

The SOCIETY
of OZARKIAN
HILLCROFTERS

Identifying and Preserving What Makes the Ozarks Exceptional

Volume 2 Issue 3 Fall 2022

Message from Hillcrofters President

My fellow Hillcrofters, as I reflect on the 2022 fall season in the Ozarks, one of the most vivid memories of recent days is the extremely brilliant, but extremely brief, display of fall foliage this year. It was a reminder of how blessed we are, living in the Ozarks, with all four seasons appearing with distinction and beauty all their own. The weather this past summer and on into fall was very hot and extremely dry. I had concerns that there would be any fall colors at all.

But lo and behold, we had one weekend in late October when the hills came alive with a coat of many colors, drenched in oranges, reds, and yellows. Then, within a matter of just a couple of days, the leaves dulled to brown, shriveled and crisped, and the north winds of a weather front tore them away and deposited them on the forest floors.

But that brief and beautiful display of fall Ozarks colors is a lesson in itself, in appreciation. For if we had those brilliant, beautiful colors all year long, or even for the entirety of the fall season, would it be as special?

Like the fleeting fall foliage of October 2022, the Ozarks region is filled with not only unique and natural beauty that is fragile and limited, but also with unique cultural features—and wonderful people with their own special stories about life in the hills. As Hillcrofters, we strive to preserve and protect these things for future generations.

We have another great issue in store for you, and it is all because of talented authors who have contributed and the hard work of our talented editor, Marilyn Perlberg. In this issue, Ethan Smilie continues his series about Laura Ingalls Wilder’s farm journalism. Gwen Simmons has an informative article about George Washington Carver and his admirer, Richard Pilant, who campaigned to create the Carver monument. Emily Garoutte takes us on another trip in the Ozarks, this time to

(President’s Message continued on next page)

OUR GOAL

To identify attributes that make the Ozarks region exceptional, raise awareness of these attributes, and document the attributes to benefit future generations.

OUR AREAS OF INTEREST

- Ozarks Nature/Conservation
- Ozarks History/Historic Sites
- Ozarks Folklore/Folkways
- Contemporary Ozarks Culture
- Notable Ozarks Personalities

IN THIS ISSUE . . .

President’s Message 1

Announcements 3

Board Minutes 4

Photos: Entertainment. 6

Articles Section

Laura Ingalls Wilder:

Farm Journalism series 7

George Washington

 Carver 10

The Inn Mountain View . . . 15

Ozarks Fall Taste Treats . . . 19

Hootin an Holleran 22

The Book Bag 25

Guidelines for Authors . . . 28

Mountain View, Arkansas. Barbara Kipfer introduces us to that fascinating Ozarks fruit . . . the paw paw. Barbara Luna gives us the history of one of the best fall festivals in the Ozarks: “Hootin and Hollerin” days at Gainesville. And Hayden Head gives us a review of Todd Parnell’s trilogy of Ozarks fiction.

As always . . .

I appreciate very much your continued interest in The Society of Ozarkian Hillcrofters. We will work hard to address our goals and projects through leadership and your volunteerism. We will also do our best to ensure that you, as members, find your participation to be an enriching, positive, and productive outlet for your interest in the Ozarks. We expect to provide you with ongoing opportunities to learn more about the Ozarks and the people who have a similar passion for this wonderful region. It is my great pleasure to welcome the members who have recently joined us.

Most sincerely,

Curtis Copeland



Fall in the Ozarks

-- Photo by Curtis Copeland

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Curtis Copeland – President
 Bob Kipfer – Vice President
 Crystal Copeland – Secretary

Susan Scott Larry Sifford
 Tammy Morton Jeff Michel
 Hayden Head Ken Henderson
 Jeremy Lynn Tom Motley
 Rob Flatness

NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

Curtis Copeland – Publisher
 Marilyn Perlberg – Editor
 Hayden Head Gwen Simmons
 Bob Kipfer

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Larry Sifford—Advisory Chair

CHAIRS (specialized)--
 Jennifer Luna-Thompson—Events
 Tammy Morton—Grants and
 Fundraising
 Marilyn Perlberg—Newsletter and
 Outreach
 Bailey Lynn—Social Media

© All rights reserved. Please note that no part of this newsletter may be reprinted or reproduced in any form without prior written permission of the copyright holder. Short quotations from articles are permissible but need to be cited properly and credited to the author. Please see details in Guidelines for Authors.

Upcoming Event

Cabin Fever

Back by popular demand is a Hillcrofters fan favorite . . . CABIN FEVER! About the time the holidays are over and winter really settles in, we are all looking for a little something to anticipate. Mark your calendars! Saturday, February 25, 2023, is the date for our music fundraising event at New Testament Christian Church in Reeds Spring, Missouri. Watch your emails for more information to come!



Special Notice

Edith Kadlec has donated \$100 to The Society of Ozarkian Hillcrofters in honor of her grandmother, Daisy Lines Maxey. Daisy was an important member of the original Hillcrofters organization. From 1933 to 1939, she and her husband Otis hosted the annual Hillcrofters fall Festival of the Moon of Painted Leaves. Daisy was known for her Hillcrofter hospitality. An extended biography by Edith Maxey Kadlec appeared in the Spring 2022 issue of the newsletter.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit our website at:
societyofozarkianhillcrofters.com
Find our group page on Facebook

CONTACT US

Email: information@societyofozarkianhillcrofters.com

Traditional mail:
PO Box 682
Ozark, Missouri 65721

MEMBERSHIP

Individual Membership
- \$20 per year

Student Membership
- \$10 per year

Membership application forms may be found on our website:
societyofozarkianhillcrofters.com/membership

You may order your membership online through the website, or send a check or money order to:
PO Box 682
Ozark, Missouri 65721

The newsletter is distributed to members and contributing authors by email. Newsletters in hard copy are sent by traditional mail to requesting contributing authors and requesting members.

The Society of Ozarkian Hillcrofters from the Minutes of the Board Meeting

December 1, 2022

The officers, board of directors, and others met at the JSO Office, 109 S. 2nd St., Ozark, and virtually through Zoom on December 1, 2022. The meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m. CST.

Present in person were Curtis Copeland, Crystal Copeland, Larry Sifford, Jennifer Luna-Thompson, Rob Flatness, and Bailey Lynn. In attendance through Zoom were Hayden Head, Bob Kipfer, Tammy Morton, and Marilyn Perlberg.

New Business

Organizational restructuring: Proposed Bylaw amendments, Advisory Committee, and Description of Duties.

Marilyn suggested changing the word “Committee” to “Council.” Rob speaks to Committee or Council meeting twice a year. Larry suggested that the Advisory Council Chairperson be appointed by the Executive Board. Rob agreed with the original name of Committee for the Advisory group, possibly needing a subcommittee or sub-council, but not requiring.

Larry made a motion to accept the resolution as written. Hayden seconded. All were in favor. The motion passed.

Hayden made a motion to create an Advisory Committee. All were in favor. The motion passed.

Elections and Appointments.

Discussion centered on description of duties and if an Executive Board member could also serve on the Advisory Committee.

Rob made a motion to amend the resolution of description of duties of the Board of Directors, Officers, and Appointees to add “Chairperson” on page 2. Larry seconded. All were in favor. The motion passed. Rob made a motion to accept the proposal as written. Hayden seconded. All were in favor. The motion passed.

Curtis proposed that Tammy Morton be appointed to Grants and Fundraising Chair. Rob made the motion. Crystal seconded. All were in favor. The motion passed.

