:05 Paulette Bane, Harding University**

***Poems***

This selection of poetry grows out of my Ozarks-based childhood in northern Arkansas and return visits with my daughter. The poems are excerpted from *Wild Muse: Ozarks Nature Poetry* (Cornerpost Press), edited by Phillip Howerton.

From my artist statement in the anthology: “The Ozarks are their own world, a world I carry with me—a love of land and preservation that my grandmother taught me and that I seek to pass on. Poetry is one way I can access the past and make meaning, since it offers a way to condense experience. Writing poetry, which for me is also a process of discovery, makes the difficult parts of life easier to bear by naming them, and it brings the beautiful into focus.”

Audience Questions: 9:30-9:35

**9:40 Jo Van Arkel, Professor of English, Drury University**

***Legacies: Women, Folktales and Ozark Magic***

Van Arkel discusses the legacy of folklore in fiction that represents women’s lived experience by expanding on Vance Randolph’s work, but also adding to that discussion with work by other folklorists including references to *It’s Good to Tell You: French Folktales from Missouri*, by Rosemary Hyde Thomas, and *Legends and Lore of Missouri* by Earl A. Collins. Van Arkel will combine discussion of folklore research with a reading of micro and flash fiction.

Audience Questions: 10:05-10:10

**10:10 Break**

**10:30 Dean Curtis, Curtis Photography LLC, Springfield, MO**

***The Wild Horses of Shannon County***

Curtis has been photographing the wild horses of Shannon County, MO, for 15 years. In this presentation he will present some of his favorite photos and contextualizes the photos with information from experts, locals, congressional testimony, and oral history. Curtis is a retired photojournalist and photo editor with over 40 years of documentary photography experience. He was the photo editor at the *Springfield News-Leader* for over 22 of those years and was inducted into the Missouri Photojournalism Hall of Fame in 2015.

Audience Questions: 10:55-11:00

**11:05 James Fowler, Professor of English emeritus, University of Central Arkansas**

***“Downstream”***

Dr. Fowler reads his short story, “Downstream.” Plot summary: With both parents in a nursing home and a brother he hasn’t seen since childhood now dead of heart failure, Lance Lawson has a lot to juggle. His home life with a successful spouse and two college-age daughters is happy, but he faces the prospect of an emptying nest before long. Dropping everything, he drives from Colorado to northwest Arkansas to collect some of his brother Ray’s belongings and glean what he can of his life. Once at his brother’s house in the Ozarks, he meets Glen Troutmann, a fishing guide who is Lance’s best hope for connecting after the fact with an older sibling whose adult self has been a thorough mystery to him.

Audience Questions: 11:30-11:35

**11:40 Alesha Cerny (Hauser), Architectural Historian, National Park Service**

***Proud Echoes: The Federal Building Program and Stone Architecture of Vilonia, Arkansas***

Modest structures made of large stones proliferated in the rural towns of central Arkansas and the Ozark Mountains region during the 1930s and 1940s. The town of Vilonia, Arkansas, is a prime example having a long history of stone structures built with distinctive regional characteristics from as early as the 1920s to the present. This vernacular architecture peaked during the 1940s after men became skilled in masonry construction from working on building projects associated with Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal programs. These programs sought to restore families back to a desired level of comfort through direct relief payments and public works projects. Through these programs, the status of the vernacular or untrained local builder was heightened to a new level.

Documentation and fieldwork revealed that stone structures in Vilonia are largely characterized by Craftsman influences. Many were built using mixed masonry materials meaning that stone and brick were both utilized as construction materials in a single building. A windshield survey of the properties was conducted from which a variety of the best examples were measured. Residents were also interviewed. This vernacular methodology was combined with the social and technological aspects of depression era architecture. New Deal programs ultimately contributed to the architectural and social character of Vilonia, Arkansas.

Audience Questions: 12:05-12:10

**12:10 Lunch Break**

**1:00 C.D. Albin, Professor of English, Missouri State University-West Plains**

***"Silhouettes of Ruin": Shrouded Truths in The Maid's Version***

Functioning as both narrative and symbolic center of Daniel Woodrell's *The Maid's Version*, the novel's fifteenth chapter opens upon a memorably spectral sunset scene: the destruction left behind by the 1929 explosion of the Arbor Dance Hall in West Table, Missouri, and the stream of visitors who congregate near the ruins each evening at sunset. Given West Table's frustration that no firm answers for the explosion are announced and no perpetrators held accountable, Woodrell cannily chooses the phrase "silhouettes of ruin" to convey *The Maid's Version's* most evocative image. While at first glance the shape of a silhouette may appear familiar, its interior, as Randall Wilhelm puts it, "refuses to reveal any visual information beyond its outline and as such remains stubbornly 'unknowable,' a void of undecipherable blackness." Ultimately, according to Wilhelm, the silhouette is "an art form that seeks to hide as much, or more than it shows." Seizing upon this curtained, impenetrable quality, Woodrell employs the silhouette as the central symbol for the frequent shrouding of truth portrayed in *The Maid's Version*, a novel constructed to probe tensions between the known and unknown, the cloaked and exposed, the verbal and the mute.

