

The SOCIETY
of OZARKIAN
HILLCROFTERS

Identifying and Preserving What Makes the Ozarks Exceptional

Volume 1 Issue 3 Fall 2021

Message from Hillcrofters President

Every season in the Ozarks brings a host of wonderful experiences to residents and visitors alike, but there is something about the attributes of the autumn season that stirs feelings of the Ozarkian experience. The cooler temperatures clear the air of the lush summer humidity, revealing crystal-blue skies with wisps of cottony-white clouds. The first frost brings on the changing colors of the foliage-covered hills and valleys.

Within just a few days, the deep greens and few browns of the leaves of late summer give way to a blaze of colors . . . shades of yellows, oranges, and reds. Fallen foliage leads to the smells of burning leaves and the hardwood smoke that emanates from chimneys to ward off the first signs of cool weather.

Deer and other fall hunting seasons begin, and a distant gunshot cracks through the quiet, frosty morning air. Migrating geese can be heard calling in the darkened, starry night skies high above the earth. The smell of warm pumpkin pie, sweet apple cider, and roasting corn awakens the hunger for Thanksgiving dinners and other fall events that feature foods of the summer's harvest.

Fall festivals, some of them decades old and of legendary status, are scattered all over the Ozarks region, filling calendars from September through November. Traditional crafts and acoustic music, and once again, a variety of fine foods bring delight to thousands of Ozarkers and visitors alike.

Many of us have attended these festivals since a young age, and they have become Ozarkian traditions that usher in autumn and opportunities for some final outdoor activities and adventures before cold wintry weather confines us to the warmth of the indoors. Yes, there is so much the Ozarks has to offer for us to be thankful for, and the autumn season does not disappoint.

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

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I look forward to sharing this issue with you all. Once again, our team of talented writers brings you stories from and about the Ozarks we so dearly love.

In this issue, we will learn about the original founder of the Society of Ozarkian Hillcrofters, Otto Rayburn, from author Hayden Head. Bob Kipfer will tell us just how and why the leaves change color at this time of the year. Marilyn Perlberg will take us on a tour of the fascinating Ralph Foster Museum at College of the Ozarks. And in The Book Bag section, Hayden Head will review a fascinating book called *The Little Fiddler of the Ozarks*.

There's a great deal to report about the projects and activities of the Society of Ozarkian Hillcrofters. There is a news brief about the September 4 Old Country Fair Music Festival, and we have some exciting news from the Smithsonian regarding the Ozarks!

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 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

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

UPCOMING EVENT CELEBRATES OZARKS

Smithsonian Folklife Festival

Late June to Early July 2023
National Mall, Washington, D.C.

Role for Hillcrofters in 2023 Smithsonian Festival

The Smithsonian Folklife Festival is featuring the Ozarks region in 2023. Plans are underway, and the Hillcrofters are invited to help. Hillcrofters President Curtis Copeland received the news from Tom Peters, dean of library services at Missouri State University (MSU). Peters solicited Copeland because of the Hillcrofters mission of cultural preservation.

Concurrently Jason Morris, Smithsonian festival operations director, contacted Copeland. Barry Bergey also reached out. Bergey is the retired director of folk and traditional arts for the National Endowment for the Arts. Morris and Bergey felt it was important to include the Hillcrofters because of our research efforts and regional overview. The Hillcrofters can ensure the festival includes a good representation of the Ozarks region as a whole.

Copeland and the Hillcrofters would be grateful to know of anyone skilled in Ozarks arts and crafts, music, culinary expertise, storytelling, or presenting that we could contact. The Smithsonian Folklife Festival is a major event. It is held on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., and annually showcases the living cultural heritage of a nation, region, or state. Admission is free, and hundreds of thousands of visitors typically attend. The dates for 2023 are presently listed as June 27 to July 8.

For Additional Information

“Ozarks at the Smithsonian.”
<https://festival.si.edu/2023/ozarks>.

Riley, Claudette. “Missouri State library tapped to help tell story of Ozarks at 2023 Smithsonian Folklife Festival.”
Springfield News-Leader, Oct. 21, 2021.
<https://www.news-leader.com/story/news/education/2021/10/21/missouri-state-libraries-help-tell-story-ozarks-2023-smithsonian-folklife-festival/8513567002/>.

“Smithsonian Folklife Festival: Mission and History.”
<https://festival.si.edu/about-us/mission-and-history/smithsonian>.

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 can 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

News and Projects

2021 Old Country Fair Music Festival

On September 4, the Society of Ozarkian Hillcrofters and the Michel family homestead co-hosted the 2021 Old Country Fair Music Festival. The homestead is located seven miles east of Branson, off T Highway. In addition to providing an opportunity to hear Ozarks music and participate in dancing and other festivities, the goal of the event was to raise money for the Ozark Mountain Music Association (OMMA).

The Hillcrofters partner with OMMA to provide funding for scholarships and musical instruments so that young people, from kindergarten through grade 12, may learn how to play traditional Ozarks acoustic music as well as learn traditional dancing. Several hundred people attended the event, which raised more than a thousand dollars.

The event featured several talented musical groups, many composed of OMMA students. The Missouri Boatride Bluegrass Band was the main act. This well-known band has performed at, and supported, Hillcrofters events over the years and features Hillcrofters board member Larry Sifford.

Other groups included the Mountain Grove Medley. This group is composed of several students that practice and perform every Thursday night at the historic Mountain Grove Schoolhouse, a few miles east of Branson.



Missouri 65, another group, has been becoming increasingly popular over the past couple of years.

The members of Missouri 65 are also past and present students of the OMMA roots music program.

Country Fair Entertainment: Missouri 65

A duo consisting of Emalee Flatness of Ozark, Missouri, on fiddle, accompanied by Alex Edwards from North Carolina on guitar, captivated the audience.

Other talented acts included Fresh Cut Bluegrass, Ozark Strangers, Cynthia Ridge, and Greenland Station. The day's festivities ended with a square dance that was open to the public.

(Country Fair continued on next page)

Country Fair Entertainment:

**Emalee Flatness
and
Alex Edwards**



Country Fair Entertainment:

Ozark Strangers

-- Country Fair photos courtesy of
Marcus Macclamrock

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Notch Post Office Update

Report by Tammy Morton

One of the first projects the Hillcrofters took on was the restoration of the old post office at Notch, Missouri. This place is on the National Register of Historic Buildings. It was made famous in Harold Bell Wright's novel *The Shepherd of the Hills* as Uncle Ike's post office at the Forks. In reality, the post office was owned and operated by Levi Morrill ("Uncle Ike"), and the property has remained in the family.

