

The SOCIETY of OZARKIAN HILLCROFTERS

Identifying and Preserving What Makes the Ozarks Exceptional

Volume 2 Issue 1 Spring 2022

Message from Hillcrofters President

The spring season in the Ozarks is a beautiful time. Within a matter of weeks, the stark, gray hills of winter start to come alive again. It starts with little signs of hope for warmer weather. The forest floor exhibits signs of new beginnings with mayapples, and with morels breaking through the leaf-littered ground. Other early arrivals include the purplish-pink blossoms of the redbud tree, followed shortly thereafter by the blossoms of the dogwood and serviceberry (“sarvice”-berry, as the hill folk might say).

The yellow daffodils pop up just as the grass starts getting green again in the creek bottoms and pasturelands, illustrating the yard boundaries of some long-gone Ozarks homestead. The oaks and hickories finally bud out their new leaves, giving the hills a lime-green blanket that will change to a deeper green as the spring shifts to summer. Yes, Nature is busy in the springtime in the Ozarks. And the Society of Ozarkian Hillcrofters has been busy as well!

The Hillcrofters have been involved in a number of newsworthy activities this spring. We will learn about these in this issue. One of the events is that Crystal Copeland and I represented the Society of Ozarkian Hillcrofters on a visit to the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage in Washington, DC. We wanted to learn more about the 2023 Smithsonian Folklife Festival, which will feature the Ozarks region for the first time since the Center’s inception in 1967.

We spoke with Cristina Diaz-Carrera, festival curator, and Jason Morris, the festival operations director. We learned about the process of how the Center selects content for the festival, which includes music, dancing, foods, crafts, art, presentation, and so on. The selected content will be a representation of Ozarks

(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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folklife at the two-week-long festival in the summer of 2023. It is also important to note that Missouri State University is the lead partner in the 2023 Folklife Festival, and is playing a key role in assisting the Smithsonian in identifying and researching content and participants.

Other news reported in this newsletter issue include the renaming of a Missouri state park, the rededication of the restored Notch Post Office, the 2022 Old Ozarks Settlers Days, and recent activities from our Board.

Also in this issue, Edith Kadlec provides us an in-depth story about her grandmother, Daisy Lines Maxey, who was a very important player in the Hillcrofters organization during the 1930s and 1940s. Ethan Smilie introduces us to Laura Ingalls Wilder’s farm journalism. Gwen Simmons discusses a historic theater, and Bob Kipfer tells us about the role that ants play in planting our Ozarks wildflowers. Emily Garoutte introduces us to the Mountain Grove Schoolhouse and its importance to Ozarks music traditions. Finally, Hayden Head is back with a book review about Ozarks hillbillies.

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

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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 Hayden Head
 Bob Kipfer
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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.

News and Projects

Shepherd's Old Ozarks Settlers Days

The Old Ozarks Settlers Days event was held on May 14 and 15. This was the second year for the event, which is held at the historic Shepherd of the Hills Farm at Branson, Missouri. The event features Ozarks crafts and craft demonstrations, live music, and presentations on Ozarks history and culture. A portion of the proceeds goes to the Society of Ozarkian Hillcrofters. The event is also an opportunity for the Hillcrofters to be involved with the community and visitors.

The Hillcrofters had an information table set up in the newly restored and relocated post office founded by Levi Morrill ("Uncle Ike") at Notch. The event provided an opportunity for the Hillcrofters volunteers to visit with people about our Society. The volunteers had the opportunity to talk about the Society's role in the preservation of the historic post office, and to inform visitors as well about the significance of the building to our local history. Many visitors expressed their gratitude for the Society of Ozarkian Hillcrofters and the Shepherd of the Hills for their efforts in preserving the structure.

In addition to the variety of booths for arts and crafts, there were multiple food truck vendors and the existing shops at the Shepherd of the Hills for visitors to enjoy. Old Matt's Cabin, like the relocated Notch Post Office, was open to visitors. The live music lineup included the Farnum Family; Magnolia Wind; and two groups from Mountain View, Arkansas: Ozark Strangers and the McCool Clan.

The music lineup also included a special segment for Ozarks fiddle music and square dancing. This featured fiddle music by local musicians Jeff Michel and Dennis Pritchard. The square dancing was led by kids from the Ozark Mountain Music Association. During this event, Jeff Michel was presented with a special achievement award from the Society of Ozarkian Hillcrofters for his dedication in teaching youth traditional Ozarks music and instrumentation, as well as providing a facility for them to practice at the historic Mountain Grove Schoolhouse, which he helps maintain.

(Old Ozarks Settlers Days continued on next page)

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit our website at:
societyfozarkianhillcrofters.com

Find our group page on Facebook

CONTACT US

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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:

[societyfozarkianhillcrofters.com/
 membership](http://societyfozarkianhillcrofters.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

A unique part of this event consists of Ozarks history and culture presentations. The presentations included a talk on collecting stories and oral histories in the Ozarks by author, Alex Primm. Tammy Morton, Angel Wolf, and Michael Harris discussed the history of the Bald Knobbers vigilante organization. Marilyn Whetstone, Taney County native and author, discussed her recent book, *Our Home in the Hills*. Vincent Anderson, Ozarks historian from Mountain Home, Arkansas, gave a presentation on the relocation of cemeteries in the late 1940s prior to the inundation by Bull Shoals Lake. Larry Dablemont, author and magazine publisher and storyteller, gave a presentation on “The Life and Times of an old Ozarkian.” Charlie Fagan talked about the mysterious Yocum Silver Dollar of Stone County lore and had on display actual Yocum dollar coins and dies.



Hillcrofters booth in the relocated Notch post office. The volunteers are, from left to right, Stan Budzyna and Judy Matthews.

The Farnum Family perform at Old Ozarks Settlers Days.



Photos courtesy of Crystal Copeland

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New Missouri State Park Renaming

May 4, 2022, was a day of historic significance in the Southwest Missouri Ozarks. The day marked the 150th birthday of Harold Bell Wright, author of *The Shepherd of the Hills*. His novel has introduced the Ozarks he loved to people around the world for over 100 years, and it continues to do so. In honor of Wright, and in honor of these Ozarks hills and their rich history, a new state park located north of Branson was renamed. On May 4 at the new park, Governor Mike Parson announced the name change from Ozark Mountain State Park to Shepherd of the Hills State Park.

Dru Buntin, director of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, acknowledged the influence of the Society of Ozarkian Hillcrofters in renaming the new park. The Hillcrofters had proposed and supported the renaming to give recognition to the historical importance and positive impact of Wright's novel to this specific area of the Ozarks. Governor Parson echoed these sentiments as he spoke about the renaming as a historic event for Missouri State Parks.

Support for the renaming was a group effort by members of the Hillcrofters and specifically our board of directors. It is important to recognize many others whose efforts made this event possible. We are thankful for Carl Bonnell and the Missouri State Parks staff who have been fantastic to partner with. We also greatly appreciate Lieutenant Governor Mike Kehoe, who has been helpful and supportive to the Society of Ozarkian Hillcrofters, Missouri State Parks, and the residents of Southwest Missouri.



Unveiling the new name of Shepherd of the Hills State Park are, from left to right,

Dru Buntin, director of the Missouri Department of Natural Resources;

Lieutenant Governor Mike Kehoe, State of Missouri;

Governor Mike Parson, State of Missouri;

Curtis Copeland, president of The Society of Ozarkian Hillcrofters;

David Kelly, director of Missouri State Parks.

Photo courtesy of Jeremy Lynn

* * * * *

The Historic Levi Morrill (“Uncle Ike’s”) Post Office Gets a New Home

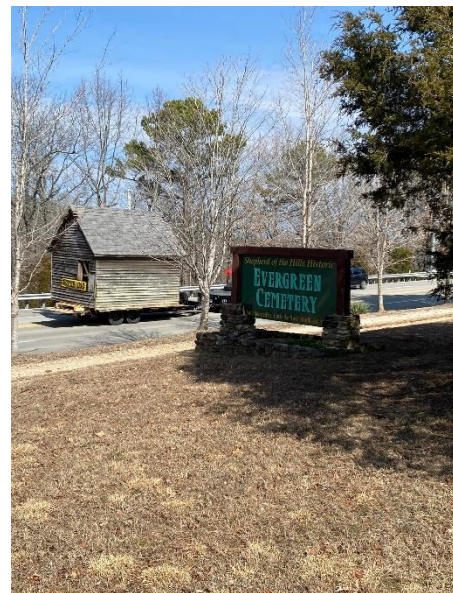
On the afternoon of May 4, 2022, the Shepherd of the Hills Farm unveiled the restored Levi Morrill (“Uncle Ike’s”) Notch Post Office in its new location there. This little post office building is an important symbol of our local history and a part of the Shepherd of the Hills community immortalized in Harold Bell Wright's novel. Levi Morrill started the Notch Post Office in 1895, and he served as its postmaster for over 30 years until his death in 1926 at the age of 89. Wright became friends with Morrill during his visits to the Ozarks at the turn of the 20th century. Wright portrayed Morrill as “Uncle Ike” in the famous novel *The Shepherd of the Hills*.