Curtis proposed that Marilyn Perlberg be appointed to Newsletter and Outreach Chair. Crystal made the motion. Rob seconded. All were in favor. The motion passed.

Curtis proposed that Bailey Lynn be appointed to Social Media Chair. Crystal made the motion. Larry seconded. All were in favor. The motion passed.

(Board Minutes continued on next page)

Jennifer Luna-Thompson was interested in the position of Events Chair. Curtis made the motion. Hayden seconded. All were in favor. The motion passed.

Rob made a motion for Larry to be appointed Chair of the Advisory Committee. Hayden seconded. All were in favor. The motion passed.

Establishment of 2023 Calendar

The Cabin Fever date was proposed for February 4, 2023, but the church would have to verify.

The Old Country Fair date was set for September 9, 2023.

For the Annual Meeting—Fall 2023—Festival of Painted Leaves, it was noted that Stacy King was interested in speaking. Location and time needed to be established.

Regular Board meeting dates, quarterly membership meeting dates, and newsletter deadlines were on the agenda but not discussed.

Project Reports

It was reported that the 2022 Old Country Fair made \$797.00. It was noted that the Fair competed with other area events, and the weekend would have to be picked carefully.

-- Springfield-Harrison Roadside Park:

Saturday, December 3, was set for the workday to spread mulch and seed. Remaining tasks and ribbon-cutting date were on the agenda but not discussed.

-- Shepherd of the Hills State Park:

Saturday, December 3, was established for the workday.

Potential projects: Discussion was passed to the next meeting.

Advisory Reports

Newsletter

Marilyn proposed and Curtis made a motion for a one-year embargo before posting newsletters on the website. Hayden seconded. All were in favor. The motion passed.

Grants

Tammy reported having an idea for a small grant to help with the Garber Schoolhouse and might also be able to find a grant to help with making the newsletter into a journal.

Social Media

Bailey reported on the video blurb for a last call for volunteers for the weekend's workday.

(Board Minutes continued on next page)

Accounts and Membership Status

Main operating account: \$2,547.10

Fundraising account: \$8,410.84

Current members: 81

The meeting adjourned at 8:13 p.m.

* * * * *

Photos: Old Country Fair Entertainment

September 24, 2022



Missouri 65 (from left to right):
Gil Turk, Emily Garoutte, Bryar Boldman, Hawken Boldman, Elliot Crocket



Trio (from left to right): Dennis Pritchard, Terry Hand, David Scrivener

* * * * *

Articles Section

Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Missouri Ruralist* Journalism, 1916: Women's Work, Women's Clubs, and Ozarkers

by Ethan Smilie

This is the second in a series of articles examining Wilder's publications in the Missouri Ruralist from 1911–1924.

Wilder composed 21 articles for the *Missouri Ruralist* in 1916. Her first of that year (“All in the Day’s Work”) is a retrospective of the profits yielded by poultry, eggs, and cream in Mansfield, Missouri, the previous year. The town, which had no more than 900 residents, generated \$117,000 in profit for these products, which, Wilder proudly notes, “speak well for the industry and capability of the women. . . . for we all know who raises the poultry.” This boast immediately transforms into a question: “I wonder if Missouri farm women realize the value in dollars and cents of the work they do from day to day in raising farm products for the market? How many persons . . . think of the fact that it is practically all produced by the women, and as a sideline at that!”

In exploring this question, Wilder divulges a key supposition of her conception of women’s work: regardless of how economically valuable such farm work is, “of course a woman’s real business is the keeping of the house and caring for the family.” Those hoping for a stronger voice of feminism from Wilder must look closely at her conception of keeping house. As she portrays it through her writing, Wilder credits mothers with an immense, even world-altering, power.

More immediately, her idea of keeping house ascribes to farm women more respect than they were wont to receive in the years leading up to World War I: “The fact is that while there has been a good deal of discussion for and against women in business, farm women have always been business women and I have never heard a protest.” Conducting this “business” places farm wives at an equal station with their husbands. She cites the example of a friend who kept a record of her poultry expenses and profits. Records like these, argues Wilder, can defend the wives’ chickens against husbands who complain about the expenses, “Those darn hens are eating their heads off.” When these skills are applied to other aspects of farming, prudent wives become equal partners with their husbands “on all matters of farm business.”

In fact, Wilder describes farm women and their work in terms typically employed in male professions. In “Join ‘Don’t Worry’ Club,” a farm woman is said to work with an engineer’s efficiency: “She never worried over her work. She appeared to have no feeling of hurry. Her mind, calm and quiet, directed the work of her hands and there was no bungling, no fruitless running here and there. Every motion and every step counted so that there was ‘no lost motion.’”

(Wilder’s Journalism, 1916, continued on next page)

To maximize such efficiency, Wilder proposes a number of practical suggestions in her articles. For example, avoid waiting for semiannual or even weekly occasions to clean, she suggests. Clean what part of the house needs it as soon as possible to avoid the hectic activity and exhaustion caused by large-scale endeavors. Furthermore, she suggests altering the type of furniture one possesses to reduce the effort needed to clean. Ironing is also discouraged as both a means to save time and effort as well as a health benefit, with Wilder citing a medical study showing unironed clothes are more sanitary.

It should be noted, however, that not all labor-saving methods and devices are endorsed by Wilder. In "All the World is Queer," she humorously recounts her husband, Almanzo, presenting her with a brand-new churn designed to be run by an engine. He promises that it will accomplish a half-day's work in three minutes. Not long after using it, she realizes that it actually creates more work and is more time-consuming than her old churn. Consequently, she flings it out the door as far as she can.

Every bit of energy conserved by a farm woman adds to the value of a farm. Just as the economic success of a farm depends on such efficiency, so too that of the nation. With the increasing prospect of American involvement in World War I, the efficiency of farm women becomes also a matter of international importance. Already by the summer of 1915, "Farmers [were] being urged to raise more food for the world consumption, to fill more acres and also produce more to the acre." Hence the need for farmers to "marry more wives"!

For Wilder, however, it is not the production of eggs, poultry, or butter, nor is it the management and planning required for an economically successful farm that is the woman's greatest responsibility. What yields the longest-lasting and wide-ranging effects is the rearing of children. In "Look For Fairies Now," Wilder laments the inevitable loss of childlike wonder as one ages and matures. Such reflection leads her to note, "What a wonderful power mothers have in their hands! They shape the lives of children today, [through] them the lives of the men and women of tomorrow, and [through] them the nations of the world." Indeed, such immense power and responsibility leads to her pessimism about women's suffrage:

A great many seem to regard the securing of the ballot as the supreme attainment and think that with women allowed to vote, everything good will follow as a matter of course. To my mind the ballot is incidental, only a small thing in the work that is before the women of the nation. If politics are not what they should be, if there is graft in places of trust and if there are no just laws, the men who are responsible are largely what their mothers have made them and their wives usually have finished the job.

Wilder recognizes that for women to be flourishing household managers and mothers, they need to be socially, psychologically, and intellectually fit. Her key recommendation for promoting such fitness is women's clubs, which she discusses in "Folks Are 'Just Folks'" and "Learning to Work Together." These "associations of friendship and mutual helpfulness" are open to women living in both town and country, since "the most vital subjects in which women are interested are the same in town and country, while the treasures of literature and the accumulated knowledge of the world are for all alike."