Working with the Morrill family, the Hillcrofters raised funds to restore the roof and build a new porch in the hope of opening the building to the public. Unfortunately, with the passing of landowner and Hillcrofters board member Layne Morrill, the future of the property, and the building itself, is currently uncertain. It is the hope of the Hillcrofters that the restoration of the roof that has been completed will extend the life of the post office until plans for the building are determined by current or future owners.

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Articles Section

Otto Ernest Rayburn: Founder of Ozarkian Hillcrofters

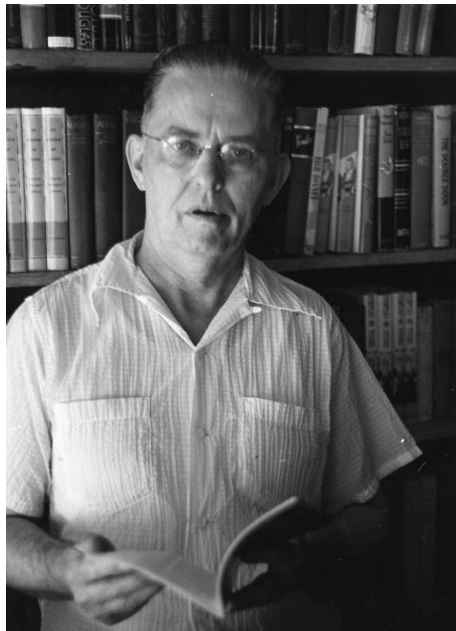
by Hayden Head

“The hillsman is losing his distinctive traits and is becoming a drab, standardized American. Once the transformation is complete, the romantic Ozarks will live only in song and story. The average Ozarkian does not realize the value of his heritage to himself and to the world and is making no serious attempt to guard it against the inroads of twentieth-century civilization.”

From *Ozark Country*, page 38, by Otto Ernest Rayburn

Part I

Otto Rayburn (1891–1960) was as devout a lover of the Ozarks as these hills have ever wooed. A transplant from Kansas as a “young colt” of twenty, Rayburn threw his life, lot, and considerable energies into the promotion of the Ozarks, and to that end he was a founder of clubs, a recorder of folklore, an author and publisher of magazines and books, and a booster of all things Ozarks. More to



Courtesy of Lyons Memorial Library,
College of the Ozarks

the point, it was Otto Rayburn who was the founder of this society, the Society of Ozarkian Hillcrofters. And before proceeding to Rayburn’s life, it may be helpful to define precisely what a “hillcrofter” is. Rayburn does just that in his part memoir/part history of the Ozarks, *Ozark Country*: “A croft is a small farm, or tract of land, and a crofter is the one who cultivates it. Hillcrofters are tenants of the land who live the simple life close to nature. They are guardians of tradition and folklore in the backhills” (58).

Rayburn’s attachment to “hillcrofters” and their land was bred in the bone, so to speak; in his autobiography, *Forty Years in the Ozarks*, Rayburn writes of his lowan ancestors: “Two generations of Rayburns took time out to cultivate flat lands that stretch away from the hills. This was a break with tradition for the clan had originated in the Highlands of Scotland where every man is a hillcrofter” (5). In coming to the Ozarks, Rayburn saw himself as recovering his family’s traditional bond to the hills.

In fact, Rayburn founded two Ozarks groups: the first was the Ozarkians and the second was the Hillcrofters. In 1932, these two groups melded into one, but the aims of both remained the same:

To collect and preserve the folklore, customs, songs, legends, traditions, arts, crafts and pioneer history of the Ozarks; to aid in the protection and propagation of wild plant and animal life, and the preservation of the natural beauty of the hills; to demand that modern industry, as it enters

(Rayburn continued on next page)

the hills, be made beautiful; to encourage the living of the simple life close to the soil; and to foster the re-establishment of the principles of democracy and true culture in American life. (*Forty Years* 67)

Only slightly modified (can anyone really arm-twist modern industry into being made beautiful?), these goals persist in the recently re-founded Society of Ozarkian Hillcrofters.

Part II

Rayburn's love affair with the Ozarks began—as it has with so many others—with *The Shepherd of the Hills*. In Harold Bell Wright's 1907 novel of the Ozarks, Rayburn discovered “a kinship with the people of the hills,” and he “walked off level land, never to return” (*Forty Years* 6). When he arrived in Ozark country, Rayburn bought a dilapidated cabin south of Reeds Spring near the White River and set about establishing himself in his new home. His attempts to create a paradise were interrupted by war—in 1917, Rayburn enlisted in the army and was shipped off to France—but resumed after his discharge. Upon his return to his “Hideaway Lodge,” Rayburn fixed up the cabin as best he could and warmed it in winter by dragging in discarded timbers and feeding them by degrees into his stove. The ends of the logs stuck through the open door, but the ventilation, he claimed, made the cabin more comfortable. About this unusual means of heating, Rayburn writes:

I would straddle it [the hewn log] before the fire and set my portable typewriter in front of me. I was just beginning my adventure with the written word, and my writing was as uncouth as my rustic desk. It was on this log desk that I wrote my first lines about the Ozarks. Little did I realize that in the thirty years to follow I would write and publish more than a million words on this enchanted land. (*Forty Years* 30–31).

Clearly, Rayburn loved writing about the Ozarks, but writing was not his sole ambition; with equal passion, he repeatedly sought to promote his adopted hills through the publication of magazines and journals.

Rayburn's first magazine was *Ozark Life: The Mirror of the Ozarks*, first published in June 1925; the *Arcadian* followed in February 1931; and the third was *Arcadian Life*, a magazine Rayburn published while he lived in Sulphur Springs, Texas. Concerning these ventures, Rayburn writes, “Publishing an Ozark magazine is like going on a snipe hunt and holding the sack” (*Forty Years* 50). Each failed publication depleted his resources, but Rayburn the idealist persisted. He sustained himself (and later, his family) largely through teaching, and from 1924 through 1930, he served as superintendent of the public school in Kingston, Arkansas. In 1925, he married Lutie Beatrice Day from Hopkins County, Texas, but Rayburn writes that she “never understood his strange obsession to publish a magazine” (*Forty Years* 52).

Lutie's lack of understanding seems, well, understandable, given the apparent impossibility of making these magazines profitable. In 1929, the financial situation for the Rayburns became so dire that they were forced to sell their furniture to keep *Ozark Life* going. Then, of course, the market crashed and

(Rayburn continued on next page)

soon *Ozark Life* did, too. Nevertheless, Rayburn persevered, and in 1931, he moved his family to Eminence, Missouri, where he founded the *Arcadian*, which soon followed its predecessor into oblivion.