Audience Questions: 1:25-1:30

**1:30 Dr. Thomas M. Kersen, Associate Professor of Sociology, Jackson State University**

***A Tale of Three Hippy Homesteader families: Understanding the Ozark Back-to-the-Land Movement***

At the end of 1978, in one of the harshest winters, my family, several couples, and single folks traveled caravan-style to the Ozarks to start an intentional commune. We all lived in a tar paper shack with one pot belly stove. When I started the fifth grade at Ozark, I was a hippy kid with no clue about the south, outdoors, etc. I didn't know until I was in my 30s or 40s that there were two other families in my class who came under similar circumstances. I will share and compare our back-to-the-land experiences and legacy.

Audience Questions: 1:55-2:00

**2:05 Joyce McMurtrey, Researcher and Photographer, Mountain Grove, MO**  
***King of the Ozarks***

*King of the Ozarks* was inspired by a collection of portraits and profiles from interviews Joyce McMurtrey conducted with members of the Davis/Thompkins family. This multi-generational African-American family has farmed in southern Missouri since the Homestead Act. Joyce will explain how she created the project and then introduce Mark Dixon and Tyra Dixon-Knox, members of the faith community, who will read profiles from the book. Jean Davis Sigh, the oldest of King and Jean's daughters, will speak about her life in the Ozarks followed by her son, Maurice Hicks, one of the last of King's grandsons to spend time on the farm and grow up with the Davis legacy.

Audience Questions: 2:30-2:35

**2:40 Dr. Kitty Ledbetter, Professor Emerita, Texas State University**  
***Si Siman's Legacy to the Ozarks: A Life in Entertainment***

In the mid-1950s, Springfield, Missouri was a worthy competitor with Nashville as the home of country music because of its role in introducing the first continuous live country music show on network television, ABC's Ozark Jubilee (1955-1960). As Executive Producer of the Jubilee, Si Siman was large responsible for its success. However, the rest of Siman's life story is yet more remarkable than the country music television show he produced. My presentation at the Ozarks Studies Symposium would feature one or more eras from Siman's life that contributed to his reputation as a remarkable, legendary Ozarks figure.

During the 1920s and early 1930s he was a boy-wonder entertainment entrepreneur and a bat boy for the Springfield Cardinals minor league baseball team. During the mid-1930s he was booking Tommy Dorsey, Ella Fitzgerald, Glenn Miller, and other big bands while he was still in high school. During the summers he traveled the country as driver and secretary for the famous St. Louis Cardinals talent scout Charley Barrett. After serving in the Navy in World War II, Siman played an essential role in the production of KWTO radio's live and recorded performances during the "Golden Days of Radio." In the late 1940s he turned his thoughts to television with the rest of the country and joined with Springfield's greatest media talent during TV's formative years to create and produce the Ozark Jubilee. After the Jubilee ended, Siman became an award-winning music publisher responsible for some of the greatest hits in twentieth-century music. Siman had many opportunities to find success in distant cities, but he chose to do it all from his home in the Ozarks.

Audience Questions: 3:05-3:10

**3:15 Dr. Douglas S. Shipley, Board Member and Historian and Genealogist, Opportunity 1888 Foundation**

***Harrison School: Tipton's "Colored" School***

Like other towns in Missouri's "Little Dixie," Tipton, Missouri was settled by proslavery individuals from Kentucky, Tennessee, and Virginia. From 1890 to 1957, Harrison School (the "colored" school) operated as a racially segregated school. Sharing the complete history of Tipton, Missouri's first fully funded Black public school, Dr. Douglas S. Shipley reveals the origins of why and how Harrison School was created. Through historical documents, photographs, newspaper articles, and oral and written histories, Shipley describes how from its inception and construction, through its maintenance for over sixty years, the Harrison School exemplified the United States codified racial system of "separate but equal." The goal of this presentation is to encourage individuals and groups to develop and gain a deeper appreciation of the early history of Black student education in Missouri and the obstacles presented toward receiving that education. The Harrison School is a microcosm of the forces that shaped Missouri's segregated educational system, which while separate was never equal.