Besides the camaraderie and practical advice and help conferred by the social networking of these

(Wilder's Journalism, 1916, continued on next page)

organizations, they open up a world of ideas not always easily accessible to rural women. Likely evidence of the clubs' effects on Wilder takes the form of her frequent quotations of poetry—of William Shakespeare; Alexander Pope; Robert Burns; William Wordsworth; Walter Scott; Washington Irving; William Cullen Bryant; Henry Wadsworth Longfellow; John Greenleaf Whittier; Alfred, Lord Tennyson; Oliver Wendell Holmes; Ella Wheeler Wilcox; George Bernard Shaw; and G. K. Chesterton—as well as poetic compositions of her own.

In 1916, Wilder focused on two issues specific to the Ozarks. In “Showing Dad the Way,” she contributes to the Ozarkian good roads movement. She detailed the efforts of the “Mansfield Boys Good Roads Club,” an organization of fifty “good lively boys” volunteering to maintain local roads. Such work is essential for an Ozarks town, with its roads situated on “steep hillsides” and among “swift flowing mountain streams,” which makes “it very hard to keep the roads in fit condition to be traveled.” Since a state road had just been proposed for the area, residents were eager to put their roadways in the finest condition. As Brooks Blevins has pointed out, the construction and maintenance of good roads were key factors in the Ozarkian economy at this time (Blevins, *A History of the Ozarks*, 3: 98–101).

Besides this facet of Ozarkian boosterism, Wilder is also curious to explore the question of what, exactly, constitutes a native Ozarkian. In “When Is a Settler an Old Settler?” she recounts the fact that she became an inhabitant of Mansfield in 1894. By 1916, newcomers considered her an old settler, but this designation is contradicted by another Mansfielder: “My father was an old settler here. He came up from Tennessee before the [Civil] war.” To this, Wilder can only note, “Since then, in working the fields, we have found now and then a stone arrow or spear head made by a settler older still.”

This remark points to the complexity of the question (and, given the time, is a remarkably open-minded view) of who can rightfully be considered an Ozarker. Though not directly answered, I would say that implicit throughout her articles is the notion that those who treat the land with respect and who are active participants in their communities deserve the title.

Notes on Sources

Pages 98–101 in Brooks Blevins, *A History of the Ozarks, vol. 3: The Ozarkers* (University of Illinois Press, 2021) provide an account of the good roads movement and its economic importance to the Ozarks.

Wilder's *Missouri Ruralist* articles can be found in Stephen W. Hines, *Laura Ingalls Wilder, Farm Journalist: Writings from the Ozarks*, which contains his useful introduction and an excellent index (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2007).



Wilder House at Rocky Ridge Farm Mansfield, Missouri
Public domain image from Wikimedia Commons

* * * * *

Two Lives Connected: George Washington Carver and Richard Pilant by Gwen Simmons

Tucked away at the end of a shady road near Diamond, Missouri, is the George Washington Carver National Monument. One of seven National Park Service units in Missouri, the Carver site commemorates the life of the renowned scientist and teacher at the place of his birth. Authorized in 1943 and officially dedicated in 1953, the site was only the third in the country to recognize a famous American's birthplace. The first two? Presidents George Washington and Abraham Lincoln.

The Carver site was also “the first national monument to any American for services to agriculture—the first to an American scientist, the first to an American Negro—and the world's first memorial to interracial peace” (Pilant Calls Dr. Carver Benefactor). The achievements of his life truly reflect Carver's belief that “No individual has any right to come into the world and go out of it without leaving behind him distinct and legitimate reasons for having passed through it” (Kremer 1).



Entrance sign at the monument
Public domain image from Wikimedia Commons

George Washington Carver's exact birth date is unknown but was most likely during the closing months of the Civil War. His mother, Mary, was a slave owned by Moses and Susan Carver who also owned the farm near Diamond. The identity of his father is unknown although George believed that he had been killed in a logging accident shortly before George's birth (National Park Service). Not long after his birth, George and his mother (and possibly a sister) were kidnapped by guerillas and taken to the Confederate state of Arkansas. Moses Carver hired John Bentley, a neighbor and scout, to find George and his mother. Bentley was successful in bringing George home but could not locate Mary. The Carvers raised the orphaned George and his brother Jim, although they never formalized the relationship with adoption or guardianship (Krahe 3).

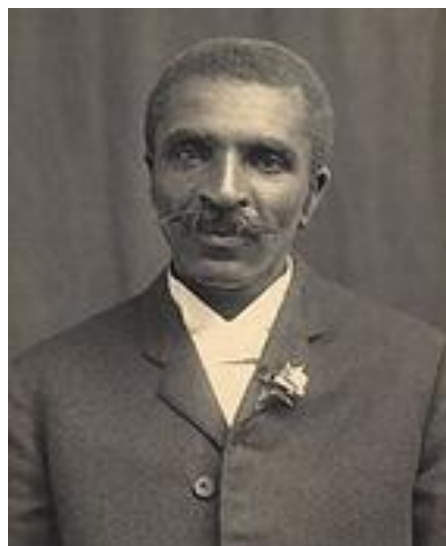
(George Washington Carver continued on next page)

A sickly child, George spent much of his time working with Susan at household chores rather than doing more strenuous work in the fields. He also found time to explore the nearby creeks and woods, collecting plants and rocks while developing his observational skills and love of flowers. He began painting and continued his artistic pursuits throughout his life. During his childhood George learned to read and write although he was not permitted to attend the local school because of his race. In 1876 George relocated to Neosho to attend school, the beginning of his formal education. Eventually his search for knowledge would take him to Kansas and Iowa where he would earn a master's degree at Iowa Agricultural College, as that institution's first African American student (Krahe 5).

In 1896 George was offered a teaching position at the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama where he would spend the rest of his life. He established an agricultural experiment station and sought to provide area residents with farming techniques that would rejuvenate the land. He also developed a number of products that could be made with local crops, most notably the peanut. Outreach programs spread his ideas to farmers and housewives, teachers and politicians. At the same time, George was teaching and by all accounts, was a beloved and effective teacher. He often taught with demonstrations or by taking students outside to observe their surroundings. He became a much sought-after public speaker, at home with both White and Black audiences. He would eventually find himself speaking in the halls of Congress and with US presidents.

Notable as he became, George never lost his sense of humility or frugality. His first laboratory was equipped with glassware salvaged from a garbage can. He never owned a home, instead living in a dormitory and eating with students in the cafeteria. George was a deeply religious man, having his first conversion experience as a child on the Carver farm. Throughout his life, George shared his faith in his writings and with his students. He began each day with a walk where he would talk with the "Great Creator" while he gathered specimens. This practice began on the Carver farm and continued throughout his life (Krahe 7).

Upon his death on January 5, 1943, George Washington Carver was praised for his scientific research, remembered as a caring and dedicated teacher, lauded for his work with farmers, and acknowledged for his service to humanity. His coffin was draped with flowers he loved, provided by good friend Henry Ford. Less than three weeks after his death, Missouri's Congressional delegation of Harry Truman and Dewey Short introduced bills to make Carver's Missouri birthplace a national monument. On July 14, 1943, that legislation was officially signed into law by President Franklin D. Roosevelt (Krahe 57). But the movement to create that national monument actually began several years earlier with a man named Richard Pilant.



George Washington Carver, ca. 1910
Public domain image from
Wikimedia Commons

(George Washington Carver continued on next page)

Tucked away at the back of a filing cabinet drawer at the College of the Ozarks library is a file folder labeled "Pilant, Richard." Inside are assorted documents given to the college by Richard Pilant, a native of Granby, Missouri, located about ten miles from the Carver birthplace. Although Pilant was White, he and Carver shared many similarities and Pilant developed a great respect for Carver's work and life. Both grew up in southwest Missouri. Both suffered from physical ailments as children. Pilant was born blind but did gain some eyesight after several surgeries. Both were deeply religious. Both valued education and received advanced degrees. Both worked in higher education, Carver at Tuskegee, and Pilant at Washington University in St. Louis. Even with their commonalities, Pilant knew that Carver's life had been much more difficult because Carver had been born Black. Pilant had great admiration for what Carver achieved despite the racial barriers in the way (Krahe 32).