Finances—or a lack of them—compelled Lutie and the children to return to her parents' home in Texas, and soon Rayburn joined them, though he “was so choked with emotion,” he “could hardly speak” (*Forty Years* 72). He enrolled in East Texas State Teachers College in Commerce, Texas, and started another publishing venture: *Arcadian Life*, subtitled “A Journal of Ozarkian Lore and Pastoral Living.” About this journal, Rayburn writes, “Sulphur Springs took no interest in my magazine, and I never received a single line of advertising from the businessmen” (*Forty Years* 74). In 1936, Rayburn received his World War I soldier's bonus, and he returned to the Ouachita Mountains where he taught high school at Caddo Gap.

In 1940, Rayburn's luck changed when “Fate patted [him] on the back in a friendly way,” and he was selected to write a book on the Ozarks for the American Folkway Series (*Forty Years* 77). Rayburn was still teaching at Caddo Gap when he received a letter from Erskine Caldwell notifying Rayburn of his selection, whereupon Rayburn traded full-time teaching for part-time, so he could focus on the book. In the spring of 1941—and just a week before Pearl Harbor—his book *Ozark Country* was finished. The book was reprinted in 2021 by the University of Arkansas Press with an introduction by Brooks Blevins, and *Ozark Country* deserves a place in the library of all Hillcrofters.

Rayburn's life and fortunes further improved when he and his wife, Lutie, with their son Bill settled in Eureka Springs. His old friend Vance Randolph settled there as well, and together they initiated a kind of folklore renaissance in that magical town. As one might expect, Rayburn started a new magazine, this one entitled *The Ozark Guide*, which featured Rayburn himself as the guide. According to an article in the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Rayburn made “an announcement in his magazine that if anybody anywhere wanted to know anything about the Ozarks, all they had to do was to write him and he would answer every question. There was no charge, and the only condition was that the inquirer enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope for reply.” Rayburn published *Ozark Guide* as a quarterly and for once, his magazine turned a profit. He and Lutie opened a bookstore that specialized in Ozarks literature, and it too was successful.

In 1949, John Gould Fletcher, poet laureate of Arkansas, founded the Ozark Folklore Society at the University of Arkansas, with Vance Randolph as the vice president and Rayburn as one of the founding co-directors. (Incidentally, another of the co-founders was Mary Parler, folklore authority at the University of Arkansas and Randolph's future wife.) After Gould's death Randolph took over as president of the society—soon to be renamed the Arkansas Folklore Society—and Rayburn followed Randolph.

At roughly the same time—from 1952 to 1956—Rayburn also directed the Ozark Folk Festival. In 1953, Rayburn was elected to the Eureka Springs Chamber of Commerce; in 1954, he published a history of Eureka Springs serially in the *Eureka Springs Times-Echo*, and in that same year, Rayburn was honored by the Ozarks Playground Association with a Distinguished Service Award. In 1955, Rayburn “rolled up his sleeves” and began assembling all the bits and bobs of his long career in Ozarks studies; he donated the finished collection to the University of Arkansas as the *Ozark Folk Encyclopedia*, a vast compendium of “250 volumes in loose leaf binders, each properly indexed, and with an estimated 20,000,000 words” (*Forty Years* 99).

(Rayburn continued on next page)

Still, with all of his achievements, Otto Rayburn seemed beset by a lingering melancholy that tainted his self-perception and downplayed his success. "In the end," Rayburn writes: "I am only a dot, and a small one that, in the vast universe of being, but I have tried to be helpful, 'planting flowers where I thought flowers would grow.' . . . If life has meaning or significance, it comes as the result of honest toil" (*Forty Years* 101). Rayburn toiled in a land that he loved and poured out his life's blood, ink, and energies to promote and preserve the Ozarks. After a brief illness, Otto Ernest Rayburn died in Fayetteville, Arkansas, in 1960.

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Behymer, F. A. "A Walking 'Guide to the Ozarks.'" *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 27 Dec. 1944, p. 25.

Rayburn, Otto Ernest. *Forty Years in the Ozarks*. Eureka Springs, Arkansas: Ozark Guide Press, 1983.

Rayburn, Otto Ernest. *Ozark Country*. Edited by Brooks Blevins, University of Arkansas Press, 2021.

Simpson, Ethel. "Otto Ernest Rayburn, an Early Promoter of the Ozarks," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, vol. LVIII, no. 2, summer 1999, pp. 3–35.

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This poem, and the article that follows it, reflect on our concern for Ozarks nature and conservation, with appreciation for the changing seasons.



Reality

Observing nature on a frosty morning stroll,
Roadside ditches filled with autumn's rusty toll,
A golden flower stands in the warming sun
Brazenly, defying winter yet to come
Missing petals foretell to all who see
Nature's approaching reality.

Tom Johnson-Nov 2020

-- Photo courtesy of Tom Johnson

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Leaves of Fall: The Why and the How

by Bob Kipfer



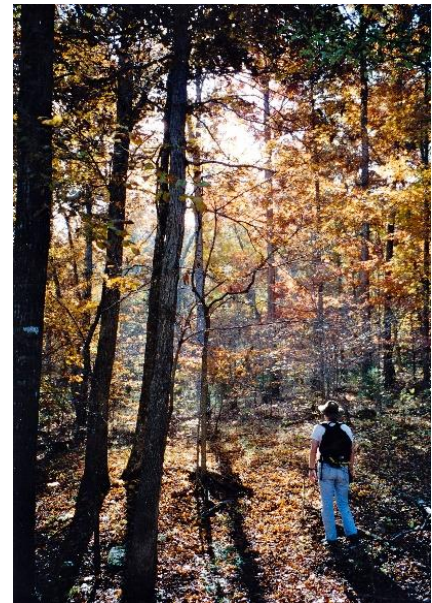
Fall in the Ozarks immediately brings to mind the spectacle of leaves coloring the hillsides. The colors change subtly every few days as different species of trees and shrubs choose their seasonal wardrobe. Leaves gradually lose their color and fall to the ground, exposing the bare branches of winter.

Who doesn't love the fall colors? Maybe homeowners obsessed with raking them up to expose the fading lawn? The smell of burning leaf piles is another sign of fall that is fortunately less

common now as we understand the toxic gases that it adds to the atmosphere. We now encourage using a mulching mower or piling the leaves in a corner to let them mulch naturally. That is what nature has been doing since the first plants grew on earth.