The preservation of this building has been of importance to the Society of Ozarkian Hillcrofters since early 2018 and has been the subject of fundraisers and a roofing project to extend its existence. We are honored to have been included in the continued efforts of the building’s preservation and move to Shepherd of the Hills.



Moving the
Notch Post Office

Photos courtesy of
Jeremy Lynn



Several people deserve acknowledgment for their parts in this historic event. First, we are indebted to the Morrill family. Bob Morrill, Gina Morrill Olson, and Shelley Morrill were instrumental in planning the preservation and move, carrying on the important legacy of their great-great-grandfather, Levi Morrill.

Second, we owe a great deal of thanks to Jeff Johnson, co-owner of Shepherd of the Hills Farm and Outdoor Theater, for his desire to preserve the history of Shepherd of the Hills and its important legacy. That legacy includes the preservation of the Notch Post Office. Jeff and members of Shepherd of the Hills not only gave this building a fitting home, but brought it home safely. Thanks go to Adam Marty, the master craftsman who restored the post office in its truest possible state of original glory. A thank-you goes out to the community members that donated to various Hillcrofter fundraisers because they believed in the Ozarks and its historical and cultural importance.

(Notch Post Office continued on next page)

In a celebration of the moving and restoration of the Notch Post Office, a May 4 ribbon cutting with the Branson Chamber of Commerce was held. Missouri Governor Mike Parson spoke to the large crowd about the significance of this event in the preservation of our rich Missouri Ozarks history and culture. Jeff Johnson spoke of the history of the structure and its role in the Shepherd of the Hills story. Curtis Copeland, with the Society of Ozarkian Hillcrofters, gave a speech as well about the importance of historical preservation to the local community and future generations.



Notch Post Office Restored



Celebrating the Notch Post Office are, at left, Governor Mike Parson and his wife Teresa; center, Curtis Copeland; right, Jeff Johnson.

Both photos courtesy of Shepherd of the Hills Farm
Jenelle Hostetter, photographer

* * * * *

Uncle Ike's Notch Post Office as Portrayed By Harold Bell Wright

"The Post Office at the Forks occupied a commanding position in the northeast corner of Uncle Ike's cabin." So begins Chapter 22 in Wright's famous novel. Wright describes an "old table, on legs somewhat rickety," that holds a miscellany of items. But the focal point for Wright is "a little old chair, wrought . . . from hickory sticks from which the bark had not been removed." The chair changed with the weather.

"And if in all this 'land of the free and home of the brave' there be a single throne, it must be this same curiously changeable chair." None who called at the Forks dared to occupy "this seat of Uncle Sam's representative. Here Uncle Ike reigned supreme over his four feet square of government property. And you may be sure that the mighty mysterious thing known as the 'gov'ment' lost none of its might, and nothing of its mystery, at the hands of its worthy official."

Source: Wright, Harold Bell. *The Shepherd of the Hills*. 1907. McCormick-Armstrong/Shepherd of the Hills Historical Society, 1987: 133–34.

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The Society of Ozarkian Hillcrofters

From the Minutes of the Board Meeting

April 19, 2022

Officers and the board of directors met at Bonniebrook and virtually through Zoom on April 19, 2022. The meeting was called to order at 7:09 p.m. CDT. Those in attendance were Curtis Copeland, Crystal Copeland, Jeff Michel, Hayden Head, Tammy Morton, Jeremy Lynn, Ken Henderson, and Bob Kipfer.

Crystal made a motion to approve the previous minutes. All attendees approved.

Project reports began with discussion of the Springfield-Harrison Road Park (Murder Rocks). It was reported that a brush pile could not be burned until later in the year. All preparations had to be done by the August 1 deadline to open the park to the public. Announcements were made that a workday was needed. The Scouts needed to build a trail before regrowth took over the cleared area. Jeff Michel will work to get gravel hauled out. He will inform about the date so as to send out workday information and inform the grant-funding source, White River Valley Electric Cooperative.

It was announced that a Bonniebrook Open House would be held from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on April 30. Three sets, each composed of two volunteers, would be needed to spend two hours per set at a Hillcrofters table to visit with guests and answer questions about our organization.

May 4 events were reviewed. At 11:00 a.m. at the barn on the grounds, Ozark Mountain State Park will be renamed the Shepherd of the Hills State Park. At 1:30 p.m. at the Shepherd of the Hills Farm, a ribbon cutting event and unveiling of the Notch Post Office will be held. Governor Parson and Lieutenant Governor Kehoe will be present at both events. May 4 will be the 150th birthday of Harold Bell Wright. The Governor will proclaim May 4 Harold Bell Wright Day in Missouri.

It was announced that Old Ozarks Settlers Days will be held on May 14 and 15 at the Shepherd of the Hills Farm. Volunteers are needed for the ticket booth and table.

The meeting turned to new business. It was reported that great contacts were made on a fantastic visit to the Smithsonian in Washington, DC. It is a waiting game to learn how the Hillcrofters might be involved in the 2023 festival focused on the Ozarks. Smithsonian contacts will need to receive our newsletters. The Hillcrofters hope to provide hospitality when contact persons come to the Ozarks. We expect visits from Jason Morris, the festival operations director, and Cristina Diaz-Carrera, the curator. Both represent the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage.

No new updates were provided about Directors and Operators Insurance.

It was announced that Hillcrofters submitted a check to support the Reeds Spring Hall of Fame.

No new updates were offered for organizational restructuring.

Ken Henderson moved to adjourn. Hayden Head seconded. The meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

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Articles Section

Daisy Lines Maxey, Pioneer Hillcrofter

by Edith Maxey Kadlec

Introduction

Curtis Copeland asked me to write an article for the Hillcrofters newsletter about my grandmother, Daisy Lines Maxey. Having done extensive research on Grandma's history, I accepted this assignment with pleasure. For those who may wonder how I could be the grandchild of a woman born in 1875, I am a daughter of my father's second marriage. I didn't have the privilege of knowing Daisy, as I was born fourteen years after her death. My grandfather, Otis Maxey, died when I was just six. Nevertheless, my father kept their memories alive for my sisters and me through oral and written stories. I am deeply thankful for the Springfield, Missouri, newspaper archives, for May Kennedy McCord, and for my cousins, who have shared Grandma Daisy's scrapbook and photos. I trust this article will give you a flavor of Daisy Maxey's ebullient charm, generous hospitality, and her role in the Ozarkian Hillcrofters.

-- Edith Maxey Kadlec, daughter of Ellsworth Lines Maxey



Daisy Lines Maxey, 1942

Early Life

Daisy Belle Lines was born in Wilson County, Kansas, on March 9, 1875. She was the second child of L. E. and Matilda Jane Lines, who were early pioneer settlers of Talleyrand Township. The family moved to northwest Arkansas when Daisy was seven years old. Her father declared that the Ozarks seemed like paradise after years spent on the windswept plains of Kansas. In 1890, the Lines family moved again to Pierce City, Missouri, where Lines's music business grew considerably. It was at Pierce City High School that Daisy met her future husband, Otis C. Maxey. Upon Daisy's graduation in 1893, L. E. Lines moved his family to Springfield so his four daughters could attend Drury Academy. All fifty of Lines's employees moved with him to the new city and Lines Music flourished, becoming one of the largest piano and organ firms in the Southwest.

Springfield, Missouri

L. E. Lines valued higher education for his daughters, so much so that he contributed generously to the Drury Academy Endowment Fund. Daisy honed her elocution skills at Drury. In her first year, she competed and was chosen to be one of Drury's commencement speakers with a dramatic reading from *The Winter's Tale* by Shakespeare. Afterward, the local newspaper wrote, "The beauty of the lady added a charm to the declamation" (Drury Commencement 1). Daisy graduated from Drury Academy with an English major in 1895.