Audience Questions: 3:40-3:45

**3:50 James A. Rees, President, Arkansas Archaeological Society, Fayetteville, AR**  
***W. H. Burton, the Sage of Burney Mountain: Philosopher, Poet, and Moonshiner***

Although he often referred to himself in his writings as a hillbilly, William Harrison Burton did not match the stereotype in all respects. He was born in Iowa in 1876. At the age of 19 while returning from the Kansas corn harvest, he fell from a train car and lost his left arm. This event profoundly altered the course of his life. In 1924 he and his wife moved from Oklahoma to the Arkansas Ozarks. In 1926 he settled his growing family on Burney Mountain near Kingston, Arkansas and became part of an early twentieth century back to the land movement. During the Great Depression he briefly turned to making and selling illegal whiskey. He kept records on this enterprise in a notebook which has survived to the present day, providing some interesting insights into what was largely a secretive endeavor. Having left school at an early age, W. H. Burton was basically a self-educated man, but he was a prodigious reader and letter writer. Toward the end of his life, he wrote and self-published a book entitled *The Biography and Philosophy of a Hillbilly*. The book reveals his passion for thinking and learning which has been passed down as his legacy to his present -day descendants.

This presentation is based on documents passed down by Mr. Burton to his descendants, and on oral history interviews with a surviving grand-daughter who was born in 1934. It will focus on the details of Mr. Burton's extraordinary life history, especially on his activities during the Great Depression. The accompanying power point will feature Burton family photos from the early twentieth century and contemporary photos of Mr. Burton's writings and of the present-day site of the Burton family farm on Burney Mountain in Madison County, Arkansas.

Audience Questions: 4:15-4:20

**4:25 Alison Overcash, Content Marketing Specialist**  
***Ha Ha Tonka: One Man's Dream, One Hundred Years Later***

Ha Ha Tonka State Park is one of the most popular attractions at the Lake of the Ozarks. While the park features an impressive array of geological features, the "castle ruins" sitting atop a scenic overlook are the focal point for many visitors.

Wealthy Kansas City businessman Robert Snyder started building the spectacular European-style mansion, or "castle," on the land known as Ha Ha Tonka in 1904, but he never lived to see the project finished. Shortly after Snyder's sons finished the mansion in the 1920s, the newly created Lake of the Ozarks had started to encroach upon the natural spring-fed lake on their property.

The Snyder family entered a long legal battle with Union Electric, the company that built Bagnell Dam. By the time they received fair compensation for the damages done to their estate, the family had to sell their natural gas business and lease the mansion for use as a hotel. The mansion tragically burned down in 1942 and sat forgotten atop the cliff for the next 36 years before being turned into a state park.

This presentation will explore the story of the Snyder family and consider how their downfall represents the larger battle for preservation vs. progress at the Lake of the Ozarks.

Audience Questions: 4:50-4:55

**5:00 Dr. Kristen Ruccio, Assistant Professor of English, and Leslie Reed, Instructor of English, Arkansas State University**

***Rhetorics of Extinction: Conversations Surrounding the Changing Landscape of the Ozarks***

Extinction. Human beings have a fascination with this term, and the Ozarks have seen its share of extinction, in wildlife as well as in the way of life. The conversations surrounding this loss provide a fascinating glimpse into the attitudes and actions of those affected. One species that was deemed extinct is the Ivory-Billed Woodpecker. The last confirmed sighting of an Ivory-Billed Woodpecker was in 1944 in Louisiana. The accepted wisdom of American biologists is that the Ivory-Billed Woodpecker has been extinct since the middle of the last century, but the Ivory-Billed Woodpecker remains something of a Holy Grail to birdwatchers, Indigenous peoples, and to conservationists alike (U.S Fish and Wildlife). But environments also mean human settlements. When we look to our changing settlements, two examples that went through significant changes are Henderson, Arkansas, in Baxter County, which still exists despite the original settlement's forced move due the construction of the Norfork Dam. Newspaper articles and stories from that time show a town determined to survive, while the small farming settlement of Stranger's Home, Arkansas, at the foothills of the Ozarks in Lawrence County, slowly died away over the course of several decades.

This presentation will include a history of the Ivory-Bill, and how the rhetorics surrounding the possibility of extinction as well as a history of the language used by the residents of Strangers Home and Henderson. This will allow us to consider how we can learn about the way people felt about the changes as well as how the adaptations of the communities, both for those who stayed and for those who left—and for those who search for the Ivory-Billed Woodpecker.

Audience Questions: 5:25-5:30

**6:00-7:30 Closing Reception, Ozarks Heritage Research Center  
Garnett Library, Missouri State University-West Plains  
304 W. Trish Knight**

All are welcome to enjoy food and drinks at the Ozarks Heritage Research Center: mingle and chat! The Lennis Leonard Broadfoot Collection, and the Ozarks photography of Carr Ward, will be on display. A special thanks to the office of Chancellor Dennis Lancaster for sponsoring the reception.



*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.

# Seventeenth Annual Ozarks Studies Symposium, 2024

## Call for Proposals

The Ozarks Studies Committee of Missouri State University-West Plains seeks proposals for its 17th annual symposium to be held at the West Plains Civic Center on September 19-21, 2024.

The theme of the 2024 symposium is **“The Political Economy 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 [jasonmccollom@missouristate.edu](mailto:jasonmccollom@missouristate.edu). To be given first consideration, proposals must be received by July 1, 2024.