There is a method to the madness of falling leaves. It begins as the days grow shorter, the nights longer and the tree's need for leaves fades. The tree stops making chlorophyll, instead storing that remaining energy in its roots. As the green of chlorophyll fades, the underlying carotenoid and anthocyanin pigments of red and yellow are exposed. Fall is here!

Many of the leaves have been gnawed by insects and their larvae, which in turn fed predatory insects and birds. Leaves would add weight on branches that are already burdened by rain and snow all winter long. Having served their purpose, the tree soon cuts its energy and fluid losses by closing off the vessels feeding the leaf. New cells called the abscission layer grow at the petiole junction, sealing it to prevent water loss after the leaf falls to the ground.



Once on the ground, the leaves lose their color and are either forgotten or raked into piles by homeowners to expose the fading lawn. In nature however, their role has just begun as they dry out and decompose. The top layer covers the fermenting layer below where leaves are compacting and beginning to rot. The insulation keeps them moist, allowing bacteria and fungi to break down the cellulose.

(Leaves of Fall continued on next page)

Now nature's recycling really gets rolling. Detrivores are species that feed on dead material. These include snails, slugs, mites, pillbugs, millipedes, and of course, earthworms. Their feces feed more bacteria and fungi, creating the rich black humus of completely rotted plant and animal matter, nature's brand of compost.

Lift the leaf litter and you will expose a protected underworld of beetles and other beneficial insects as well as fierce predators such as centipedes and spiders. These will in turn feed toads, salamanders, and skinks, and all their accumulated waste returns to the soil for next year's tree growth.



The forest floor is the winter home for a variety of insects such as moth cocoons, ground-nesting bees, cicada and beetle larvae, and many others. The mat of fallen leaves serves to insulate this soil community from hard winter freezing.

Dead leaves that fall or wash into small streams and ponds still contribute to the food chain. By early spring, the tough fibrous material becomes slimy and soft from digestion by fungi and bacteria that add protein to the mix. Aquatic nymphs of stoneflies and caddisflies shred the leaves, in turn providing food for frogs, snakes, and fish.

After resting all winter, as the daylight hours lengthen, the buds of dormant trees and shrubs burst forth in spring. A fresh crop of leaves will gather sunlight for photosynthesis, providing food and shelter for the new year's life cycle.



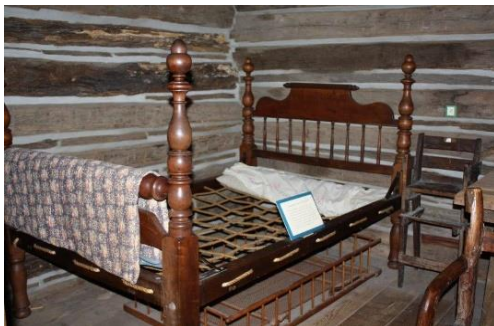
-- Photos courtesy of Bob Kipfer

Ralph Foster Museum in the Spotlight

by Marilyn Perlberg

For Ozarks regional history and culture, the Ralph Foster Museum is a major resource. The museum is located on the College of the Ozarks campus, just south of Branson, Missouri, and west of US Highway 65. The museum houses a wide-ranging assortment of items, but a focus on the Ozarks is pervasive. Scores of exhibits could be said to express the spirit of the Hillcrofters motto: "Identifying and preserving what makes the Ozarks exceptional."

The Bookout Cabin is a significant feature. The cabin was built in 1884 by a Bookout family member using logs hewn with an adze. Its original site was about ten miles east of the college campus. The cabin was displayed at the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904 and later purchased by the Missouri State Highway Department.



Bookout Cabin



The museum acquired the Bookout Cabin through a donation. The cabin is reconstructed, a bit modified, and available to enter. The interior is furnished with items of the period, including a rope bed and mattress, fireplace tools, a table, cupboard, crockery, and cookware.

Near the cabin, along the same hallway, various vintage implements are on display. The larger ones include a Springfield wagon and tractors, and a steam engine used into the 1970s. Beyond the steam engine is the entrance to the Bob and Lois Brownell Research Center and Library, a valuable information source.

The library was established in the mid-1970s by the Brownell family of Iowa. Bob Brownell owned a gun parts business; Lois Brownell was a librarian. The Brownells often vacationed in the Ozarks and took great interest in the museum. Their financial contributions enabled conversion of a sizable storage room into a research center that houses work areas, office space, and the library. Brownell family support continues today.

The Brownell library contains books—more than six thousand—along with magazines and vertical files. The vertical files contain anything related to the Ozarks, according to Annette Sain, museum director. Students on campus may use the library and check out books for research projects. Public access for research is available by appointment with the museum director, and materials must be used on site.

The museum also features a Greater Ozarks Hall of Fame that celebrates notable Ozarks personalities. Induction ceremonies began in 1975 and lasted into the mid-1980s, with more than thirty inducted

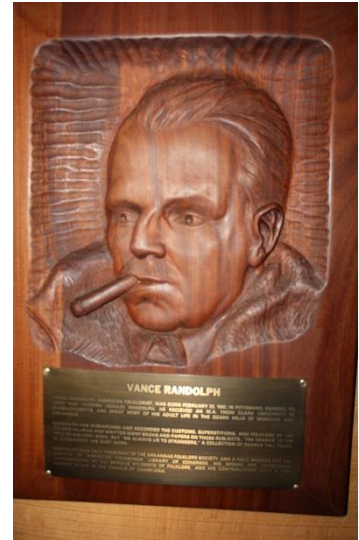
(Ralph Foster Museum continued on next page)

under this Greater Ozarks program. Each notable was initially honored with a plaque and display case of related artifacts. Plaques and display cases were later split up and moved. Few display cases accompany plaques today.



The induction of three notables per year was initially planned, but the number varied. Six were inducted in 1975: artist and illustrator Rose O’Neill, poet and columnist Mary Elizabeth Mahnkey, folklorist Vance Randolph, columnist May Kennedy McCord, artist Thomas Hart Benton, and author Harold Bell Wright. Except for the latter two, all can be identified as members of the original Society of Ozarkian Hillcrofters.

**Hall of Fame Plaques:
Mary Elizabeth Mahnkey
Vance Randolph**



Plaques for Mary Elizabeth Mahnkey, Vance Randolph, and Harold Bell Wright are clustered in a History of the Ozarks area on the third floor, below the heading Ozark Mountain Folklore Writers. The same cluster honors plant scientist George Washington Carver, inducted in 1976; *Little House* author Laura Ingalls Wilder, inducted in 1977; and writer-journalist Lucile Morris Upton, inducted in 1980. Laura Ingalls Wilder is marginally related to the Hillcrofters as the mother of her writer-assistant Rose Wilder Lane, an original Hillcrofters member.