While Daisy attended Drury, Otis Maxey studied law in Pierce City, and a prolific exchange of eloquent letters traveled back and forth between the courting couple. In the spring of 1897, Otis gave Daisy three

(Daisy Lines Maxey continued on next page)

days' notice that he was coming to propose to her. Seven weeks later, they were married in her parents' home with her dear sister, Rose Lines, as maid of honor. Otis and Daisy eventually settled in their country home southeast of the city on RFD No. 3. Their firstborn son, Ellsworth Lines Maxey, was born ten years into the marriage and was a beloved and much doted-upon child. Two daughters, Charlotte and Louise, followed in quick succession. Daisy cherished her family and made time also to take part in community affairs.

Books, Birds, and Blooms

Daisy was a leading member of the Kickapoo home economics club. She viewed homemaking as a profession to take pride in and enjoyed teaching other women. She was an avid reader and literary critic and wrote book reviews in the newspaper. Daisy presented programs at many women's clubs and could also be heard on the radio speaking on her favorite subject, nature. Daisy was actively involved with the Sorosis Garden Club and grew prize-winning chrysanthemums. Outdoors was her favorite place to be – gardening, swimming, fishing, or walking in the woods.

A passionate ornithophile, Daisy worked tirelessly for the Audubon Club at the local and state levels. She took frequent "bird walks" through the parks and was adept at identifying birds by their songs and calls. Daisy once remarked, "The grandchildren may be on top of the roof, creditors at the door, skunks in the henhouse, weeds in the garden, company coming and no pies baked, but life flows serenely around the birdwatcher" (The Wastebasket 10). It should surprise no one that Daisy chose a bird for her pet, a pretty parrot she named Gladys.

Lake Taneycomo

Daisy and Otis were part of the first generation of tourism on Lake Taneycomo. The Maxeys co-owned a tract of land with Mr. and Mrs. Will F. Pauly at Cedar Point near Rockaway Beach. The summer cottage was affectionately dubbed "The Call of the Wild," and the two families made many happy memories there with their young children. Lake Taneycomo became "the playground of the Middle West," thanks to Harold Bell Wright's novel, *The Shepherd of the Hills*. Everyone wanted to experience the beauty of the Ozarks.

Ozark Writers' Guild

In 1927, magazine editor Otto Rayburn formed the Ozark Writers' Guild in Kingston, Arkansas. Daisy and her sister, Rose Lines Brite, were both charter members. Rose became the organization's second president. Other charter members included Mrs. Arthur Galbraith, Mrs. Matthew Kerr, Mrs. R. E. Lee McDaniel, Mrs. Herschel Sampson, and May Kennedy McCord. A few years later, the Guild gathered at Marvel Cave with other Ozarkians from nine counties to hear Congressman Dewey Short declare that the Ozarks hills were an asset more valuable than the hogs and corn of the region.



Daisy Lines Maxey and Otis Maxey (bottom row) with Rose Lines Brite and Jay Brite (top row) on Rose's wedding day in April 1899.

(Daisy Lines Maxey continued on next page)

“Happy Days” Cabin in the Shepherd of the Hills Estates

In August 1931, the Maxeys hired well-known architect Carl A. Bissman to build a seven-room colonial cottage for them in the Shepherd of the Hills Estates near Forsyth in Taney County. Daisy drew up her own floor plan and remained on site, supervising the work. Built on a southern sloping hill, the white home with green shutters contained two fireplaces constructed largely of smooth, river-washed stone, which Daisy gathered herself from Sand Creek. In addition to the large living room with plank floors, there were four bedrooms, a shower bath, a kitchen with an electric range, and a sunroom with a fish-shaped pool. The screened-in porch was sufficient in size for three double beds.

Daisy had innumerable friends and loved to entertain. She designed the cabin to accommodate an ample number of guests. Outside, Daisy built her own little rock garden and pool near the new garden grill – an open-air kitchen with a stone floor and built-in fireplace. The building was completed in six weeks. On September 19, the very day it was finished, Daisy threw a housewarming barbecue for one hundred guests! The Maxeys christened their new home the Happy Days cabin, for happy days were surely ahead.

Hospitality

Daisy was well known for her prowess as a hostess. She said she “cooked out of her head” and didn’t use a recipe. Newspaper columnist Docia Karell wrote, “Old-timers hereabouts know – and newcomers soon discover – that Mrs. Daisy Maxey has preserved in her warm heart and capacious affections, as well as in the home with doors always wide open to guests, the finest traditions of Ozarks hospitality” (Karell 6). Daisy entertained lavishly as her mother had done, creating a congenial ambience with plenty of food and stimulating conversations. She believed that hospitality flourished in the Ozarks and no one



Daisy and Otis Maxey inside their Happy Days cabin

put on airs, even when a native Ozarkian rose to a place of power and fame. “They don’t come home and ‘high hat’ us,” Daisy asserted. “They pick up the strands of life right where they left us – go to the swimming hole with the old gang, as Senator Roscoe C. Patterson did last summer, eat their Ozark fish and chicken from a picnic plate, and tell us where they sat at a White House dinner only when we ask them to do so” (Karell 6). Daisy was an excellent cook; her specialties were mince pies (at Christmas) and fried chicken. Having spent several years as a poultry farmer, she knew how to kill, chop, and cook a chicken or two!

(Daisy Lines Maxey continued on next page)

Ozarkian Hillcrofters

“The Moon of Painted Leaves . . . is a bewitching season in the Ozarks. With the ‘frost on the pumpkin and the fodder in the shock’ and the hills dressed in a coat of many colors, it is time to relax and enjoy the well-flavored days of Indian Summer. This is the moon of fox hunts, barbecues, and festivities of thanksgiving. It is a time, fitting and proper, for good folks to get together in unity of purpose” (Hillcrofters A New Group 2). Thus began the article that detailed Otto Rayburn’s plan to organize a society of “Hillcrofters.” On November 6 and 7, 1931, Ozarkian writers, artists, and educators gathered in Eminence, Missouri, and committed to becoming guardians of the hills – preserving the natural beauty and folklore of the Ozarks. Attending from Springfield were May Kennedy McCord, Daisy Lines Maxey, Rose Lines Brite, and Carl B. Ike, all of whom became founding members. Rayburn was the first president. Semiannual Hillcrofters events included the Feast of the Mayapple in late spring/early summer and the Festival of the Moon of Painted Leaves, occurring close to October’s new moon.

At Camp Ramona near Galena, Missouri, sixty people from the Ozarkians and Hillcrofters met in a joint convention on October 15, 1932, and voted to merge their two organizations as the Society of Ozarkian Hillcrofters. May Kennedy McCord was elected the first president. She introduced every guest present and asked a good number of them to make speeches.



Hillcrofters: Photo from Daisy Lines Maxey’s scrapbook. Undated but probably 1930s. Daisy is third from left; May Kennedy McCord is third from right. George Riley is second from left; Roy E. Martin is at far right.

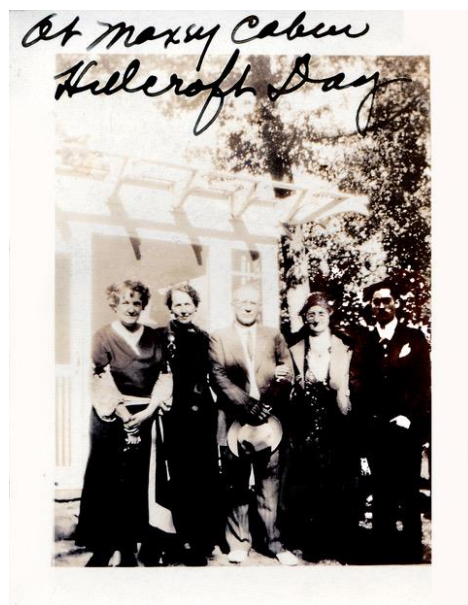
The following year, the Festival of the Moon of Painted Leaves was held at the Maxeys’ Happy Days cabin. From 1933 through 1939, Daisy and Otis hosted the Hillcrofters fall festival at their home on Lake Taneycomo. The nation was in the throes of the Great Depression, and folks had to be resourceful in order to feed their families, let alone a crowd. Yet each year as another festival concluded, the Maxeys

(Daisy Lines Maxey continued on next page)

were hailed as the consummate hosts. Long before the concept of “radical hospitality” came into being, the Maxeys practiced it as a way of life, warmly welcoming friend and stranger in their home and sharing whatever they had.