In 1939 that admiration led Pilant and the St. Louis chapter of the NAACP to propose a national monument commemorating Carver. The proposal found its way to Congressman Dewey Short. Short was in favor of the monument but at the time, it was National Park Service policy that no memorials would be developed to honor people still living. The notion of honoring a Black man was also problematic for a park service that still allowed state-mandated segregation to be practiced in southern park units (Krahe 40). Yet another obstacle to the monument was World War II. What with one thing and another, the monument authorization did not happen until 1943 after Carver's death.

Although the monument was authorized, the struggles to create it were not over. The National Park Service had to conduct studies to determine which property should be included and how much it was worth. The landowner was willing to sell but terms had to be agreed upon and funds appropriated by Congress. The purchase of the land eventually became contentious with sale to another owner and condemnation proceedings. But, in 1951, the Park Service took ownership of the property (Krahe 73).

When the monument was authorized in 1943, Pilant realized that he still needed to sway public opinion. He embarked on a ten-year campaign to sell his project. Pilant touted the accomplishments of Carver and the need to memorialize him, but Pilant also spoke of the need for racial harmony as a reason for creating the monument. More personally, he viewed his publicity work as his contribution to the war and Cold War effort. Unable to serve in the military due to his poor vision, Pilant spoke of the monument as a way to combat Communist propaganda about the treatment of Black Americans (Williams) and "a war measure designed to show our allies . . . that this was a land of opportunity for all races" (Pilant 8).

One of the documents in the Pilant file at the College of the Ozarks library is a copy of Pilant's personnel form from the National Park Service. His position title was "Collaborator" and he was employed



Richard Pilant, 1975
Photo by Townsend Godsey,
Courtesy of Lyons Memorial Library,
College of the Ozarks

(George Washington Carver continued on next page)

without compensation. At his own expense, Pilant traveled the world speaking about the monument. Included in the Pilant file are scrapbook pages with newspaper articles pasted in. Those articles come from papers in the US but also from England, Japan, Germany, India, Israel, Hong Kong, and the Philippines. Letters of introduction from the director of the National Park Service and the World Council of Churches are in the file along with a manuscript of a booklet that Pilant wrote about Carver. The booklet was titled "George Washington Carver . . . the poor peoples scientist [sic], published by the School of the Ozarks (now College of the Ozarks) Press in 1971.



Photo by Gwen Simmons

Pilant's journeys and speaking engagements paid off when the monument was officially dedicated on July 14, 1953, with over 2,000 people in attendance (Krahe 94). When the Park Service took ownership of the property, much of the infrastructure needed improvement. But, at the same time, the Park Service was embarking on Mission 66, a nationwide project to upgrade parks following neglect during the Great Depression and World War II. The Carver monument benefited from Mission 66 with improvements in visitor facilities, installation of art, and the preservation of historic buildings and the Carver family cemetery.

Today's sightseer will find a visitor center with three floors of exhibits, information, and a theater showing the park film. There is a classroom and laboratory that often hosts school groups learning about Carver and recreating some of his scientific experiments. The grounds of the site include a 3/4-mile walking trail. As walkers begin the trail, they pass by an intentionally minimalist re-creation of a log cabin, just four knee-high walls. Carver was born in a cabin on the spot where the re-creation stands. However, there are no photographs or written descriptions of the cabin. Archeologists have documented the footprint of the cabin, and the smallness of the 14' x 14' building may surprise modern eyes.

Following the trail through the woods along the creek, walkers will find a bronze statue called "The Boy Carver" by Robert Amendola. A dam along the creek creates a pond that offers benches and stones with quotes from Carver. Past the pond sets the 1881 home of Moses and Susan Carver. Although George never lived there, he is believed to have visited a few times before Moses and Susan died. The two are buried in a small family cemetery located down the trail from their home. George is not buried there; instead, his resting place is at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama.

Richard Pilant died in 1979 and is buried at Ozarks Memorial Park Cemetery in Branson. There is no monument to him, but without him, there might not be a national monument to George Washington Carver in Diamond.

(George Washington Carver continued on next page)

Works Cited

Krahe, Diane L., and Theodore Catton. *Walking in Credence: An Administrative History of George Washington Carver National Monument*. National Park Service, 2014.

Kremer, Gary R. *George Washington Carver in His Own Words*. University of Missouri Press, 1987.

"Pilant Calls Dr. Carver Benefactor." *Hongkong Standard*, 3 July 1954, n.p.

Pilant, Richard. "The Making of a Monument." *Missouri Highways* (1972), 6–11.

Scientist, Educator, Humanitarian. National Park Service. 15 July 2021. 5 October 2022.

Williams, Jack. "Missourian Battles Communism By Preaching the Carver Story." *Kansas City Star*, 19 Sept. 1954, n.p.

* * * * *

George Washington Carver is featured in the Hall of Fame at the Ralph Foster Museum on the College of the Ozarks campus. He was inducted in 1976 and honored with a plaque on the museum’s third floor. The plaque is on display in a History of the Ozarks area, part of a cluster that additionally honors Ozarks luminaries such as folklorist Vance Randolph, bestselling author Harold Bell Wright, artist and illustrator Rose O’Neill, and the author of the *Little House* books Laura Ingalls Wilder.

– Editor’s Note

Carver plaque photo courtesy of Ralph Foster Museum
College of the Ozarks



* * * * *

In 1917 George Washington Carver published the research bulletin “How to Grow the Peanut: And 105 Ways of Preparing It for Human Consumption.” The bulletin advised farmers to try diversified planting. This was Carver’s response to the decimation of cotton crops by the boll weevil, which had arrived some years earlier. Alabama was especially hard hit. Farmers there took Carver’s advice with great success. According to a Missouri Department of Agriculture website, “Dr. Carver and the peanut helped save the economy of the southern part of the U.S.”

Sources

“Boll Weevil Monument.” Encyclopedia of Alabama. <http://encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-2384>.

“George Washington Carver: A National Agricultural Library Digital Exhibit [Bulletin Excerpt]. U.S. Department of Agriculture. <https://www.nal.usda.gov/exhibits/ipd/carver/items/show/27>.

“George Washington Carver: History of an Educator, Innovator, Leader.” Missouri Department of Agriculture. <https://agriculture.mo.gov/gwc.php>.

-- Editor’s Note

* * * * *

Musicians Thrive at Restored Inn at Mountain View, Arkansas

by Emily Garoutte

When I was younger, such a place of exotic and historic beauty only existed within the bounds of my imagination. From the moment I stepped inside The Inn at Mountain View, my mind's fables were brought to vivid life. This summer I was privileged to spend time “Inn-terning,” as Mr. Kevin calls it, at The Inn. I was able to help Mr. Kevin and Ms. Cheri with serving breakfast, cleaning, and gardening. Never did I discover a lull in any day, for if we were not busy with upkeep I was listening to stories on the front porch, swimming in Sylamore Creek, or playing music. Almost every day, I joined the musicians. As primarily a bluegrass and old-time fiddle player, I was intrigued by being exposed to many new styles of playing. Though my extraordinary time came to an end when the summer did, my mind often wanders back to The Inn, where each day brought a new set of characters, a new chapter in a story, and a new set of fiddle tunes.