Others related to the Hillcrofters include US congressman Dewey Short, inducted in 1979, and Levi Morrill, inducted in 1981. Dewey Short was a member of the Ozarkians, one of two groups that formed the original Society of Ozarkian Hillcrofters. Levi Morrill, the model for “Uncle Ike” in the novel *The Shepherd of the Hills*, established the historic Notch post office that is a project of the Hillcrofters today.

**Hall of Fame Plaques:
Harold Bell Wright Levi Morrill**



(Ralph Foster Museum continued on next page)

As the force behind approval to construct Table Rock Dam, Dewey Short is one of several Hall of Fame notables still honored with a display. An imitation of his office is located on the third floor, set apart from the Folklore Writers cluster and near displays for notable Branson music pioneers.



Displays for Hall of Fame notable Rose O'Neill are located on the first floor. A showcase includes her plaque and many of her creations, such as Kewpie and Scootie dolls, "laughing hoho" figures, assorted items decorated with Kewpies, and a cover illustration from a 1927 *Ladies Home Journal*. A case nearby contains other Rose O'Neill artworks.



Rose O'Neill Kewpies



A special alcove is reserved by the first-floor Edwards Art Gallery for Thomas Hart Benton. His plaque is displayed with his painting "Departure of the Joads." The painting was one of several commissioned by 20th Century Fox to promote the film of John Steinbeck's 1939 novel *The Grapes of Wrath*.

The Grapes of Wrath painting

A display case of miscellany, located near the art gallery, includes information about *The Ozarks Mountaineer* magazine, which was a significant source for Ozarks history and lore. *The Ozarks Mountaineer* was published from the early 1950s into the early 21st century. Among the contributors listed are Jimmy Driftwood and original Hillcrofters May Kennedy McCord and Vance Randolph. Jimmy Driftwood was the Arkansas Ozarks singer and songwriter who brought traditional folk music to national attention.

(Ralph Foster Museum continued on next page)

The name of Vance Randolph appears in another first-floor display, this one showing Ozarks hickory-nut dolls. A notice from Vance Randolph's *Ozark Mountain Folks*, published in 1932, explains: "With the necessities of life dependent upon the dexterity of fingers, there was an urge for completeness that made artisans into artists." The manufacture of hickory-nut dolls was a new Ozarks industry in the 1930s.



Hickory-Nut Dolls

That doll display is located near a vintage loom, spinning wheel, and numerous collections, some with no connection to the Ozarks. Exhibits that mirror Ozarks life typically share space with mildly dissimilar or totally unrelated items. Collections range from cameos, stamps, and clocks to a 1931 Rolls Royce and nature displays that include life-sized stuffed grizzly bears and a bull moose. More than that, the truck that appeared in *The Beverly Hillbillies*, the popular CBS television series that ran from 1962 to 1971, greets visitors at the museum entrance.

How did the museum end up with so many unusual and dissimilar displays? According to Annette Sain, "the museum collected anything and everything in the beginning." The interests and donations of benefactors influenced the collecting policy for several decades afterward.

The museum was started in the late 1920s, in a boys' dormitory later converted into museum space. Initially called Museum of the Ozarks, the name was later changed to the Good Museum to honor school president Dr. Robert M. Good. In the 1960s, the museum was renamed again to honor Ralph Foster, a major benefactor and Springfield, Missouri, radio and television pioneer.

Ralph Foster made museum expansion possible through his financial donations. He donated many items, large and small, among them an antique Cornish organ and collection of ivory works. The Native American display and extensive firearms collection on the museum's second floor came from Ralph Foster. He was inducted into the Greater Ozarks Hall of Fame in 1976.

A plaque for Ralph Foster and an imitation of his office are adjacent to the Si Siman music room on the first floor. The room features memorabilia and photos from music publishing, with a special focus on the Ozark Jubilee. Ralph Foster originated the Springfield AM radio station KWTO and Ozark Jubilee television show, which focused on country music.

(Ralph Foster Museum continued on next page)

Museum policy changed after Ralph Foster's time. Collecting today is limited to items related solely to the Ozarks region, its people and culture. Still, the overall collection remains, in the words of Annette Sain, "eclectic and nontypical." How did the recent pandemic affect this collection? The museum was left unattended while the campus remained closed to visitors for an academic year.

The museum reopened on schedule last September, but the variety of exhibits, some quite intricate, made opening preparations more difficult. According to Annette Sain, the museum had been closed only once before for a week, but never for many months. Museum staff, helped by students back for the fall semester, cleaned, dusted, and polished for several weeks to freshen the long-neglected exhibits.

**Truck used by the
Clampett family in *The
Beverly Hillbillies*
television series**



Visitors may again enter the museum to be greeted by the truck from *The Beverly Hillbillies*. How did it get there? It was a gift from Paul Henning, who had boyhood memories of the Ozarks. He created the "poor mountaineers," who struck it rich and exchanged an Ozarks cabin for a West Coast mansion. How do visitors respond to the truck? "Very favorably," according to Annette Sain. "The hillbillies were smart. Visitors remember the show as 'clean.' The truck signifies for them a simpler time."

-- Photos courtesy of Director Annette Sain, Ralph Foster Museum, College of the Ozarks

Acknowledgments/Sources

I am indebted to Annette Sain for meeting with me on August 11 and September 11, 2021, to provide essential information about the museum's history, policy, and collections. I am also grateful to Annette Sain for finding time in her busy schedule to locate the photos for this article. Thanks go to Hayden Head for his research that identified Dewey Short's affiliation with the Ozarkians (email July 30, 2021). Other information is based on my recent tours of the museum and my knowledge of the Society of Ozarkian Hillcrofters. This article represents a significant revision of my brief overview previously published in *nBranson ETC* (Branson, MO) 2, no. 3 (January– March 2009): 6–8.

The museum website may be accessed at www.rfostermuseum.com.

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A Conversation with Mark and Steve Seaton: The Business of Hillbilly Postcards and Calendars

by Curtis Copeland and Hayden Head

In the nineteen-sixties and seventies the Seaton family was something of an institution in the Missouri Ozarks. Photographs of the Seatons appeared on postcards and calendars and came to embody the stereotypical hillbilly for both tourists and locals. The patriarch of the Seaton family and founder of their hillbilly business was Bruce Seaton. After Bruce met his bride-to-be, Dorothy, in Carthage, they moved close to Cape Fair in Stone County where they raised their brood of eight children. Bruce and his family worked in numerous capacities at Shepherd of the Hills; for a while, Bruce's picture was even printed on McDonald's coffee cups as Preachin' Bill.

