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## OUR HISTORY UNDER ONE ROOF

Maury County Archives  
is expanding to record  
our past

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## LOCAL FOCUS

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**ON THE COVER** Tom Price, Director of Maury County Archives. photo by Michael Tedesco

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Tom Price and staff at Maury County Archives keep the historical records safe for future generations. Photography by Michael Tedesco

# CROSSROADS IN AMERICAN HISTORY

## PAM WINDSOR

Maury County has a deep and impressive history, and now it's easier than ever for those who want to learn more about it.

The new Maury County Archives facility on Sixth Street brings all of the county's records, dating back to 1807, as well as recent and current documents, together under one roof. Now, whether you want to trace your family's genealogy, get a Real ID, or a multitude of other things, you can do it in one place.

"The response has been overwhelming," says Director Tom Price when asked how residents are making use of the new facility since it opened in January. "I'm originally from New York. I moved here in 1996, and I've always been amazed at how the people in

Maury County understand the importance of the history of this place."

Price says people come to the archives for a variety of reasons.

"The biggest number involves genealogists, people who are studying their family history," says Price. "And that's followed very closely by property researchers. So many people are moving into this area and want to know the history of their properties. And then we have a lot of students and academics who are doing research for papers and publications."

The goal of creating one central location for county records began nearly seven years ago when Price became director. He'd

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## < FROM PAGE 8

previously served as curator of the James K. Polk Museum.

"When I came on board, the biggest challenge I saw was space. We had everything from 1807 to 1950 in the archives building that had been converted from the old county jail. Everything else was still housed in the courthouse basement. I knew all of that needed to migrate to the archives, but we needed space to do it."

Price began researching how to generate the money needed to build a newer, expanded archives facility. He discovered a state law that said if a county has an active public records commission, that commission could enact a five-dollar fee on every record it generated. So, he began looking at the different records where the fee could be applied.

"That brought in quite a large sum of money," he says, "about \$250,000 a year, which I just banked over the next five years. And that paid for the architect's fees, the engineering fees, the ground-work, and pretty much everything right up until the building was coming out of the ground. And the fees continue to be collected and that pays the debt service on the building, as well. So, no direct taxes went into this expansion."

The state-of-the-art facility came in at a cost of just under \$9.6 million.

With the new facility, Price is looking at additional ways it can serve the community.

"We have an education center where we're going to be offering classes for kids and adults. I want every kid in Maury County to come to the archives and learn what we do and understand the history of this place. And I want to offer programs for adults, too, with classes like Genealogy 101, all the way through to the modern stuff with genetic genealogy. We've also been able to help the FBI with cold case murders now that the records are all in one place."

Price, who calls Maury County a 'crossroads in American history,' says its records have many stories to tell. He currently shares some of them on a podcast he hosts called "History's Hook."

He and his archives staff, Michelle Cannon, Cindy Grimm, and Amy Egnew, clearly love what they do.

"We're ready to help anyone who comes through the door, gives us a call, or sends an email," he says.

*Hours are Monday through Thursday, 8am to 6pm, and the Archive is located at 201 E 6th Street in Columbia.*



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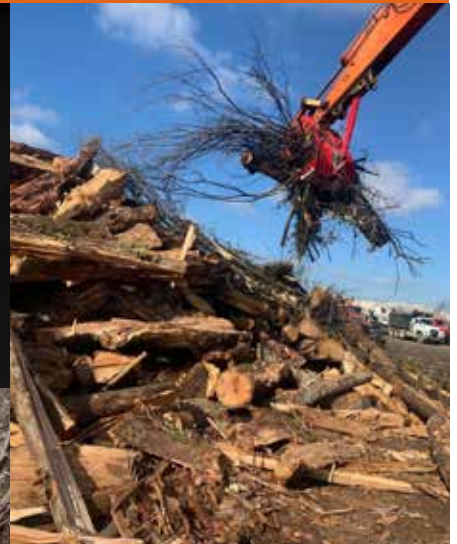
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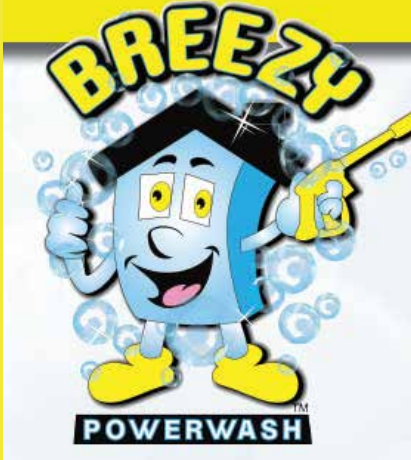
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# COMMUNITY SNAPSHOTS



## CITY OF COLUMBIA HOSTS MEMORIAL WREATH-LAYING CEREMONY TO HONOR JOHN HARLAN WILLIS



On February 28, 2025, the City of Columbia, along with military representatives and members of the community, gathered to honor John Harlan Willis, a Medal of Honor recipient and true hero, during a wreath-laying ceremony at the John Harlan Willis Bridge Memorial on Highway 31. This event marked the 80th anniversary of his ultimate sacrifice during the Battle of Iwo Jima, where Willis demon-

strated extraordinary courage and selflessness, paying the highest price to help save his fellow Marines.