Roy E. Martin’s song poem, “My Home in the Ozark Hills,” was adopted in 1934 as the Hillcrofters official song. Roy was Daisy’s mail carrier on Route 3 and was known as Springfield’s “Postman Poet.” Daisy was president of the Hillcrofters in 1934 and 1935, taking over the role from her friend, May Kennedy McCord. The Hillcrofters Festival of the Moon of Painted Leaves followed the same schedule each year with Saturday activities devoted to fun and frolic followed by a serious program with speeches on Sunday. Dues were fifty cents. In her *Hillbilly Heartbeats* column, May reminded readers that guests interested in coming to the festival could bring a quilt and roll up with the hoot owls or rent a room at El Bonita Inn for thirty-five cents. The Inn was a stone’s throw from the Maxey cabin. Early comers to the meeting tramped about the woods and enjoyed the Ozarks flaming colors in all their majesty. A picnic supper was spread on the lawn and afterward, a short business session commenced with the election of officers.

Later, in the cabin, they rolled back the rug and pushed the furniture to the walls. The 17 x 27 living room provided a spacious setting for square dancing. May Kennedy McCord could be found at the piano with Fannabelle Ford Nickel on guitar and Jimmie DeNoon on the fiddle. May often implied that if her readers *thought* they knew what fun was, they didn’t know anything until they had attended a Festival of the Moon of Painted Leaves! Hillcrofters went from one pleasure to another, enjoying the fiddle tunes, ballad singing, folk dancing and play-party games. Of the latter, May reported that “we had an old-fashioned candy breaking, which is a ‘kissin’ game’ you know, but the men had awfully poor luck matching the ladies, and the kisses were few and far between” (McCord 8).



Hillcrofters at Maxey cabin.

May Kennedy McCord stands at far left.

Photo is courtesy of McCord personal papers.

The merriment went late into the night, followed by a midnight bonfire and fish fry. Otis Maxey constructed the bonfire days in advance. Hillcrofters donned white robes and masks and held an “Indian pow-wow” in remembrance of the Osage Indians, who were the first ones to occupy the Ozarks hills. New members were initiated into the Society and there were roles to be played during the ceremony. Represented around the fire were the Prehistoric Man, the Waterfowl, the Spirit of Unborn Generations, the Old Mother Pioneer, the Moon of Painted Leaves, the Indian, and the Spirit of the Flame. All of these “spirits” gave counsel. The initiation ceremony was meaningful as Hillcrofters took an oath of allegiance to their beloved Ozarks and the country. There was never a dull moment at a Hillcrofters gathering. During the 1938 initiation ceremony, Nellie Tromly’s wig caught on fire and President George Riley used his robe to extinguish the flame.

(Daisy Lines Maxey continued on next page)

Sunday morning breakfast was cooked outside at Daisy's garden grill with coffee brewed over an open fire. The noon banquet was held in various locations such as the nearby Armory in Forsyth and the Hotel Seville in Harrison, Arkansas, sixty miles to the south. Hillcrofters enjoyed hearing speakers such as Congressman Dewey Short, Orland K. Armstrong, and Floyd Sullivan, to name a few. One year, the Ozark Playmakers from Rolla put on an original comedic play based on the hill superstition that the screech of an owl is a death omen. A hillbilly orchestra provided the music. Hillcrofters meetings ended with a pledge to uphold their organizational motto, "Progress with Beauty."

The Happy Days cabin felt like home to the Hillcrofters. So many special memories had been made there that no one wanted to go anywhere else. But the membership had swelled, forcing a new location for the 1940 fall festival, which was held at Camp Allendale in Branson. May lamented, "For years, the Otis Maxey Happy Days cabin has been our home and we leave it with a big deep sigh for its gorgeous hospitality. But we simply outgrew it and that's all there is to it. We got too thick to breathe so we had to take out to bigger quarters" (McCord 10).

Hillcrofters at Half-A-Hill Tea House

By the mid-1930s, Daisy had organized a weekly dance for the Hillcrofters at Half-A-Hill Tea House, which was located southeast of Springfield and close to the Maxey farm. Mrs. Walter (Maude) Hickman, owner of Half-A-Hill, was a good friend of Daisy's from the Audubon Club. Every Wednesday night, the dance hall was reserved for the Ozarkian Hillcrofters and their guests. These private parties continued through 1945. Eighteen forms of the square dance were featured; about five were square and the remainder were ballroom or round dancing. Calling the dances took a special musical ability as well as showmanship. Among the best callers at the Hillcrofters' dances were Fred H. Piercy, Jerry Fenton, "Happy" Gibson, and Otis Maxey. Otis and Daisy's daughters, Charlotte and Louise, grew up hearing "allemande left" and "swing your partner" and both women were active in the young Hillcrofters dancers. The Otis Maxey Square Dancers took 1st place at the inaugural National Folk Festival in St. Louis in 1934.

Winding Down

In October 1941, 175 Ozarkian Hillcrofters gathered at Sammy Lane Camp in Branson for the annual Festival of the Moon of Painted Leaves. It was the last Hillcrofters meeting for Daisy. The following year, she was diagnosed with cancer. This news devastated Daisy's friends, who sent her cards and letters and organized a covered-dish supper where they presented Daisy with a special handmade quilt. In January 1943, Otis took Daisy to New York for three months where she underwent major surgery and radium treatments. When she returned home to Springfield, Fannabelle Ford Nickel gave her an extraordinary handmade scrapbook. "Daisy's Scraps" became the receptacle for Daisy's most precious memorabilia, from family photos and letters to news clippings and postcards from her many travels. Daisy shared an exceptionally close friendship with May Kennedy McCord and was undoubtedly cheered by May's encouraging letters during her long illness.

(Daisy Lines Maxey continued on next page)

To My Darling Daisy:

And now Daisy, if you think that I am even going to HINT losing you, you just as well begin your thinking all over. You are going to be here a long time yet-- I think God will keep you here just for ME -- because Daisy, I can't even imagine living without you. I have never seen that far. The radium will kill this trouble. It has done it before and it will in your case. You have such extra vitality. It is built in the cell.

Daisy, you just have never known how much I love you and I have always felt silly to tell you that I am such a nut about you. Someway you mean to me a rock in a weary land, a joy, a comfort-- You are ~~a paradox~~ you are a tower of strength to me and you are as comforting as a little harmless white kitten! I doubt if anyone, even your own nearest and dearest ever knew the depth of your innate goodness. Nobody.

When you get better I am coming out to see you
When you get all adjusted. You must be left alone
now to be adjusted and get to be yourself again.
God is your deliverance. Remember that. Daisy
you know what he said he would do if my faith
was as a grain of mustard seed. Well, my faith
is as big as an overgrown pumpkin... Goodbye
my darling belovedest woman in the world and
keepcourageous.. All will be well. We are pull-
ing hard for you.. Everybody worships you-- but
ME THE BEST!

May —

Letter from May Kennedy McCord to Daisy Lines Maxey, January 1943,
written before Daisy left for New York

(Daisy Lines Maxey continued on next page)

Daisy passed away on January 23, 1945, at the age of 69. Left behind to cherish her memory were her husband of 47 years, three children, seven grandchildren, a brother, two sisters, and a multitude of friends. Reverend Barton Johnson officiated at Daisy's funeral. Johnson was the minister of South Street Christian Church, where Daisy had been a faithful member for 52 years. Daisy was buried in Maple Park Cemetery in the Lines family plot.

Hazel Dagley Heavin, vice president of the Hillcrofters, wrote a touching tribute to Daisy shortly after her death. "Springfield, our Queen City, is far less than the rich little city that she was. For Daisy Lines Maxey is gone. . . . Queenly Daisy – hostess to a hundred and more of us at her lovely cabin, 'Happy Days' at Forsyth" (Dagley Heavin 2). Hazel fondly remembered Otis and Daisy's gracious hospitality and looked forward to a great Hillcrofters meeting beyond the horizon. "And while we wait here, we shall carry on as Daisy did as nearly as we can. Daisy loved the Hillcrofters and the things the organization stands for. We shall set ourselves to the glad task of making the Hillcrofter organization even better . . . a lasting and beautiful monument to Daisy Lines Maxey" (Dagley Heavin 2).

Photos are courtesy of Maxey family collection, except as noted.