The house is pink. One would think that alone would be enough to catch the eye of every visitor in town. What makes The Inn at Mountain View stand out is an alternative form of curb appeal. Apart from the lacy wooden gables and the grand, Victorian wraparound porch, the merriment that has taken place in the bed-and-breakfast for over a century is its defining identity. Located adjacent to the “Pickin’ Park” in Mountain View, The Inn has played an indispensable role in the community’s history and music scene.



The Inn at Mountain View

Mountain View, Arkansas, known as the folk music capital of the world according to the *Washington Post*, has accentuated folklife and traditions since 1890. In a community ecosystem of ever-changing music genres and quirks, The Inn is a haven for the folk music that the town prides itself in. The “Pink Inn,” as many have known it, has stood in the community since its founding. It continues to serve the citizens and visitors as it did in the 19th century.

There is a saying around Mountain View: “On your first visit you pack a suitcase, and on your second visit you look at properties, and on your third visit you bring a U-Haul.” That, in fact, was true for Kevin and Cheri Goggans. In October of 2021, the couple from Mississippi arrived in Mountain View for a visit. They had hoped to move into a rural cabin in the hills to have placid evenings away from the noise of the world. However, their idea of quiet evenings in the hills would be flipped upside down in a matter of hours. For, as Cheri says, “God had better plans for us, and I am very glad He did.”

(The Inn continued on next page)

As Kevin and Cheri explored the famous “Pickin’ Park,” a prime location for music jams in town, they eyed a monstrosity of a project hiding nearly in plain sight. The grounds were overgrown. They soon found that The Inn had been abandoned for two years. Kevin identified The Inn’s need and proposed a solution. He asked Cheri if she wanted to buy it. She did not directly decline. Instead, she suggested they pray over the matter. On Friday, the idea of owning a bed-and-breakfast entered their dreams for the first time, and by Monday, they were the new owners of the historic gem.

Kevin and Cheri adapted quickly to their new role and undertook a full-blown restoration project. To their delight, the house had remained fully undisturbed for two years, so not a bit of dirt plagued the place. Rooms were refreshed, bathrooms were renovated, and the outdoor landscaping was revived to its full glory. In February of 2022, The Inn was opened to the public for the first time since 2020. “This was not in our wheelhouse to be here, this was all about the Lord wanting us to be here and love people,” Cheri said. Guests are prayed for before they walk in the front doors. The Innkeepers—Kevin and Cheri—spend each day in gratitude over the blessing The Inn has brought to their lives, but community members would argue that they are the ones who have been blessed.



The porch at The Inn

Being at The Inn has opened a wealth of stories to Kevin and Cheri, and many surprises have come as they have unveiled The Inn’s history and role in the town. Rumors of The Inn being built with stolen goods and by an outlaw have roamed the town for years. The Innkeepers Kevin and Cheri did not know what a centerpiece The Inn was in the town's founding until they heard these rumors and researched at the local courthouse and library. Records show that The Inn was built in 1886 by William Webb. A local novel, *Life In the Leatherwoods*, a tale of neighboring communities such as Calico Rock in Arkansas, references William Webb as an outlaw. Because of his infamous involvement in stealing goods, it is possible that The Inn was built with stolen logs and other building materials. Another legend that surrounds The Inn is based on prohibition raids. Some claimed that liquor was hidden in the discreet cabinet built under the staircase during the time of the alcohol raids.

Though The Inn has a colorful background through folklore, other aspects regarding its past are much more benign. It was first built to serve as a hotel to the community. It has been the location of many weddings, both in the backyard and in the parlor.

The Inn was not originally as large as it is today with ten bedrooms and ten bathrooms. Likely, it started as a small log structure (the parlor being one of the original structures) and was added on from there. The Innkeepers hope to eventually expose a section of the parlor’s concealed log wall to learn about the building's expansions. The kitchen as it is now is a modern addition. “Lilly’s Locket,” a room now available to guests, served as the first innkeeper’s quarters. The wood floors are original, and The

(The Inn continued on next page)

Innkeepers have carefully selected appropriate time-period furniture. While the rest of the world has moved on with time, The Inn still displays its authenticity. Historical accuracy through style is not the only way The Inn stays true to its heritage. Music is also a part of its story.

Even before the founding of Mountain View, the making of mountain folk music was ingrained in the local way of life. In the 1960s and 1970s, folk music became a tourist attraction in the town. Since then, folk and traditional musicians have flocked to the area to play. According to locals, the major music scene started at the Ozark Folk Center State Park and then moved to the courthouse lawn. Jams were set up in small groups just yards away from one another. Once the “Pickin’ Park” was established, the jams primarily moved there. Over time, the open parlor at The Inn, which was next to the park, drew attention. The parlor was free from the outdoor elements of the park and provided a private venue for musicians.



Jamming in the parlor at The Inn

Over the years, the parlor became a joy to many of the local musicians who often met there without much of an audience. The new Innkeepers, however, were unaware of this inveterate tradition. A local musician approached The Innkeepers on their first night as owners and eagerly inquired about jamming in the parlor once again. Though The Innkeepers felt this was unusual, they let the musician come that evening. A congregation of musicians came along with the original inquirer, and soon the entire parlor was filled with strangers with acoustic stringed instruments.

The Innkeepers, skeptical when the musicians arrived, lost their hesitations upon hearing the first chord. Four of the musicians present that night had performed on the Grand Ole Opry. Even without knowing their qualifications, The Innkeepers understood what a “concert” they had been able to witness. From that night on, Kevin and Cheri welcomed musicians and listeners into their parlor for a rare experience in fellowship and musicianship.

The Inn’s renovations and the porchlight’s glow served as well as any advertisement in the newspaper, and there was no trouble getting the parlor filled each night. Bluegrass, Appalachian old-time, Ozarks old-time, swing, jazz, and Americana chords have all been heard in the parlor. The hum of the bass shakes the weary wood floors, and the ring of the banjos causes the glass in the windows to quiver.

Recently, a student group from the University of Arkansas visited Mountain View during their “Ozarks Bootcamp.” A special presentation was held in the parlor to showcase the fiddle tunes and ballads

(The Inn continued on next page)

native to the Ozarks and surrounding regions. Most of the gatherings held, however, are unplanned and unformulated. Many musicians are regulars on the front porch simply for the camaraderie found with The Innkeepers and the guests, and advertising their music is far from their agenda.

The jams at The Inn can often go late into the evening, which could be a recipe for disrupted sleepers if it were not for the special attention paid by The Innkeepers to that issue. The music is not heard in the bedrooms because of their location in The Inn. In addition, the guests delight in getting front-row seats to the Mountain View music scene. Guests often remain in the parlor just as long as the musicians do to catch every familiar tune and record every harmony. The Innkeepers attribute the lack of a “music curfew” to their ability to trust the musicians in the parlor. The musicians respect the prime picking location, and they know to keep the gathering special. With the revival of The Inn came a new inspiration to gather.

A college degree in hospitality or business might create a successful bed-and-breakfast, but what has breathed life into this historic treasure was not formality or strategy. Cheri and Kevin have answered the community’s needs through authenticity and sincerity. On any given day, it is probable to find these innkeepers chatting away with their guests on the front porch about the weather, what would come of the guest’s travels, and most of all, how grateful they are to serve their guests each day.