John Harlan Willis was born and raised in Columbia, Tennessee. He enlisted in the United States Navy on November 5, 1940. On February 19, 1945, he landed with the 3rd Battalion, 27th Marines on Iwo Jima. He participated in the Battle of Iwo Jima as a rifle company platoon corpsman and, on February 28, while aiding fallen Marines during a fierce action near Japanese-held Hill 362, he was wounded by shrapnel and ordered back to the battle-aid station. Disregarding his injuries, Willis returned to the battle area to resume casualty assistance. He was treating a wounded Marine when the enemy attacked his position with hand grenades. After throwing eight grenades back at the enemy, he was killed when a ninth grenade exploded in his hand. For his heroic actions that day during the battle, Willis was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor.



## MULE DAY QUEEN AND HER COURT

Congratulations to the 2025 Mule Day Queen and Her Court. In the photo above from Left to right: **Ava Sykes, 4th Runner up; Shae Klamert, 1st Runner up; Colbey Fritts, 2025 Mule Day Queen; Phynlee Keeling, 2nd Runner up; Maya Keeton, 3rd Runner up.**

Photography provided by "Fan into Flame Photography"



## CITY OF COLUMBIA UNVEILS HISTORICAL MARKER TO HONOR THE COLUMBIA FEMALE INSTITUTE

The City of Columbia unveiled a historical marker at the site of the former Columbia Female Institute, an institution that played a significant role in the history of education for women in the region. This marker is dedicated to preserving the legacy of the Institute and the contributions it made to the academic advancement of young women during the 19th and early 20th centuries. In his remarks at the unveiling, Mayor Chaz Molder emphasized the historical importance of the Columbia Female Institute, "This marker acknowledges an institution that broke from the traditional educational models of its time. The Columbia Female Institute provided an advanced education for women and challenged prevailing norms. It is an important chapter in the history of our community and serves as a testament to the foresight of its founders."



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Justin and Mark Curry of The Trailer Store in Columbia. Photography by Robbie Mathis

# THE TRAILER STORE

## JASON ZASKY

It's been almost three decades since Mark Curry teamed up with his mother to open The Trailer Store on New Lewisburg Highway in Columbia. Since 1996, it has become the area's leading trailer sales & repair shop, with a customer base that extends throughout Tennessee and Alabama—and beyond.

"I grew up around trailers and semis," begins Curry. "I drove them, I worked on them, and I worked on a farm where we had cattle and horses," he continues, speaking about his youth.

These days, The Trailer Store could best be described as the quintessential family business, as it still employs Curry's mom, as

well as his wife and his son, Justin, who has been working alongside his dad for most of his life, now full-time after graduating from Columbia Academy and attending Columbia State.

However, he'd like to add additional employees to help sustain the growth the business has been experiencing.

"Our numbers are getting bigger every year," he says, attributing much of The Trailer Store's success to that fact that it's a local, family-owned business.

"We try to be nice, to do what we say, and we always try to make things right," he advises.