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Ozarks Folk Festival

The all-Ozarks Folk Festival was held in Springfield in 1934 with May Kennedy McCord as district chairman. Daisy Maxey and many other Hillcrofters made up the Advisory Committee. The folklore assembled included play-party games and dances, ancient ballads and fiddling, handcrafts of pioneer Ozarkians, and all sorts of tales. Daisy wrote a short play called "A Week in the Ozarks," that portrayed a pioneer family in four scenes. As the curtain rose, the family was in front of their cabin. Mrs. Herschel Gibson (Ma) was churning butter in an old-fashioned cedar churn. "Otis Maxey, as 'Pa', announced he was plum tuckered out already. Mrs. Maxey was rocking the baby, which was her own grandson, Jerry Lee Webb, and near her was another grandson, Mike Webb" (Morris 1). The children on stage entertained the audience by feeding a pet lamb from a bottle. The play was truly a family affair and featured the Maxeys' daughter, Charlotte Maxey Webb; their nephew, Jimmy Lowe; and great-niece, Bettie Rose Bogardus.

Source: Morris, Lucile. "Folklore Group Vividly Portrays Old Time Ozarks At Final Party." *Springfield Daily News*, Apr. 19, 1934: 1.

* * * * *

Laura Ingalls Wilder: Ozarkian Author

by Ethan Smilie

What makes an author an Ozarkian author? If living and writing within the confines of the Ozark Uplift is sufficient, then incontestably Laura Ingalls Wilder, whose *Little House* novels were composed outside of Mansfield, Missouri, during the thirties and forties, is an Ozarkian author. If, however, elements such as subject matter, theme, style, and setting dictate whether an author can be considered Ozarkian, then designating Wilder as such is much more complicated—at least in regard to her as the author of her still-famous fictional juvenile series. The mythic perception that a grandmotherly, artless Wilder sat down in her sixties to write a “factual” account of her childhood is still fairly prevalent.

However, thanks to the increased efforts of scholars studying her life and works, readers and fans are discovering more and more that Wilder was a professional, if not prolific, writer who worked diligently to hone her craft long before beginning the fictional series for which she is now famous. And, incontestably, her publications prior to the *Little House* series are Ozarkian.

Geographically speaking, Wilder became an Ozarkian author on August 24, 1894, when she recoded an entry in her diary. More than five weeks earlier, she, with her husband, Almanzo, and daughter, Rose (and accompanied by another family), set out from De Smet, South Dakota. Traveling via horse and wagon, they were lured by the prospect of a more prosperous life in “The Land of the Big Red Apple” of the Southwest Missouri Ozarks. Wilder’s entry of August 24 indicates that she entered the Ozark Uplift near Lockwood, Missouri (in Dade county), where the party “camped by a swift-running little creek of the clearest water” that was the “most delicious water to drink, cold with a cool, snappy flavor.”

Writing, however, was not an integral part of her life for the next couple of decades, as she and her family tried to make ends meet and create the farm that would become known as Rocky Ridge. By the 1910s, no doubt inspired by her daughter Rose’s success in writing sensational journalism in the San Francisco area, along with the prospect of an additional source of income, Wilder undertook writing as a serious pursuit. By this time, Wilder had become regionally known for her poultry management and egg production. In 1911, she was asked to present on her techniques of farm management at a Missouri homemakers’ conference but was unable to attend. Instead, she sent a paper that was delivered on her behalf. In the audience was John F. Case, editor of the *Missouri Ruralist*. After hearing the paper, Case contacted Wilder and asked her to write for his publication. Thus Wilder began a fourteen-year career as a farm journalist. Though writing primarily for the *Ruralist*, in which she would publish more than 170 articles, occasionally Wilder would publish pieces in national magazines such as *McCall’s* and *Country Gentleman*.



Laura Ingalls Wilder plaque
Ralph Foster Museum
Courtesy of Annette Sain
College of the Ozarks

(Laura Ingalls Wilder continued on next page)

Not long into her tenure as a journalist, on August 21, 1915, Wilder set off by train to visit Rose (by then, Rose Wilder Lane) in San Francisco, with the intention of learning more about the craft of writing from her daughter's example and instruction (with which Rose would be very forthcoming during the rest of her mother's career). Though excessively concerned about the trip's cost and leaving Almanzo alone to run the farm, Wilder thought the risks worth the potential gains. In a letter dated October 4, 1915, she told her husband, "I intend to try to do some writing that will count." The Panama-Pacific International Exposition was taking place in San Francisco at this time, which, along with other attractions of the Bay Area, provided content for a number of her *Ruralist* articles. More significantly, working alongside Rose would help establish an authorial relationship that would subsist, even at great distances, during the composition of the *Little House* series. Indeed, the exact nature of that relationship is frequently debated today, with the spectrum of scholarship identifying Rose as the primary author of the famous series, a copy editor, or any number of roles in between.

Before her trip to San Francisco, Wilder published one or two articles a year. After the trip, she published between nine and twenty-three per year. During 1919-20, thirty-two articles were published under the title "The Farm Home," and during 1921-24, thirty-three under the title "As a Farm Woman Thinks," with Wilder's articles being directly aimed at farm wives and mothers of the Ozarks region.

The content of these articles is wide-ranging. Some articles are practical and instructional in nature—the management of poultry, recipes, cleaning advice—with her own experiences frequently cited. Many tell success stories and techniques of successful small local farms run by families and emphasize the economic, physical, and emotional advantages country life holds over city life. Others are more philosophical, exploring the nature of memory and the roles of family and friends. In many cases, poetry and proverbs are cited. In other cases, Wilder utilizes her own childhood experiences as a springboard for her discussions, several of which readers of the *Little House* series will recognize—including an argument she had with her sister Mary about how to stuff a goose (sage versus onion) that Pa was, after all, not able to shoot (object lesson: be thankful for the blessings you do have).

Several articles introduce Ozarkian farm women to European culture and practices, much of the information being supplied by Rose, who was traveling the continent during several years in the twenties. Others examine economic issues on the local, regional, and national scale, with Wilder advocating for localism and decrying the negative effects of big business on small farms. Likewise, her articles discussing politics also promote localism as well as display her incipient libertarianism, which shows up in fuller force in the *Little House* series, some ideas of which clearly offer a critique of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal policies of the thirties (Rose, herself, would become one of the founders of the American libertarian movement). Both during and after World War I, Wilder promoted patriotism and self-sacrifice on the part of farm women for both soldiers and Europeans afflicted by the war.

A great number of Wilder's articles extol the typically unsung and essential hard work performed by farm wives and mothers, while also offering suggestions for how to make their work more efficient and

(Laura Ingalls Wilder continued on next page)

how to make their lives socially and culturally richer (Wilder was a proponent of women's clubs that discussed books and important contemporary ideas and events). Writing during the Progressive Era, during and after World War I, Wilder took pains to show how long farm women worked per week and how much they produced, though they were largely ignored by legislators and women's rights advocates during discussions of women's labor laws.

Because of the importance of her labor, the farm wife is depicted throughout Wilder's journalism as an equal partner with her husband (just as the fictional Laura and Almanzo's relationship is depicted in the later novels). Wilder cites examples of herself performing difficult physical labor alongside her husband, managing finances, planning crops, and even designing the architecture of their house. Throughout her writings, Wilder insists on the dignity and importance of women's work, while never ignoring its difficulty and the drudgery it entails.

Repeatedly, Wilder notes that the most important task of any woman is the raising of children, as they will one day be running the world. In fact, it is likely because of this tenet that Wilder is less than optimistic about the perceived benefits of women's suffrage debated at that time. Once the Nineteenth Amendment was ratified in 1920, Wilder insisted that women do their duty to vote wisely. Nevertheless, she saw the mother's role of raising good citizens as having much greater potential to improve the nation.

Justifiably, Wilder's farm journalism will always be overshadowed by her *Little House* series. Nonetheless, those who find the themes of the novels appealing can see such principles worked out both theoretically and concretely in the midst of the Ozarks in her articles. They are a paean to farm women, wives, and mothers, particularly those who have performed and continue to perform invaluable work here in the Ozarks.

Author's Note on Sources

Stephen W. Hines has done the tremendous work of collecting Wilder's extant *Ruralist* articles in his *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's travel journal from De Smet to Mansfield and her letters home to Almanzo from San Francisco (along with a journal of her and Almanzo's return trip to De Smet by car in 1931) can be found in *Little House Traveler* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006).

A handful of Wilder's *Ruralist* articles along with some of her national publications can be found in the following collections, both edited by William Anderson: *A Little House Sampler* (New York: HarperCollins, 1988) and *A Little House Reader* (New York: HarperCollins, 1998).