The efforts that have been made to preserve The Inn have uncovered traditions and memories for many who walk through the doors now. Whether the guests stayed at The Inn long ago with their families or held keen memories of playing tunes with an old friend in the parlor, The Inn’s reopening has significance. The restoration took place not only in new coats of paint but in the hearts of the community. After years of doing without, we all could use an awakening of kinship and hospitality in our walks of life.

Author’s Note

I am grateful for my conversations over the summer with Kevin and Cheri Goggans, which helped me understand the history and value of The Inn. I also conducted formal interviews, as listed below.

Sources

Goggans, Kevin and Cheri. Personal interviews conducted by Emily Garoutte. Summer 2022.

“Mountain View (Stone County).” *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*, 13 Oct. 2022.

<https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/mountain-view-998/>.

“Travel: Mountain View, Ark., Folk Music Capital of the World.” *The Washington Post*, 19 Sept. 2014.

https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/magazine/travel-mountain-view-ark-folk-music-capital-of-the-world/2014/09/18/00a7997a-2719-11e4-958c-268a320a60ce_story.html.

Wolf, John Quincy. *Life in the Leatherwoods*. University of Arkansas Press, 2000.

* * * * *

Ozarks Fall Taste Treats

by Barbara Kipfer

When the Ozarks landscape begins to cool down, I look forward to three taste treats: spicebush berries, pawpaw, and persimmons. Not found in stores, they need to be foraged, or naturally occur, or be planted on your property. They are only briefly available, which makes them even more desirable.

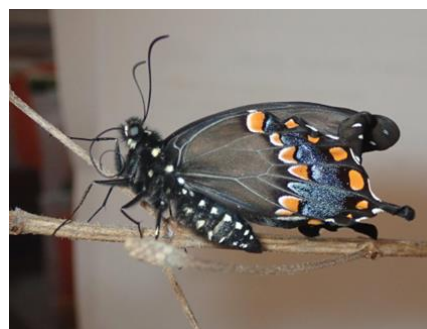
Spicebush, *Lindera benzoin*, is a native shrub. All parts of the plant contain chemicals that are aromatic. This is probably a defense to deter deer and other herbivores from eating it. Humans, however, seem to be attracted by it. Since prehistoric times indigenous people have used the edible leaves and berries. European settlers quickly discovered it as well. I encourage people who are just getting acquainted with it to scratch the stems or crush the leaves, then sniff them. The plant can be tasted during the growing season by sucking on a small stem.

Found in bottomland and along streams, it can also tolerate full sun with the right soil conditions. This plant is available through local native-plant vendors, so you might be able to add this plant to your yard! It has yellow flowers early in the spring which become the bright red berries found on the female shrubs in September and October. I gather the berries and dehydrate them in a dehydrator or the lowest temperature in an oven. Using a spice grinder or a coffee bean grinder, I turn them into a spice that is a substitute for allspice. Spicebush-flavored cookies are a favorite recipe.



Spicebush berries

This is an important plant for spicebush swallowtail butterflies. Their caterpillars eat only spicebush or sassafras leaves. For me, the desire to see these beautiful butterflies and their caterpillars was an excellent reason for planting these in my yard in Springfield. After they were planted butterflies found them, laid eggs, and granted my wish with the cutest caterpillars ever!



Spicebush swallowtail butterfly



The butterfly's eggs
and the caterpillars

(Ozarks Fall Taste Treats continued on next page)



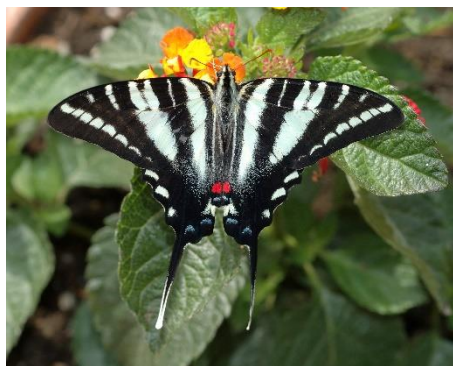
Pawpaw buds

Pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*), also known as hillbilly mango, Missouri banana, and other common names, ripens in September and October. It is the only member of the tropical custard apple family to have adapted to survive freezing winters. In late April and early May the deep-maroon flowers appear. They emit a faint odor similar to dead flesh which attracts the carrion beetles and flies that pollinate them.

The fruits that follow ripen in September and October. When they are ripe their odor is noticeable while walking under the tree. The pulp is creamy and numerous large seeds are buried in it. Once ripe, the thin-skinned fruit has only a two-day shelf-life but can be kept in a refrigerator for two or three weeks. It can be eaten fresh or after the seeds are extracted, a tedious process. The pulp can be used for many different desserts, such as pudding, pies, and cookies. Pulp can also be frozen for future desserts.



Pawpaw fruit



Zebra swallowtail butterfly

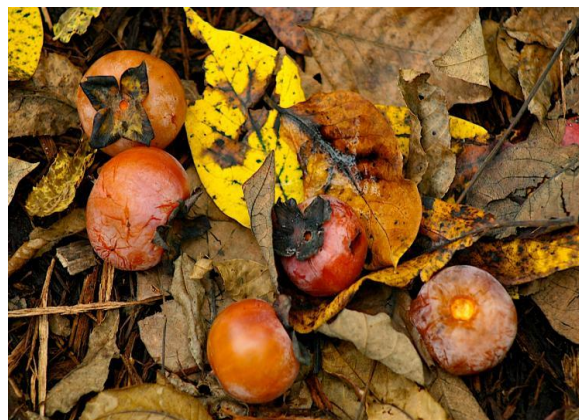
Finding the fruit before opossums, raccoons, squirrels, foxes, and black bears find them is part of the seasonal challenge. We find raccoon and bear scat filled with pawpaw seeds during this time of the year. Another animal that eats the leaves of pawpaw is the black and white zebra swallowtail's caterpillars. Pawpaw is the **only** food that caterpillar can eat. Without the tree, we'd have no zebras fluttering in the air to admire.

Pawpaw trees grow in bottomland soils along streams, and at the base of wooded bluffs and moist slopes. They reach heights of 15 to 30 feet. The large lance-shaped leaves are easily recognizable. When a leaf is crushed, it smells like a green bell pepper. Pawpaw trees are also available from local native-plant vendors. Because the trees are not self-fertile, planting two or three trees of different varieties will increase the chance of fruit production.

(Ozarks Fall Taste Treats continued on next page)

Persimmons (*Diospyros virginiana*) end the fall fruit season. They are members of the ebony family, very adaptable, growing 30 to 70 feet tall in sun or shade, in moist or dry sites, and in various types of soil. The trees produce all male or all female flowers in late spring to early summer. The flowers are cross-pollinated by many native long-tongued bee species seeking nectar and pollen. The many native insects that feed on the persimmon are joined by fruit-eating mammals and birds.

Persimmons usually ripen after the first frost. They fall from the tree, their skins a yellow-orange, orange, or red-orange. Knowing when persimmons are ripe is very important because unripe ones are astringent and will cause your mouth to pucker. The species name is *virginiana*, having been first described growing in Virginia after the English settlement in 1607 at Jamestown. Captain John Smith wrote in the *General History of Virginia* in 1626 that “If it be not ripe it will draw a man’s mouth awry, with much torment, but when it is ripe it is as delicious as an apricot.” Some describe its flavor as similar to dates.



Persimmons. Photo courtesy of Missouri Department of Conservation

Gathering the fruit is the easy part. It can be eaten as is, or made into pulp for delicious desserts. Separating the pulp from the seeds requires a special food mill or colander. You’ll need a cup or two of pulp for most recipes. Remaining pulp can be stored in the freezer for future treats, and many recipes are available online.