Bruce also worked in the print shop at Silver Dollar City, printing wanted posters and the City's newspaper. At the suggestion of an anonymous tourist, he began dressing his wife and kids up as a hillbilly family and photographing them. And that's when Bruce's hillbilly entrepreneurship began to pay off. Steve and Mark Seaton, two of the sons, sat down with us to tell us the Seaton story. Steve is currently the mayor of Hurley.

-- Hayden Head

CURTIS: We appreciate you gentlemen coming down from Hurley to share your family's story with the Hillcrofters. A lot of us who grew up around here remember those postcards and calendars your family sold back in the mid-sixties and early seventies. Your dad had some inventive ideas about how to start a business, and when tourism picked up, he found opportunities for his endeavors. Tell us how the business began.

STEVE: Dad went to work at Silver Dollar City when it opened, but he didn't work for the City. He worked for Leon Fredrick, who was a printer in Blue Eye. Leon owned the Stone County newspapers and subcontracted his print shop to the City. The old printing press had been stored in a barn loft at Blue Eye, and they moved it to Silver Dollar City, and Dad ran the printing press.

MARK: Dad told me that he would dress up in his printer's outfit, and Steven was already dressed up as a ragged paperboy.

STEVE: I sold papers at Silver Dollar City for ten cents a copy when Dad was running the print shop. I got to keep two cents for every paper I sold. They were a good souvenir. And people felt sorry for me, so they bought a lot of papers. After the money I spent on candy and ice cream, I had fifteen dollars left over from that summer, and I bought a bicycle.

MARK: Sometimes, Dad would bring all of us kids out there and dress us up like Steven. Some fellow came by and saw Dad's photographs of us kids and said to Dad, "If you dressed up like the kids, you'd make a good hillbilly family for postcards." The guy sent him a picture as an example of what Dad could do. Dad was intrigued by the idea and began by taking pictures of us in costumes with a Polaroid. After that, he hired a photographer, and things took off.

(Seaton Conversation continued on next page)

CURTIS: Your Dad arranged it so each of you kids had a specific role.

MARK: That's right. And the tarpaper shack that showed up in so many of the postcards is where we lived.

STEVE: We'd have to haul everything for the pictures down in the holler and then haul it back up to the house.

MARK: Dad printed the postcards first.

HAYDEN: Animals often show up in these postcards. Was that your livestock?

STEVE: Yes.

MARK: In fact, there was a hog in one picture, and a year later, there was a picture of us butchering the same hog.

HAYDEN: So, they were real butchering shots?

STEVE: Yeah, Dad would scald 'em.



(Seaton Conversation continued on next page)

- CURTIS:** Mark, I remember there was an interesting story about your wedding.
- MARK:** That's right; it was my actual wedding that was featured in the calendar.
- CURTIS:** Tell us about the calendars.
- STEVE:** Dad started with the postcards, and I think they were first printed at College of the Ozarks. For the calendars, he used a company called Lou Jean's that sold novelties. They produced the calendars and distributed them.
- MARK:** We were shipping calendars to Japan, and in the heyday before Dad died, we sold as many as a hundred calendars a day at Silver Dollar City.
- STEVE:** Dad wanted to save money on the printing, so he found an old dairy barn and fixed it up and moved his printing press into it.
- CURTIS:** Where was it?
- MARK:** Between Cape Fair and Reeds Spring.
- STEVE:** After the postcards came greeting cards, stationery, buttons, calendars, and even bread boards. Dad started making and selling bread boards before they became popular. Dad was always tinkering with something. If he needed equipment, he built it.
- CURTIS:** Is the old homeplace still standing?
- STEVE:** It's gone now. It was an old shack when we bought it in 1963—it didn't even have a floor.
- MARK:** Actually, we poured the floor while we lived in it. Dad would get paid and he'd buy a sack of concrete, and we'd bring water up from the creek and mix enough to pour another section.
- STEVE:** Eventually, Dad made some money, so we were able to tarpaper the house halfway up. The rest of the way up was screen, so we had to put up plastic in the winter. By the time he finished the floor, the house was falling down.
- MARK:** I remember when you dropped a tack hammer on my head.
- STEVE:** You probably deserved it. Dad had a team of salespeople that would go around and sell the calendars. And neighbors would help pack boxes.
- STEVE:** Wherever the postcards were stocked, Dad would get a penny for each one that was sold. Of course, if you sold thousands, it added up.

(Seaton Conversation continued on next page)

HAYDEN: So you sold thousands of the postcards?

MARK: Oh, yeah. We had a route for a while, and Dad and I sold a lot of postcards.

STEVE: In the winter, when Shepherd of the Hills wasn't open, Dad had a van and he would travel around and drop off postcards at all kinds of places, little filling stations or restaurants or wherever. He always said that if you take care of the little guy, your business will take care of itself. Sometimes, somebody would mention the hillbilly calendars, and he'd just give them some. He was just that way. But of course, come next year, they'd probably buy some calendars from him.

MARK: Dad turned the van into a rolling advertisement, with *The Bruce Seaton Family Hillbilly Calendars* painted on the sides. He painted the van himself.

STEVE: In no single picture did Dad do any work. It was always, "Ma do this," or "Ma do that." In fact, the boys never did any of the work; it was always the women.

MARK: In one of my favorite photographs, it looks like Mom has slung Dad over her shoulder and is carrying him to the shack. What Dad had done is drive an oak post into the ground and nailed a board to the top of it. He laid across that plank, and Mom moved underneath him to make it look as if she was carrying him. There was a jug at the bottom of the post that explained his condition. Of course, she stood in front of the post, so the viewer couldn't see it. The illusion was perfect.



(Seaton Conversation continued on next page)

STEVE: And one of my favorite photographs was our hillbilly fishing trip taken over in Cape Fair. The boat was just some boards nailed together with no bottom to it. We used inner tubes to hold the boat up, and us kids were standing on the bottom of the lake. We found some dead fish by the edge of the lake, and they became our catch. But it worked.

MARK: We did have a fun time staging the photographs. In one of them, Dad wanted to have a cat on the roof, so we tied our cat to a roofing nail and fed him up there. Our dog wasn't quite as much trouble because she loved to have her picture taken. She usually behaved pretty well.

STEVE: People in Branson today are embarrassed by the old hillbilly image. But I think if Dad were still living, he would have turned us into a reality show like *Duck Dynasty*. That's the kind of entrepreneur he was. And the success of the business made life easier. We even published a cookbook—*Ma's Cookin' Notes*—and for the first time we had money to stay in hotels, buy ice cream, even buy a new van.