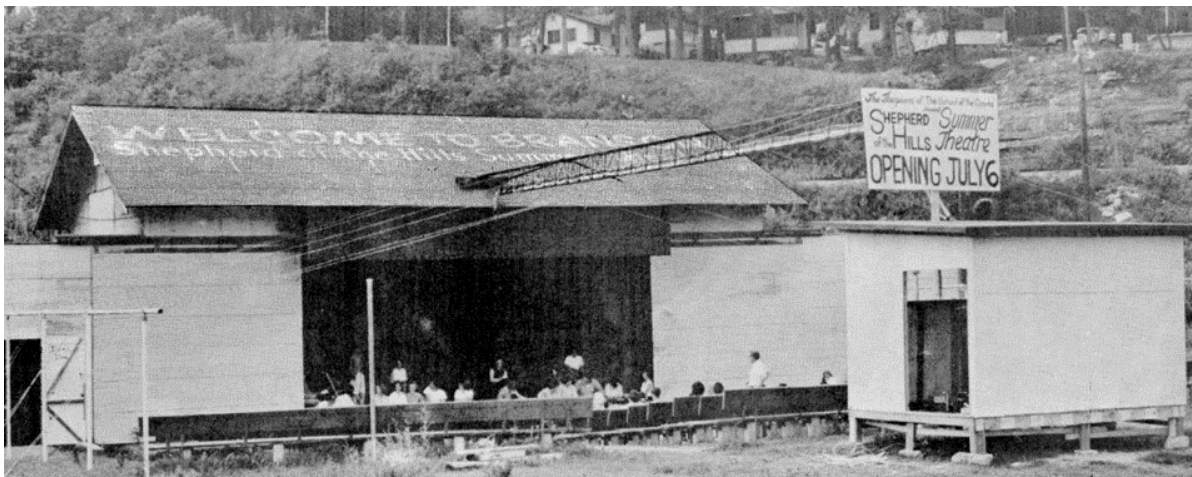
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“Let’s Go to the Show!” Beacon Hill Theatre of the Ozarks

by Gwen Simmons

All photos courtesy of Lyons Memorial Library, College of the Ozarks

Act 1, Scene 1—*The curtain opens to reveal an open-air theatre in downtown Branson, Missouri, on the shores of Lake Taneycomo. The year is 1955. The performers are college students from Southern Illinois University. Audience members are area residents and tourists. Financial backing is courtesy of the Branson Chamber of Commerce. What is it? It’s the birth of the Beacon Hill Theatre, long associated with the School of the Ozarks (now College of the Ozarks).*



The Shepherd of the Hills Theatre in downtown Branson

In 1955, Branson businesses were searching for a way to entertain tourists. A summer stock theatre was proposed, partnering with the Southern Players of Southern Illinois University (SIU). Thirty-five business owners pledged \$100 each in support while the “Branson Park Board provided labor, location and built an outdoor theatre” (H. Godsey 615).

Summer stock or repertory theatre features a rotation of plays with schedules that might vary from week to week. During 1955, the Southern Players performed *The Shepherd of the Hills* as part of their repertoire. The script was adapted from the famous Harold Bell Wright novel by Charlotte McLeod, wife of the director of the Southern Players (Jones 1). It was a forerunner of the long-running outdoor drama still produced in Branson.

The SIU students performed at the outdoor theatre for two years. However, they had to bow out when the Illinois state legislature cut their funding. Students from Central Methodist State College then stepped in for the next two years. They continued the repertory style with *The Shepherd of the Hills* performed each weekend (H. Godsey 615).

(Beacon Hill Theatre continued on next page)

The original building featured plank benches for the audience. Although lighting was minimal, those lights attracted mayflies during their periodic hatches on the lake. Fog would also move in, sometimes creating a nuisance for those involved but sometimes used to dramatic effect as in a cemetery scene from *Our Town*. Backstage areas included two dressing rooms and office space. The plain proscenium stage had a curtain as well as barn doors to close when the stage was not in use (H. Godsey 615–16).

Act 2, Scene 1—*The curtain opens as the Central Methodist students are bowing out due to money problems. Performers are now students at the School of the Ozarks, having acquired the building in 1961 after paying off the theatre's debts of \$10,000.*

Production of *The Shepherd of the Hills* continued. Other shows included *The Rainmaker* and *The Mikado*. Although students enjoyed the opportunity to perform, being part of the theatre company was hard work.

Students would board a school bus at the School of the Ozarks at 7:00 a.m. for the three-mile drive to the theatre. There, they would rehearse, work on scenery, and perform maintenance tasks until noon when they returned to campus for lunch. Afternoons were spent back at the theatre with a return bus ride to campus for supper at the cafeteria. Then, it was back downtown for that night's performance, often followed by rehearsals for the next week's play (Eighth Season for Shepherd of the Hills Summer Theatre 4). The life of a performer isn't always glamorous.



The Summer 1962 season was the last on Lake Taneycomo

Act 2, Scene 2--*Increased competition from other Branson tourist attractions as well as the environmental challenges of an open-air theatre prompt a move. In 1963, the theatre is dismantled and moved to a field directly across from the School of the Ozarks campus.*

Over the next few years, improvements were made. The building was enclosed and air-conditioned and theatrical lighting was installed. A large sign was erected, advertising coming attractions and the air conditioning. New theatre seating could accommodate approximately 400 audience members with eight entrances, a concession stand, and box office. Advertisements were published in local newspapers.

(Beacon Hill Theatre continued on next page)

Those interested in a night out could take advantage of a “Theatre Dinner Special” offered in partnership with the school’s restaurant. The special included a ticket to a show plus a full steak dinner priced at \$3.50 for adults or \$2.00 for children under 10 (1968 Season Beacon Hill Theatre Advertisement B3). The phrase “Let’s Go to the Show!” featured prominently on tickets, brochures, and flyers.



Beacon Hill Theatre at the School of the Ozarks

Another improvement led to the renaming of the theatre. While on the Branson lakefront, it had been known as The Shepherd of the Hills Theatre. A dispute over production rights for *The Shepherd of the Hills* play led to that show being dropped from the repertoire after the building was moved to the School of the Ozarks. About the same time, a carbon arc aircraft beacon light was installed in front of the theatre. It was illuminated on show nights to attract attention and an audience. The powerful beacon led to the theatre being named the Beacon Hill Theatre. Although the light would eventually be retired, the name remained for the history of the building (T. Godsey 3).



The first production at Beacon Hill Theatre at the School of the Ozarks location was *The Pirates of Penzance* by Gilbert and Sullivan. Coincidentally, that was also the last production in 1982. The building was shuttered for the 1983 summer season when productions moved to the stage in Jones Auditorium at the school. Between those two productions, though, many students gained experience in acting, set design, advertising, and directing. Shows ran the gamut from comedies to thrillers, melodramas to operettas, familiar musicals to more avant-garde dramas.

The 1978 theatre company getting ready for the summer season.

(Beacon Hill Theatre continued on next page)

Act 2, Scene 3--By the time the Beacon Hill Theatre was closed, the nearly 30-year-old building needs repairs and college administrators cite costs as one of the reasons for its closure.

For the next three years, the building was used for storage. It was also home to Herkimer, a ghost said to have occupied the theatre since its lakefront days. As the story goes, Herkimer was a young boy who ran away from home after being beaten by his father. He eventually died after taking refuge in the theatre. Herkimer got credit for falling scenery, prop malfunctions, and other mishaps (Penprase 1B). Herkimer is still involved with the theatre, having moved from Beacon Hill to the Jones Auditorium.

College officials had a demolition plan for the Beacon Hill Theatre but instead sold it to a local farmer and gave the theatre department a two-week window to remove stored props and scenery (Young). However, a mysterious fire intervened. At 10:30 p.m. on November 13, 1986, campus fire trucks responded as flames engulfed the building. The Hollister and Western Taney County departments also responded, but the building was a total loss. Fire Marshall Bill Zieres declared the fire arson, noting that traces of a flammable liquid had been found on the remains of the building (Keeth 1). Two days prior to the fire, the electricity was turned off, HVAC equipment was removed, and most of the props and scenery being stored there had been removed (Somerville 1). All that was left of the theatre equipment were some aluminum I-beams used to create two-story sets. The fire burned hot enough to melt the aluminum (Young). The arsonist remains unknown.