Persimmon weather prediction: spoons

Folklore says the forecast for the severity of winter can be predicted by cutting the seeds in half to reveal a white structure. A fork shape means a mild winter, a knife means very cold and windy, and a spoon represents a shovel, meaning lots of snow. Since the seeds are difficult to split without injury, opening one is enough for me.

Persimmon can be an excellent yard tree, even though it is slightly messy underneath in the fall. When adding it to your landscape for fruit, you will need to have both a male and a female tree. Some nurseries sell grafted female trees.

I hope this information inspires you to look forward to these fall treats either by foraging or planting your own.

Photos courtesy of Bob Kipfer except Persimmons, as noted.

* * * * *

“Hootin an Hollarin” Missouri Festival: Then and Now

by Barbara Rackley Luna

Gainesville, located in Ozark County, successfully celebrated the 61st Hootin an Hollarin festival September 15–17. The festival began in October of 1961 and has continued annually except for 2020, when the pandemic canceled all festivals. This year’s theme was “Pioneer Days to Modern Ways.”

Hootin an Hollarin began as a way of bringing together three groups of people in Ozark County—townspeople, country folks, and resort owners. It was said that two hundred people attended the first planning meeting, which was organized by Ozark County Extension agents. Addie Lee Lister, wife of pharmacist Roy Lister, suggested a day to demonstrate old-time skills and crafts. That suggestion was favorable to the group, and Addie Lee became the first chairperson. She was called the mother of Hootin an Hollarin.

Ed Petterson created the name of Hootin an Hollarin and the first symbol of the festival, called Cedar Pete—a hillbilly with a black felt hat and a corncob pipe. For the first few years, the entire festival was held on one side of the Gainesville square with a stage made of a wooden platform set on barrels. It didn’t take long to outgrow that space, and it quickly grew to encompass the entire square.

The first festival required help from lots of people, and it is still a community effort by many volunteers. There are no paid employees of Hootin an Hollarin. A committee of about twenty, composed of individuals who are responsible for certain events, meets together starting in May. Prior to meetings, preparations for those events take place and other individuals and groups are recruited to help.

These events include the big parade, queen pageant, Lil Cedar Pete and Lil Miss Addie Lee contest, craft and food vendors, demonstrators, quilt show, costume contest, bed and outhouse races, pet show, free old-fashioned kids’ games, archery/shotgun shoot, horseshoe/cornhole contest, pie-baking contest, calling contests, hillbilly 5K, and music, music, music. Nancy Walker served as committee chairperson for many years. She turned the leadership over to Paula Herd Rose this year.



The popular bed race event on Friday afternoon

Community groups and business owners also help. On Wednesday at noon, the square is closed to traffic to begin the setup of bleachers, stage, and square dance platforms. Lions Club members and Future Farmers of America students help with these activities. At about 5:30 p.m., craft and food vendors start arriving and are guided to their assigned locations. Thursday morning brings the arrival of the other vendors and demonstration booths. The official start is at 5:00 p.m. on Thursday with “The Star-Spangled Banner” being sung and a welcome address by the mayor.

(Hootin an Hollarin continued on next page)

Another business that helps to promote Hootin an Hollarin is the local newspaper, the *Ozark County Times*. Besides featuring stories for a few weeks prior to and after the festival, the *Times* publishes a free 76-page Festival Guide with pictures and stories.

When people are gathered for a festival, food is required. In the early days, the Pontiac Area Association and later the Theodosia Chamber of Commerce operated a hamburger and hot dog stand. The Gainesville Lions Club organized a Saturday dinner-on-the-ground. Food was prepared and served by local ladies. The ladies also baked cakes for a cake walk. The high school home economics students made chili and sold Frito pies. In later years, health department regulations required that all food be cooked in one kitchen and food booths had to be enclosed, so the community dinner and cake walks were discontinued. Now food trucks serve a variety of food to festival goers.

Music is a huge part of Hootin an Hollarin. This year ten different musical groups performed on the main stage, plus the square dance band that played every night from 9:00 p.m. to midnight. Square dancing is alive and well in Gainesville, and not the western swing variety. Gone are the adult groups that dressed in matching outfits and tap shoes from the 1970s through the early 1990s. Many thought this would be the end of square dancing, but in the mid-1990s, teenagers wanted to learn to square dance. Andy and Jane Elder and other adults eagerly taught them.

The groups of teens might not have looked like a normal square dance set of four couples because there could be as many as eighteen or twenty dancing together on one wooden platform. Square dancing is not done on the rough street pavement in Gainesville. There are eight wooden dance platforms all nailed together between the stage and the bleachers. All ages can be seen dancing together, and all platforms are full.



Basket Weavers of the Theodosia area:
Roxanne Wallace and Sis Green

The “big parade” always starts at 2:00 p.m. on Saturday. This year’s parade included four bands plus the Kilties from Springfield, several floats, antique cars and tractors, fire engines, and horses.

There is no charge to attend Hootin an Hollarin, so how does it survive? Don Rackley was the treasurer for at least forty years. He would contact local businesses and individuals for donations. This provided enough money to break even each year. In the early days, many local musical groups would play without compensation, just for the opportunity to be heard. Musical entertainment became more expensive every year.

One source of income is the fees that craft and food vendors pay for booth space. Craft vendors are required to sell only handcrafted items. Some events require an entry fee to participate, but the fees are used to provide prizes for the event. In the past two years, business and individual sponsors were sought to play for musical entertainment.

(Hootin an Hollarin continued on next page)

The only consistent complaints the committee has received can't be fixed because the cause is the weather—too hot or rained too much, and the like. Hootin an Hollarin has become a time of reunion, a time to see relatives and old friends. Typically, at least one graduation class holds a reunion because members plan to be in town.

Demonstrations of old-time crafts have always been a part of Hootin an Hollarin. The early days featured black kettles over open fires where local residents made lye soap or stirred hominy. Shake shingles and sorghum were also made. Finding people with knowledge and willingness to demonstrate those old-time skills became more difficult. Committee members were determined to increase the number of demonstrators, and they were successful. These past two years have featured a corn broom maker, basket weavers, hand quilters, knitters, a rope maker, an old engine pumping water, a flint knapper, a yarn spinner, a rag-doll maker, a primitive-gun maker, an apple butter maker, a butter churner, and a bread maker.



Display of an old engine by Lynn Taylor

Hootin an Hollarin offers fun for all ages. There are activities and entertainment from morning till midnight. To learn more about Hootin an Hollarin, check out the Facebook page or the webpage at www.hootinanhollarin.com.

--Photos by Barbara Luna

About the Author

Barbara Luna taught business and computer classes at Gainesville High School for 33 years. She then taught computer classes at Missouri State University (West Plains) for nine years, finally retiring in the spring of 2022. Barbara has attended all 61 years of the Hootin an Hollarin festival, beginning with the first one held in October of her eighth-grade year. She summarizes her festival involvement:

“During my teaching years, I supervised booths for FBLA [Future Business Leaders of America] and various classes including the senior class for about fifteen years. After I retired, I was asked to join the committee and to help coordinate all the school booths from Gainesville and other county schools. I did that for two years.”

[She was then asked to assist the festival’s booth coordinator.] “Coordinating all the booths is a huge job that involves seeking craft and food vendors and demonstrators, approving requests for booths, collecting fees, placing booths in appropriate spaces around the square according to vendor type, electrical needs, and water needs, supervising setup, running the information booth and answering questions for the three days of the festival. . . . I will be training others to assist me.”