MARK: As a family, we used to walk in parades all around the Ozarks: Plumb Nellie Days in Branson, the Ozark Folk Festival in Eureka Springs, Hillbilly Days in Reeds Spring. I remember one time we were in a parade in Monett. Of course, we were all costumed up, and Dad walked into the bank with his shotgun and we boys followed him in and stood toward the back. He laid his shotgun on the counter and said, "I want a loan." Everybody had a good laugh about that. I don't think I would be as apt to try that these days.

STEVE: When Dad died passed away in 1976, the business went with him. Our Mom, Dorothy, tried to keep it going, but people weren't as inclined to deal with a woman in those days. But one thing about Mom, she was fiercely independent. She worked at Shepherd of the Hills for forty-nine years and passed away just before her fiftieth. Keith Thurman, the general manager, tried to give her a parking space closer to where she worked, but she refused any special treatment.

MARK: Mom didn't drive until Dad died, and I took her and my wife to take their driver's test at the same time. Anyhow, Mom was determined to pay off their debts, and she did, too. She taught us to take care of our bills.

STEVE: I remember one story from when we were living in Lamar, Missouri. It was in the sixties, and some people from the Johnson administration came around trying to enroll Mom and Dad in the welfare program. She chased them off with a broom and hollered as she did, "We had them, and we'll raise them!" And we always had a roof over our heads and food to eat. But not a whole lot else. Being raised the way we were, we had a stronger bond as siblings than most families. Mom and Dad raised us right. And we did all right, except for Steve who went into politics. We have memories that we'll never lose. We had togetherness in that old tarpaper shack.

MARK: Mom and Dad had a rule of no TV until after dinner. With eight of us kids around the table, we had plenty to talk about at mealtimes.

CURTIS: What's a high point you remember from the calendar days?

(Seaton Conversation continued on next page)

STEVE: It had to be when Dad was interviewed by Paul Harvey on his radio program. Paul had seen our postcards and calendars, and he asked on air if there was a real Bruce Seaton family. Dad called him to reassure him that we really did exist. Paul was Dad's hero, and Paul loved Dad, so they had a mutual admiration society. He would give us free advertising: "They still have some of those calendars, and you get them for a dollar apiece."

MARK: Steve called Paul Harvey to tell him when Dad died, and Paul mentioned his passing on the radio. Those really were different times.

CURTIS: They were indeed. Well, your family and photographs are part of my memories and the memories of many, many more. Thank you for sharing your memories with us.

STEVE: You're welcome.



-- Pictures courtesy of Steve Seaton

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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 goal 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.

Review by Hayden Head:

Ellis, John Breckenridge. *The Little Fiddler of the Ozarks*. Chicago: Laird and Lee, 1913.

According to the poet Emily Dickinson, “Fame is a fickle food/ Upon a shifting plate,” and nothing persuades me of that truth more than reviewing books that have long since passed out of print. The life and literary work of John Breckenridge Ellis could serve as Exhibit A for Dickinson’s observation, because at the turn of the twentieth century, Ellis was a hot commodity. While Ellis’s 1913 novel, *The Little Fiddler of the Ozarks*, may not have been his bestseller, it was popular enough and is certainly the one most appropriate for Ozarkian Hillcrofters.

John Breckenridge Ellis was born near Hannibal, Missouri, in 1870, the son of a minister and college president. When Ellis’s father purchased Plattsburg College, the family moved across the state to their new home. Ellis decided at an early age to take up writing as his profession, and true to his ambitions, he grew up to become a renowned author. In 1912 Ellis published *Fran*, which became the bestselling novel in America in 1913 (*Plattsburg Leader*, April 5, 1929, p. 3). In 1919, *Fran* was made into a movie, *The Love Hunger*, a sure sign of success in any age (*El Paso Times*, April 14, 1919, p. 5).

In a way, Ellis’s success was not surprising, given his intellect and upbringing. As a young man he proved himself to be something of a prodigy, having graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree from Plattsburg College at the age of 16, earning his master’s from the same institution, and receiving his doctorate from Culver Stockton University in Canton, Missouri. Ellis served as an English professor for ten years at Plattsburg before resigning his position to write.

And write he did. According to a 1929 article in the *La Habra (California) Star*, by the age of 58, Ellis had published twenty-five novels, including the bestseller mentioned above. Ellis also wrote one biography, two plays, six photoplays, and fifteen serialized stories in magazines and journals. He was also an accomplished musician who wrote the music and lyrics for many songs, at least two of which were about the Ozarks: “Fishing in the Ozarks” and “Down in the Ozarks.” As a result of his prodigious output and literary achievements, Ellis served as the first president of the Missouri Writers Guild.

But what makes John Breckenridge Ellis’s life more inspiring than his stories is that he spent his entire life in a wheelchair. After he suffered a bout of spinal meningitis at the age of eighteen months, he was “a helpless invalid” (*St. Joseph Gazette*, April 22, 1912, p. 8). Later in life Ellis was compelled to learn Braille when it seemed as if his eyesight might also fail (*Albany (Missouri) Ledger*, May 21, 1914, p. 8).

Ellis’s spirit and imagination, however, defied his limitations. He began writing, as the *Albany Ledger* put it, more for pleasure than profit: “He sent away stories, short stories and long ones, to various

(Book Bag Review continued on next page)

magazines and publishers. And they all came back.” At the age of 29, his first book, *Shem*, was accepted by a publisher. The publisher shortly thereafter declared bankruptcy, and Ellis received about six dollars in royalties. But Ellis never quit writing; as he told the reporter, “I made it my motto never to give up while there was a chance to fail. And there was always a chance to fail, so I never gave up.” It took another thirteen years for Ellis to receive national attention.

And even then, Ellis had his detractors. In his *Ozark Folklore: A Bibliography*, no less a critic than Vance Randolph panned *The Little Fiddler of the Ozarks* as “[a] dreary novel, full of cheap sentiment and bad dialect.” Vance Randolph follows this offhanded dismissal by throwing a bone to the dog: “It contains a few scraps of authentic folklore.” Finally, as an aside, Vance Randolph notes that the novel was made into a movie entitled *Cinderella of the Ozarks* (quoted by Hensley Woodbridge in his review of *Vance Randolph, Ozark Folklore, a Bibliography*, in the *Kentucky Folklore Society*, 19.1, Jan. 1, 1973, Bowling Green, Kentucky). As a worthy maxim reminds us, “No matter how hard you dance, not everyone is going to clap.”