This writer, a student at the college at the time of the fire, remembers the red glow of flames in the sky and the ash scattered on the grass the next morning. Readers may be familiar with Fred Pfister, who, at the time of the fire, taught English at the college and later served as editor of *The Ozarks Mountaineer*. As a student in the 1960s, Pfister trod the boards at the Beacon Hill Theatre. Shortly after the fire, he reflected on students like him who had been a part of Beacon Hill. He wrote,

Students who acted at the Beacon Hill have drifted like the theater's ashes into all walks of life. I know that some of them became actors and are part of the entertainment industry. But most of them are teachers, school superintendents, writers, nurses, corporate managers, insurance executives. They are better workers for their experience, but most important, they are better human beings (Pfister).

Curtain closes.

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Ants Plant Spring Wildflower Seeds – Who Knew?

by Bob Kipfer



Harbinger of Spring – *Erigenia bulbosa*

Springtime is the season to look for the play put on by spring ephemeral wildflowers. They seem to appear from nowhere to savor the sun on the woodland floor before the trees leaf out. Once they are in the shade of the forest, they lose their source of solar energy. The term spring ephemeral describes plants which quickly grow stems, leaves, and flowers; and then bloom, go to seed, and die back early, all before the start of summer. The remainder of the year their surface features disappear, leaving roots and rhizomes underground. These plants tend to be found in forested areas.

The tiny harbinger of spring (*Erigenia bulbosa*) raises the curtain on our little show, soon to be followed by the rest of the Ozarks cast below.

- Trillium (wake robin) - [*Trillium sessile**](#)
- Spring beauty - [*Claytonia virginica**](#)
- Shooting star - [*Dodecatheon meadia*](#)
- Dogtooth violet (trout lily) - [*Erythronium albidum**](#)
- Hepatica (liverleaf) - [*Anemone americana**](#)
- Bloodroot - [*Sanguinaria canadensis**](#)
- Rue anemone - [*Thalictrum thalictroides*](#)
- False rue anemone - [*Isopyrum biternatum*](#)
- Dutchman's breeches - [*Dicentra cucullaria**](#)
- Wild ginger - [*Asarum canadense**](#)
- Large bellwort - [*Uvularia grandiflora**](#)



Shooting Star



Bloodroot

Bloodroot is a favorite for kids of all ages. It is a stemless plant growing directly from a tuber. It produces a single leaf just above the ground and the flower only lasts a few days. The fun is in tearing the leaf or squeezing the tuber which produces a bright red sap that was used by Native Americans as a dye.

The photo shows fingers holding the bloodroot tuber with the bright red sap.

(Spring Wildflowers continued on next page)

Now here come the ants. Are they the villains in our spring play? Actually, they “plant” the species marked with an asterisk in the list above. Those plants produce seeds with a little nutritious cap of lipid and protein called an elaiosome. This treat is apparently tasty, and some ant species will pick up the seeds and take them back to their nest to feed their young. This process is called myrmecochory.

Ant Elaiosome
 Courtesy of Eva Colberg.
 Photo used by permission.



Since seeds can't walk, transportation is necessary for the plants to spread. Many, like dandelions, use the wind to disperse their seed, while others depend on water or animals.

Acorns are moved in bear scat and stored and planted by forgetful squirrels and blue jays. Once our ants have eaten the elaiosome, many times they will haul the seed out to a trash pile with some of their feces, creating a little fertilized garden.



Spring Beauty



Trillium

This mutualism between ants and native plants is just one dramatic example of the many relationships that go on under our radar or are unknown at present. Plants introduced from other countries leave their partners and natural predators behind. This is one more reason to preserve nature and share the wonders with others.

You can find more information on all the wildflowers listed here as well as other plants, animals, and insects in the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) Field Guide, which can be accessed online at <https://mdc.mo.gov/discover-nature/field-guide/>. If your web browser is Google, simply enter the name and MDC, like this: “bloodroot MDC.”

Photos are courtesy of Bob Kipfer except the “Ant Elaiosome” photo, as noted.

Preserving Traditional Ozarks Music: The Mountain Grove Schoolhouse

by Curtis Copeland

The stone schoolhouse near the end of T Highway, north of Kirbyville, Missouri, was built in 1928. Number 33 in the Taney County school district, this school was named Mountain Grove. It was a place of learning for students in the neighborhood of the northern part of the horseshoe bend created by Lake Taneycomo (White River) between Branson and Forsyth. This building ceased to be a schoolhouse years later, after all the one-room schoolhouses in the district were consolidated. The students in the neighborhood would go to Kirbyville for primary education, and either Branson or Hollister for high school.

Now the little stone schoolhouse serves another purpose for the community. Every Thursday night, the Mountain Grove Schoolhouse is the home of a music jam. Members of the community bring their instruments to gather and play traditional Ozarks music. This tradition was started decades ago by Jeff Michel's father and other old-time musicians in the area. Jeff continues this tradition today, bringing his own fiddle to join in the circle of musicians. In the last couple years, Jeff has also been a mentor and instructor to students of the Ozark Mountain Music Association (OMMA). The OMMA is an organization dedicated to teaching youth traditional Ozarks music and instrumentation.

Traditional Ozarks music may be defined as acoustical instrumentation generally consisting of fiddle, guitar, and upright bass, along with vocals. The tunes and lyrics are generally very old, some dating back hundreds of years to European origins, although there are traditional songs developed from the past couple of centuries here in the Ozarks.

There is a difference between traditional Ozarks music and bluegrass. Bluegrass was started in the 1930s and 1940s and is generally faster paced, with blues and jazz elements. Also, during a song, each instrument has a turn period of improvisation and solo. Bluegrass generally also incorporates banjo and mandolin in the ensemble.

The Society of Ozarkian Hillcrofters raises funds for scholarships to benefit students in the OMMA program, specifically for attendance at music camps held each year. The Society also raises funds to assist with utilities and maintenance costs for the Mountain Grove Schoolhouse, helping to make this special place available to the students and local musicians that keep the traditional Ozarks music alive every Thursday night. These funding efforts are to help ensure that traditional Ozarks music is carried into the future through teaching youth.

In the companion essay that follows, Emily Garoutte provides a vivid description of the weekly music sessions at the Mountain Grove Schoolhouse. Emily is a student at Gloria Deo Academy and a member of the Ozark Mountain Music Association. She is also a member of the musical group Missouri 65.

(Traditional Ozarks Music continued on next page)

A Melody's Revival: Tales of Ozarkian Tradition at the Mountain Grove Schoolhouse

by Emily Garoutte

The demands of modern times in Missouri seep into each of our lives. An array of chicken farmers, electricians, retired folks, and kids lay aside their work once a week to play old-time and bluegrass music and fend off the demands, for posterity's delight.

The musicians make the scenic jaunt out to the Mountain Grove Schoolhouse in Taney County every Thursday, where they compete with the songs of the cicadas and play the music of generations gone by.

I am one of those musicians. We give a voice to the generations of old. The music is imperfect and raw, just as "home-grown" music should be. We push on to tell stories through these songs. When the front door is unlocked and the musicians fill the room, time returns to days of old. Once a week, the one-room schoolhouse comes to life, beckoning the community in.

I branched out from classical music and started playing the fiddle at the age of twelve, never picturing what a cherished thing I would be taking part in. My heart quickly became akin with this hidden gem I had unearthed. Without the next generation to carry on these native Ozarks tunes, thousands of melodies and their stories will perish. Stories of sorrow, faith, poverty, love, and life are bellowed out in each chord.



The current caretaker of the schoolhouse, Jeff Michel, finds it crucial to keep the music alive. He said, "For one thing, my grandpa and his buddies started the jam. But, since the younger people started coming, it has inspired us who had been playing here for a long time to pass along what we know." Although old-time and bluegrass music has evolved in some aspects over the years, the principle of the gathering remains unchanged. Unfortunately, very few residents of the Ozarks are aware of the musical traditions that brought and are still bringing merriness to folks.

The schoolhouse lies tucked in the hills of the Missouri Ozarks, less than twenty minutes east of Branson on T Highway. Used as a school for roughly a century, the original schoolhouse stood nearly a mile from its current location, now the Mountain Grove Cemetery. It was constructed in the late 1800s and served until the 1930s when it was destroyed by a fire.

(A Melody's Revival continued on next page)

Rebuilt on the new site in 1928, grades one through eight were led by one teacher in the small area. In 1952, the Mountain Grove Schoolhouse was consolidated with Branson schools, concluding its use as a school. During the time of its use as a school, ten teachers taught over the years. They were Alfred Edwards, Edna Clift, Elmo Ingenthron, Ellen Riley Hall, Helen Awbery, Charlotte McPhearson, Chloe Lawallen, Millie Snowden, Opal Gideon, and W. T. Thornton.



