

The SOCIETY
of OZARKIAN
HILLCROFTERS

Identifying and Preserving What Makes the Ozarks Exceptional

Volume 1 Issue 1 Spring 2021

Message from Hillcrofters President

Hello, Society of Ozarkian Hillcrofters. 2020 was a difficult year for many people, given the negative effect of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting impacts, not only from a health and medical standpoint but also from the standpoint of social interaction. Like many groups, we faced the necessity to implement a significant cutback in activities.

In the three-year existence of our “revived” organization, we have felt that what helped to make us special was the ability to meet and socialize, enjoy new and existing friendships, and share our common love for the Ozarks. Our member meetings not only provided the socializing element but also offered excellent presentations on a variety of topics focused on the preservation of Ozarks history, culture, and natural features. These came to a stop in 2020. Our special events, including the Old Country Fair and the Cabin Fever Music and Variety Show, provided fantastic entertainment, created lasting memories and provided the foundational part of our fundraising activities. These events were halted as well in 2020, and they were greatly missed by many.

But in 2021, there are signs of hope that we can regain the momentum of growing our organization and working on the missions and projects we pursued prior to 2020. For one thing, although our activities stopped in 2020, the board of directors pressed on. We’ve increased our board by four members, all of whom bring excellent knowledge and experience. A great effort is needed to prepare organizational and supporting documents currently being used to seek grants and funding opportunities for our preservation projects. You will meet these new board members in the pages below.

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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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We have been working on a major event, the Shepherd's Old Ozarks Settlers Days to be held on May 15 and 16 at the Shepherd of the Hills farm on West 76. The fine folks there have teamed up with us to make this a wonderful occasion. Details follow below. Also below, you will learn about a meeting between several Hillcrofters and Missouri Governor Parson and Lieutenant Governor Kehoe, held to discuss how the state might assist us and our goals.

And I want to thank our new newsletter committee, which includes Bob Kipfer, Marilyn Perlberg, Hayden Head, and Marilyn France. With this issue, we are trying out a brand-new newsletter format!

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

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

Susan Scott	Larry Sifford
Tammy Morton	Jeff Michel
Hayden Head	Ken Henderson
Jeremy Lynn	Todd Wilkinson

NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

Bob Kipfer – Committee Chair
Marilyn Perlberg – Editor
Hayden Head – Adviser
Marilyn France – Consultant

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
Shepherd's Old Settlers Days
 Supporting the Society of Ozarkian Hillcrofters
 May 15-16, 2021

We are excited to announce our participation in the Shepherd's Old Ozarks Settlers Days at the historic Shepherd of the Hills farm on West Highway 76. The dates and times are from 10 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. on Saturday, May 15, and from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday, May 16. This is the opening weekend of the legendary outdoor drama at Shepherd of the Hills, which is into its sixth decade. The Hillcrofters and the folks at Shepherd of the Hills share the goal of preserving Ozarks history and culture. A portion of the proceeds from the event will go to our Society to help support our projects.

This event is reminiscent of the traditional Ozarks crafts and music festivals of the past. More than 30 craft vendors will be present, along with demonstrators of Ozarks crafts and skills and living history groups. A number of local history organizations will be represented. Ozarks history lecturers are scheduled to speak on both days, among them Bud Lynn, longtime cast member in the Shepherd of the Hills drama, who will speak on Shepherd of the Hills history. Susan Scott will lecture about Rose O'Neill and her Bonniebrook home.

Demonstrators include wagon-builder Louis Allen. A variety of wagons will be on display. Other demonstrators include a maker of flour sack dresses, a woodworker, broom maker, and live blacksmith with a shop. Among the musicians performing during the event are Banjo Joe and Randy Hill playing bluegrass music, Abbey Waterworth playing authentic traditional Ozarks music, and the duo of Mark Bilyeu and Cindy Wolfe. Bilyeu, the duo founder, was the lead in the popular group Big Smith.

If you are interested in selling crafts at the event, please contact 417-334-4101, ext. 4602. If you would like to demonstrate a traditional Ozarks skill, please contact 417-224-0344. We invite Hillcrofters members to be volunteers at the event. We are certain that the event will provide lots of things to see and do.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit our website at:
societyfozarkianhillcrofters.com

Find our group page on Facebook

CONTACT US

Email:
information@societyfozarkianhillcrofters.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:

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

New Board Members

Dr. Hayden Head

Hayden Head is honored to join the board of the Society of Ozarkian Hillcrofters. In 1998, he earned his doctorate from the Institute for Philosophic Studies at the University of Dallas in Irving, Texas. In 1999, he joined the faculty of College of the Ozarks. He served as professor of English for 18 years at the College, where, among other classes, he taught The Life, Lore, and Literature of the Ozarks as an upper division course. Prior to graduate studies in Irving, Head and his wife, Sue, were co-directors with Head's



parents of Camp Soaring Hawk, a Christian youth camp near Monett, Missouri. Even then, Head was sharing his love of the Ozarks with campers by instructing them in wild edible and useful plants and by taking them on hikes over and beneath the bluffs.