* * * * *

The Book Bag

In this section, we will occasionally review books and other resources of interest to members of The Society of Ozarkian Hillcrofters and to any readers who share our goals and areas of concern. If you wish to submit a book review or suggest a resource you would like to have explored in The Book Bag, please contact us.

The Skunk Creek Trilogy. Author: Todd Parnell

Skunk Creek (2015)

Swine Branch (2016)

Donny Brook (2017)

Pen-L Publishing, Fayetteville, Arkansas

A Review by Hayden Head

I have found that my review of Todd Parnell's *Skunk Creek Trilogy* resembles a rolling snowball picking up speed: with every turn of phrase, the adjectives keep accumulating. Audacious, outrageous, and perspicacious. Humorous, scandalous, and frivolous. Provocative and evocative. Parnell's *Skunk Creek Trilogy* is the yellow-eyed child of the unfettered imagination of the ultimate Rotarian: former bank president, college president, and board chairman of the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce. Undoubtedly, Parnell's closest friends have long been familiar with his flights of fancy that, like Icarus, may be compelled to undertake a dangerous landing. The rest of us can only watch through our fingers.

Perhaps the best way to proceed is by presenting four facts. First and foremost, Todd Parnell loves the Ozarks and Ozarks culture. In fact, he writes with the express intention of following in the great tradition of Ozarks folklore. (By the way, if you think *The Skunk Creek Trilogy* is a bit, shall we say, earthy, just reread the bawdy folktales of Vance Randolph. You'll find that Parnell's salaciousness is actually pretty tame by comparison.)

Parnell's characters may engage in various illegal but profitable businesses, and they may wander off the marital reservation from time to time, but they never betray their Ozarks authenticity. We've all known (more or less) a Sheriff Sephus Adonis or an Editor-in-Chief Pierce Arrow, and most of us have eaten at some version of Tiny Taylor's diner. We've honored heroes like Lucas Jones and not a few menfolk have pined for a Florence Hormel. But as lascivious and wayward as Parnell's characters might be, they remain true to the clumsy cavalcade of Ozarkers who preceded them.

(Review continued on next page)

Second, Parnell loves the hills and caves and rivers of the Ozarks. Especially, the rivers. He has served on the boards of the Upper White River Basin Foundation, the James River Basin Partnership, the Missouri Clean Water Commission, and the Nature Conservancy of Missouri. He cares about endangered species like the hellbender, an ugly critter that would have been roundly denounced by the laws of Leviticus had it lived in the Jordan River. And he loathes the greed and political chicanery that would permit a CAFO (Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation) of some 6000 hogs with its attendant hog waste lagoons and hog waste dispersal to be built just a few miles from one of the most beautiful rivers in the United States, the Buffalo River.

I am supposing—and that’s what it is, a supposal—that *Skunk Creek* (published in 2015) is Parnell’s response to the approval of the C & H Hog Farm CAFO in 2012, an approval bestowed, I might add, with no public input. As evidence, consider this excerpt from an article written by Jonathan Hahn and published in the Sierra Club online newsletter on February 24, 2017:

[A] Regulation 6 permit allowed the farm to come into operation with no site-specific conditions. Little was done to take into account the specific geology on which the operation would be located. The original application for the permit made no reference to the Buffalo River. It did mention the CAFO would be built on Big Creek, but identified it as being on the White River watershed, not the Buffalo River watershed—a significant omission. Just as significant, the application didn’t mention that the geology of the area is made of karst—a porous form of limestone and other soluble rocks particularly susceptible to groundwater contamination. The Buffalo watershed has a lot of sinkholes and caves; when it rains, everything flushes right down into the river.

Well, this is precisely what happens to Skunk Creek when it becomes *Swine Branch* (the title of Parnell’s second book). A spring flood of Noachian proportions washes out the banks of the pig waste lagoons and dumps the whole stinking mess into pristine Skunk Creek. The creek is spoiled, the hellbender is all but wiped out, and the characters of Hardleyville sink into depression.

I will forego explaining how the whole catastrophe is in part remedied by the intervention of the president of the United States. I will also forego a description of the three bloated bodies that float down Swine Branch into Hardleyville, thereby alerting the good citizens that the Demon Woman is back. (You may wish to heed this caution in the publisher’s description of *Skunk Creek*: “Warning: Do not read if you blush or tire easily.” Said warning could apply to all three of Parnell’s books. Having fulfilled my role as prim and proper gatekeeping reviewer, I will continue.)

(Review continued on next page)

Third principle: Todd Parnell doesn't care what you think. Oh, he may say he means no harm. That you shouldn't take offense. In his words, "Earthy and ribald moments are meant to soften body blows and bring an occasional chuckle, not to offend" (*Donny Brook* viii). That he means well: "Herein I have sought to meld the tragic with the exaggerated to honor the mythical Arcadia of ancient lore and the dogged resilience of a people and place beset with myriad contemporary challenges" (ibid).

But Parnell's indifference to mores, his insouciance, and his *joie de vivre* are necessary ingredients for telling his tale the way he wants to tell it. Perhaps it's not that he doesn't care what you think: He *mustn't care* if he's going to tell *his* story. How else could he introduce the Demon Woman leader of a cult that worships the Great Mother? How else could he describe the death of his hero Lucas Jones, done to death by the Demon Woman?

How else could he depict the interplay of his libidinous characters, including Pastor Pat, the ecumenically minded preacher of the Skunk Creek Church of Christ? This is folklore, folks! And folklore will take you to places you both want to go and dread to go. The choice is up to you whether you do go. Don't blame me. And don't blame Todd Parnell.

And here's the fourth and final principle, the one that redeems all in spite of scandalous tête-à-têtes and slit throats: "Love wins." That may sound trite until you think of what that little sentence could mean for humanity. In *Donny Brook*, the third book of the trilogy, "love wins" means that even in the teeth of our mortality, babies are born and marriages are restored. Sacrifices are made and families reunited. And regardless of how puissant evil may seem, in the end, that old serpent in Eden will devour its own tale.

In short, Todd Parnell gives us Ozarkers hope that maybe, just maybe, the greed and chicanery and shortsightedness of boorish and powerful people will ultimately bow to the true, good, and beautiful. And of course, the true, good, and beautiful—in spite of their flaws and frequent lapses in judgment—are the people who live in the Ozarks, and the hills and caves and rivers those people call home. All in all, not bad work for an ex-college president.

* * * * *

Guidelines for Authors

For topic ideas, see areas of interest on page 1. Submit the manuscript as a Word document. If content is based on research, list at least two sources, including one book (if possible). *Wikipedia*, *ancestry.com*, *findagrave.com*, and the like are unacceptable. Content based on personal interviews is welcome.

Limit each in-text, direct quotation to approximately four to five lines (50 words or so). Quoted passages of greater length may require permission from the author or publisher to avoid copyright violation. Please see copyright notice for this newsletter on page 2.

For photos, identify the source of each and ensure permission is obtained for use. Written permission is required to use any portions of this newsletter.

Please contact us before you submit to let us know the topic of your article. We can then be sure that your topic falls within our areas of interest and does not duplicate content already published. If the article was previously published, please provide full bibliographic information for that source.

Be sure to include your name, address, phone number, and email address with your submission.

INTERESTED IN CONTRIBUTING TO OUR NEWSLETTER?

We invite readers to submit articles, notices of upcoming events, or other Ozarks-related information.

Contact us by email at:

information@
societyofozarkianhillcrofters.com,
or by traditional mail at:

PO Box 682
Ozark, Missouri 65721

Please see Guidelines for Authors
on this page.