In the years between 1952 and 1979, the schoolhouse was abandoned and fell into disarray. That could have been the end of the story, but in 1979 Frank Michel and his neighbors fully restored the schoolhouse to its original charm. Frank, the grandfather of the current caretaker Jeff Michel, and several of his friends – including Everette Gloyd and Johnnie Boyd – began the music jam in 1980. Because of their efforts in restoration, musicians have been gathering for fellowship and music every Thursday night since.

Many of the original musicians even became well known throughout the area. The beloved Ray Curbow attended faithfully for many years and became known as “the barefoot fiddler” at the schoolhouse. Jeff Michel recalled that “Ray was probably one of the best old-time fiddlers around the area. He had his own style, almost always playing two notes at once. He fiddled almost seven days a week at some jam, somewhere. He fiddled for about sixty-nine years of his life.” Jeff followed Ray to music events, learning to capture his style for many years. Ray’s picture now hangs on the chalkboard in remembrance of his fiddle playing and faithful friendship.

Now in 2022 the scene hasn’t modernized much, but lately the kids are getting involved. Older mentors will make up a large part of the circle, but new, youthful faces are appearing as well. I am one of the younger players at the schoolhouse. It is an honor to learn the tunes that are native to the Ozarks from these mentors. Kids are joining the circle to watch attentively as the old musician’s hands switch chords. The older musicians never pass up an opportunity to give up their seats and give an approving nod after a song.

On a typical Thursday night, one could expect a plethora of things. At 7:00 p.m., banjo, mandolin, bass, guitar, and fiddle strings are plucked eagerly as they’re tuned and prepped. Welcomes and greetings fill the air. Women proudly come in and present their contributions for the night, their scrumptious desserts. Spectators fill the “audience rows” and join the family. Musicians take their seats around the circle and either the oldest or youngest in the circle decides on the song to kick off with.

(A Melody’s Revival continued on next page)

The kids are taught to play in a jam just like the older generations. They stick out a foot to show when they're ending a song, they announce the song's title and its key before they take off playing, and they wait for their turn to come to play loudly. If anyone ever lacks inspiration for their song choice, the blackboard is filled with traditional song names from corner to corner.

The music always comes to a boil, and the thrill of the melody escapes as we stomp to the beat. At 8:30 p.m., someone finally declares, "Break time!"



Everyone rushes up to grab dessert before it vanishes. Chatter and laughter echo in the little room. Recipes are shared among the women, and the week's news is shared among the kids. The clamor is soon brought to an end when we hear the music begin again in the circle. A herd of muddy-footed children file back inside, nearly always out of breath from laughing. Once again, our fluttering fingers fight to outdo the cicadas until the moon is high.

That scene identifies the Ozarks. This is the Ozarks that I am proud to live in – the fellowship, authenticity, and sharing of tradition. This mountain music unifies people in the same way it did at dances, jam sessions, festivals, singings, and Sunday gatherings long ago. This schoolhouse had various uses over the years. However, its purpose remains: to pass on, nurture, and cultivate tradition.

The Lord has gifted me with the honor of spending time with the faces that fill the Mountain Grove Schoolhouse. I know to never take it for granted. Many claim that this old-time and bluegrass music is dying, and there is risk. However, I intend to uphold this tradition. I've witnessed the spark of satisfaction when a young fiddle player finishes a tune. I've seen the room reverberate with clapping and hollering when a song becomes a lively affair. I've felt passion rise in my heart over the years to keep this music alive and vital. My soul hums an old tune from the hills, and I will heed its call to preserve the melody. Under my ability, it will not die with my generation.

Source note: This article is based partly on information Jeff Michel. It is reprinted here by permission and slightly revised from State of the Ozarks, 2021:

<http://stateoftheozarks.net/showcase/2021/08/26/a-melodys-revival-odes-of-ozarkian-tradition/>.

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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.

Ozarks Hillbilly: Stereotype and Reality

A review by Hayden Head

Koob, Tom, with Curtis Copeland. *Ozarks Hillbilly*. Shell Knob, Missouri: White Oak Lodge Publishing, 2021.

In *Ozarks Hillbilly*, Tom Koob and Curtis Copeland set themselves a difficult challenge: the quest to find the authentic hill folk of the Ozarks behind the stereotypical buffoons of Hollywood, comic strips, and other popular media. Their journey was made more complex by Ozarkers themselves, for a lot of hill folk discovered gold in “them thar hills,” but this gold was dug from the pockets of tourists, not the sides of mountains. And what did the tourists want? Why, hillbilly buffoonery. As the authors point out, the projection of hillbilly stereotypes into the Ozarks was reflected back again in the antics of ersatz hillbillies. “Hillbilly exploitation” was a reciprocal relationship, but the ones who suffered—if anyone has suffered—are the authentic hill folk. Thus, the project and scope of Koob and Copeland’s book.

Copeland introduces their quest by relating a particular search of his own. After watching the movie *Deliverance* (which, incidentally, reinforced the more disturbing and violent stereotypes of hillbillies), Curtis set off to meet Banjo Boy, the banjo picking savant of “Dueling Banjos.” Curtis relates how he called ahead to arrange the meeting, only to be asked if he could pick up Banjo Boy, aka Billy Redden, from his job stocking shelves. Curtis said he would, so at 7:30 in the morning, Curtis showed up at the Walmart in Clayton, Georgia, where he met a young lady escorting Billy Redden, “an older man, diminutive in stature and . . . wearing [a blue Walmart] smock” (22). The lady wanted to make sure Curtis was “all right” before she sent Billy off with him, so a brief interview followed.

Having passed her inspection, Curtis drove Billy to a local café where Billy had his customary breakfast of grits. Curtis says Billy talked a lot about his love of grits. In the course of their conversation, Curtis also learned that Billy could not play the banjo. The producers picked Billy from among his classmates because of his “‘unique’ physical features” (23). They picked another boy who could play the banjo, and they rigged up Billy’s sleeve so the other boy’s arm wrapped around him to create the illusion that Billy was playing. In doing so, the producers perpetuated a stereotype of the hillbilly as mentally deficient and possibly inbred but darned good at playing bluegrass. Curtis remarks that he felt uneasy at his desire for a photograph with Billy, “a real and tangible souvenir of an icon of hillbilly mythology. But was I also exploiting this man?”

(The Book Bag review continued on next page)

This question reverberates throughout the book: “Is ‘hillbilly mythology’ a result of outside exploitation, or is there some intrinsic truth behind it? The answer, as you might expect, is a little bit of both. Take, for example, the earliest description of “hillbillies” in Henry Rowe Schoolcraft’s diary of his trip through the Ozarks in 1818–19: “In manners, morals, customs, dress, contempt of labor and hospitality, the state of society is not essentially different from that which exists among the savages. Schools, religion, and learning, are alike unknown. Hunting is the principal, the most honourable, and the most profitable employment” (48).

But later in the same paragraph, Schoolcraft offers this observation: “They are, consequently, a hardy, brave, independent people, rude in appearance, frank and generous, travel without baggage, and can subsist anywhere in the woods and would form the most efficient military corps in frontier warfare which can possibly exist” (48). About this apparent contradiction, Koob writes, “Schoolcraft creates an impression that is both critical and perhaps grudgingly admiring of the region’s mountain man” (49).

Koob and Copeland seemingly left no limestone unturned in their attempt to sort out the hillbilly myth, and in the process, they created an accessible and entertaining overview of Ozarks culture, history, and literature in the last two hundred years. For writers, researchers, and lovers of the hills, *Ozarks Hillbilly* provides insight and context for the story of the Ozarks, a story that is still being written. The ultimate question for us is whether the old “hillbilly virtues” of self-reliance and bravery will win out, or will these virtues succumb to a different kind of exploitation, an exploitation not only of a stereotype but of the hills themselves? Many contemporary Ozarkers hold the “hillbilly mythology” in contempt. Their assumption seems to be that we are better than they were. *Ozarks Hillbilly* suggests this assumption of superiority is not only ill-founded but perilously false.

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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 person interviews is welcome.

Limit each in-text, direct quotation to approximately four lines (50 words or so). Quoted passages of greater length may require permission from the author or publisher to avoid copyright violation. For photos, identify the source of each and ensure permission is obtained for use.

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