Nevertheless, while we might disagree on the quality of Ellis’s novels, we can’t fault his attitude. One story that demonstrates Ellis’s indomitable spirit comes from a 1916 article in *The Kansas City Times*. The author of the piece describes a camping trip taken by several members of the Missouri Writers Guild in the Missouri Ozarks:

A score of men and women sat huddled at night in a little tent on a pebbly beach miles and miles from anywhere. They were tired and hungry and the tent was leaking and the lightning played incessantly. One of the men, unable to walk from infancy, sat in a wheelchair. A stream of water wriggled through the tent top and dropped, as though aimed, down his neck.

“This,” he said, whimsically, “is a good time to play the ‘glad’ game. Let’s set it to music.”

And John Breckenridge Ellis, author of a “bestseller” and many popular novels, composed the airs while the other members of the Missouri Writers’ Guild forgot their hunger and their isolation and the woe and the cold in an effort to fit words to the music that the author of *Fran* improvised to the accompaniment of thunder and lightning and the rushing of the White River. . . . (*The Kansas City Times*, Oct. 2, 1916, p. 3)

Such a man and moment deserve to be rescued from obscurity, if for no other reason than our own dispirited and contagious age needs Ellis’s example more than ever. So, in order to reclaim a forgotten author and to further the mission of the Hillcrofters—to preserve the history, folklore, and traditions of the Ozarks—I offer the following review of *The Little Fiddler of the Ozarks* by John Breckenridge Ellis.

The novel opens with two men—a middle-aged oil driller by the name of Rodney Bates and a young landowner, Claude Walcott—who are riding a mule-drawn wagon into the dark interior of the Ozarks. Rodney, as we soon learn, had been in the Ozarks years before on a hunting trip. On that occasion, he met a beautiful woman in the forest, and he has been obsessed with her ever since. Claude, who has heard Rodney’s story many times, teases him with the possibility that she might appear at any moment.

But instead of happening upon the beautiful woman, Rodney meets Giles Gradley, at Giles’s general store. It was Giles, in fact, who summoned Rodney to the Ozarks, having sought Rodney’s expertise in exploring for oil. At the time of their meeting, the impetuous Giles is driving a poor girl from his store.

(Book Bag Review continued on next page)

Her crime? Trying to persuade Giles not to sell whisky to an alcoholic boy. Giles arrogantly asks what business of his is it if a stupid boy wants to kill himself with alcohol, and he spurns the girl as if she were no better than a dog.

As a result of Giles's cruelty, Rodney immediately forms a profound dislike for his employer, a dislike that turns to hatred when he finds that Giles is not only a bully but even worse, the unworthy husband of the "beautiful woman" who for so long has been the object of Rodney's obsession. Her name is Kate Gradley, and her sensuous beauty sets her apart in jarring contrast from her rustic neighbors and wild surroundings.

Claude, for his part, withdraws into the solitude and beauty of the woods—until during one of his excursions, he discovers the same poor girl mistreated earlier by Giles being persecuted by a group of young locals. They enclose the girl within their circle and hurl clods of dirt and insults at her, the most damning of which are "poisoner" and "murderer." Nevertheless, Claude steps into the circle, rescues the girl from her tormenters, and carries her to the relative safety of the road.

From this point, the mysteries multiply. At a dinner hosted by the Gradleys, the persecuted girl reappears, this time as a servant who tends the table. In fact, "Servant" is the only name Kate deigns to give the girl—though from Giles, we learn the servant girl's name is Norris. Kate further humiliates Norris by telling Rodney and Claude that the girl once tried to poison her. Kate claims the girl insists on the story being told as part of her penance, and though she and Giles have condescended to forgive the girl, Norris is still forced to quarter in a barn behind the house. Kate's story seems to confirm the taunts of the young people, and Claude begins to suspect the girl he rescued.

In the course of the dinner, Rodney's hatred for Giles intensifies when he sees him treat Kate with indifference. The meal concludes with Giles declaring his disdain for the hills: "What matters out here? Trees put on leaves and put them off. Birds build and disperse—what's the use of an intellect? If it wasn't for that store, that dull, sordid, mean store, with its bargainings and its loafers—I'd go crazy" (p. 56).

From this point on, the novel continues apace with the mystery of a Green Witch, the frenzy of two backwoods dances, and the appearance of the Little Fiddler, a shadowy figure who comes and goes as he pleases. Rather like Norris, a persecuted girl who is both at the center of the circle while remaining apart from her persecutors, so the Little Fiddler is essential to the dance while he stands aloof from the dancers. The identity of the Little Fiddler fascinates Claude, and he comes to believe that Norris and the Little Fiddler are lovers. He pursues the Little Fiddler to learn his identity, and when the mysterious fiddler retreats into a cave, Claude follows. When Claude finds the Little Fiddler, sitting on a rock and playing his "weird strains," Claude discovers that he is—

Well, that's quite enough. You may or may not read the novel; copies are plentiful enough online—my favorite online bookstore is abebooks.com—and who knows? You might enjoy the book more than Vance Randolph did. Consequently, it simply won't do to spoil the surprises Ellis prepares for his readers.

Suffice it to say that we readers are rather like Claude Walcott pursuing the Little Fiddler as we follow Ellis's characters through the dark channels of their secret pasts, their hidden obsessions, and their

(Book Bag review continued on next page)

passionate desires. Few of them are who they seem to be, and therein lies the pleasure of the novel. The background of the Ozark Mountains is the rustic stage on which the actors strike their poses, and the only authentic characters are those Ozarkers too simple to dissemble.

Consider Peter Poff, the mule-driver who brings Rodney Bates and Claude Walcott into the Ozarks. Uneducated, ill-spoken, and yet innately wise, he is the embodiment of the primitive Ozarker; as he himself says at the outset of the novel, "I ain't trained. I'm in a state of nature, having been to school not very frequent, though you might not think it." At the conclusion of the novel, Peter Poff repeats this same idea: "I'm in a state of nature, which my thoughts, so to speak, they are growing wild. They've never, as Scripture puts it, been digged and pruned; but such fruit as they brings forth is my own, and I know my own."

Ellis, like so many other writers captured by the lure of the Ozarks, contrasts the artifice of sophisticated city folk with the artless ways of the hill folk, but he does so without idealizing either of them. In fact, Ellis's sophisticated characters are interesting principally because of the effort it takes to discover who actually resides behind the masks they wear. In contrast, Peter Poff is rather like the leader of a Greek chorus—he observes and speculates, but he is careful in his judgments, especially his judgment of Norris. For Peter Poff, the answer to the problem of character lies in nature, human and otherwise, and his oneness with nature enables him to see clearly what the other characters, and what we as readers, must work so hard to discover.

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