In terms of the sales side of the business: "We sell a lot of

**PAGE 26 >**



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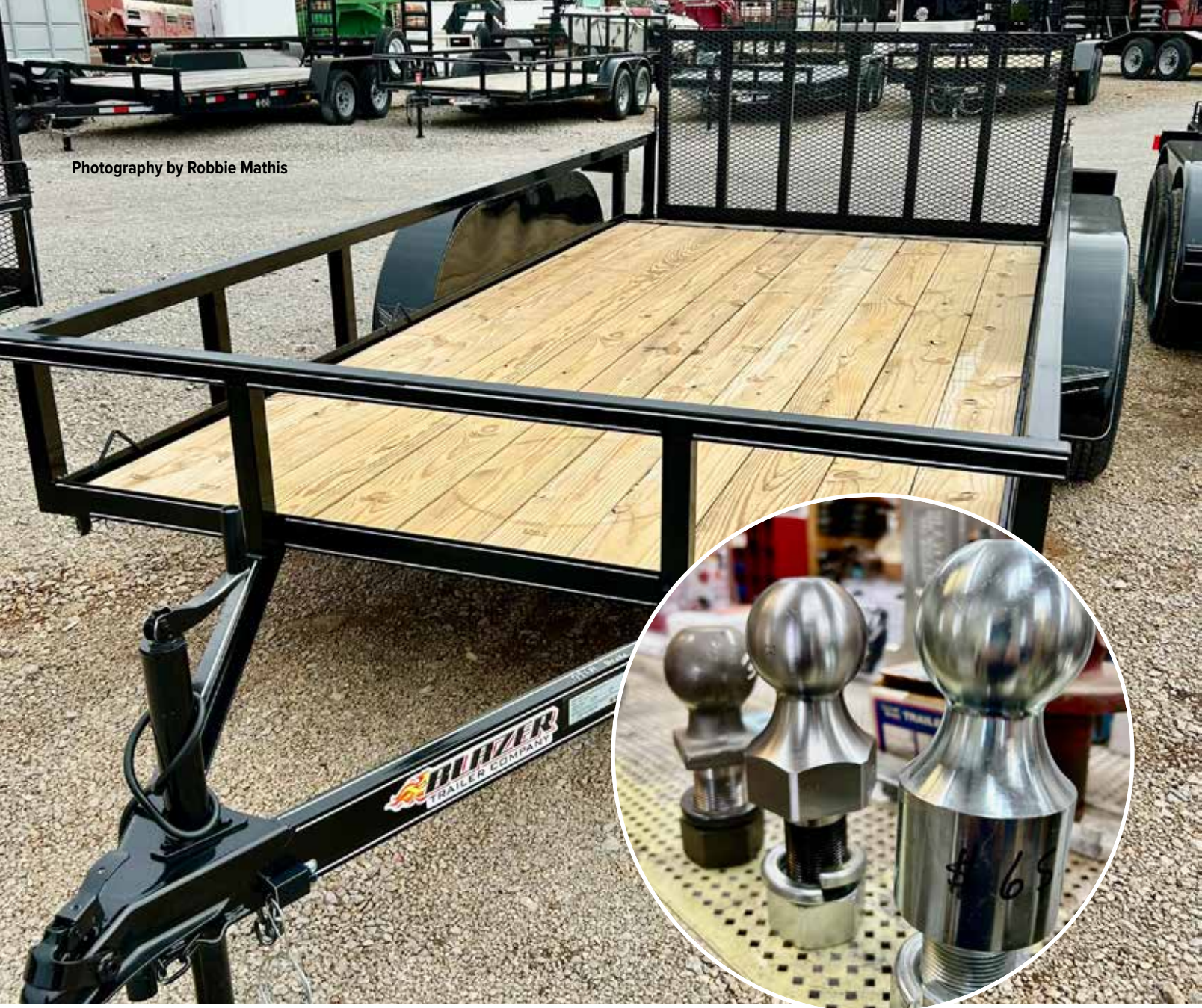
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Photography by Robbie Mathis



#### < FROM PAGE 24

trailers to farmers, landscaping companies, contractors, and boat owners,” says Curry, talking about his core clientele, with horse and cattle trailers consistently the best-sellers.

“We carry five or six brands of trailers, including Grimes-Parker Industries,” he continues, referring to the Fulton, Mississippi-based trailer manufacturer commonly known as GPI Trailers.

“We have been selling GPI Trailers and Circle W Trailers since we started,” says Curry, the latter a Shreve, Alabama-based manufacturer that produces livestock, equipment and dump trailers. “We also do all kinds of repairs, with bearings, brakes, and lights on trailers being the most common repair jobs. And we sell a lot of RV parts; people will break down in their RVs, and those are constantly being brought here to get repaired.”

Meanwhile, The Trailer Store also helps maintain its connection to the Maury County community by donating trailers for use

in popular local events.

“We donate trailers for Mule Day,” notes Curry, citing an example of such an event, one that will take place between April 3-6 in 2025. We also donate trailers for children’s groups to use in local parades,” he adds, including the annual Christmas parade.

Another thing Curry doesn’t see changing is their connection to the community.

“Before Columbia grew so large, I knew just about everyone who came in here. Almost all the business was word-of-mouth,” he says, though he appreciates the newcomers, many of whom have become regular customers, too.

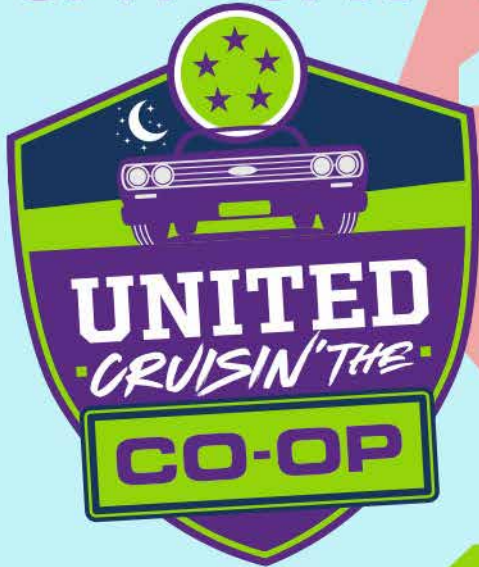
“We appreciate all the new and returning business,” concludes Curry, “and we get a lot of returning business.”

*The Trailer Store*

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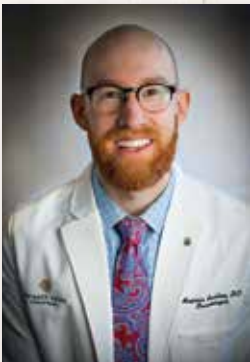
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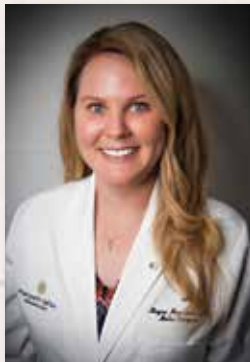
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