Head retired from teaching in 2017 and now spends much of his time researching and writing about life in the Ozarks. His current projects include a musical adaption of The Shepherd of the Hills, written in collaboration with Stan Beard, longtime musical director at Silver Dollar City. A highlight in this process was a stage reading of the play in New York City in 2018.

Previous civic involvement includes serving on the board of the Branson Regional Arts Council and volunteering as a mentor in the Jobs for Life program at Jesus Was Homeless, now Elevate Branson. Head looks forward to working with fellow Hillcrofters who are passionate about preserving and furthering the culture, history, and environment of the Ozarks. He and Sue have two children: Henry, who lives in Branson with his wife, India, and Lanie, who lives in Springfield.

Ken Henderson

The Henderson family moved into the Reeds Spring area in 1900 to cut railroad ties. Ken Henderson was born in downtown Reeds Spring. He has lived in Stone or Taney County for 68 of his 70 years, except for two years at Southern Baptist College in Arkansas.



At age 13, Ken began working at Silver Dollar City during its first Craft Festival in 1963. His first job was sweeping streets. He retired from the City in 2006, having served as a director for 30 years.

He has served on numerous boards of directors, including Tantone Industries, Christian Associates of Table Rock Lake and Stone County Young Life. He currently serves on the board of directors of the Southern Stone County Fire Protection District and the Stone County Senior Tax Board.

Ken is the founder of the Reeds Spring Area Hall of Fame and the recipient of the 2020 Humanitarian Award from the Society of Ozarkian Hillcrofters.

(New Board Members continued on next page)

Jeremy Lynn

Jeremy Lynn, the son of Bud and Lynda Lynn, was raised in Notch, Missouri, at the west end of Roark Valley. He attended school at Reeds Spring and Humansville. He had the privilege of growing up in his father's shadow during Bud's Branson career primarily at Shepherd of the Hills, or "the farm" to those who call it home. Jeremy spent his childhood having the farm as his playground, riding with the guides as they gave tours or hiding in the corn bin to surprise guests in the Mill tour. Growing up at the farm enabled Jeremy to benefit from the presence of many families and other people who represented all that the Ozarks and its culture have to offer.



Jeremy worked for Shepherd of the Hills as well, at the parking lot, the photo shop, on trail rides and as a Bald Knobber in the outdoor drama. He worked with his father representing Branson in the group tourism industry, distributing copies of "The Shepherd of the Hills" novel, "The

History: Those Who Walked With Wright" and "The Branson Timeline" publications. Jeremy gave history tours as a step-on guide for motor coaches.

For the past 25 years, Jeremy has pursued a career in law enforcement, working for the Bolivar Police Department and Polk County Sheriff's Office. He currently serves as the captain of the Patrol Division for the Greene County Sheriff's Office. Jeremy has a wife, Angela, and two children. His older daughter, Bailey, is in the early education program at College of the Ozarks. His younger child, Addison, attends school at Willard, Missouri, where the Lynns make their home.

Todd Wilkinson



Todd Wilkinson graduated from Missouri State University with a Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts in History, and taught American and Ozarks history and geography at Ozarks Technical Community College as an adjunct instructor for 16 years. Continuing that emphasis, Todd served for 10 years as a seasonal park ranger with the U.S. National Park Service at Wilson's Creek National Battlefield in Republic, Missouri, where he researched and delivered presentations on many aspects of the Battle of Wilson's Creek and local history, as well as the cultural and natural geography of the Ozarks. During his time teaching at OTC and as a ranger at Wilson's Creek, Todd developed a passion for encouraging students and visitors to explore the natural and cultural resources around them and to be aware of the importance of these resources today.

Todd also serves in the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, the enrolled volunteer component of the U.S. Coast Guard, as a public affairs and marine safety specialist, working alongside active duty and reserve Coast Guard personnel to promote recreational boating safety and environmental stewardship. On his free time, Todd likes to hike, attempt to kayak, and study folk music and folklore from the Ozarks and Scotland, especially the works of Vance Randolph.

-- Biography by Bob Kipfer. Photo courtesy of James River Basin Partnership.

News and Projects

Hillcrofters Visit Gov. Parson and Lt. Gov. Kehoe

Curtis and Crystal Copeland, Larry Sifford and his wife Judy, and Jeremy Lynn and his wife Angela were invited to a meeting in Jefferson City with Gov. Parson and Lt. Gov. Kehoe. The four board members – the Copelands, Larry Sifford and Jeremy Lynn – represented the Society of Ozarkian Hillcrofters. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss how the governor’s office and staff could assist with efforts to establish and name a new state park.

We Hillcrofters have recently entered into a partnership with Missouri State Parks, Division of Natural Resources, to aid cultural and nature preservation efforts at the new park. The state has purchased 1,100 acres but is still in the process of developing a comprehensive plan. The park property is adjacent to the southern boundary of the Ruth and Paul Henning Conservation area and is bounded on the west by the Ozark Mountain High Road, along Sycamore Church Road.

What is unique about this park is its importance to local history and culture. There is a tie to the “Shepherd of the Hills” story. For that reason, we are leading the effort to name the park Shepherd of the Hills State Park. The park includes the one-room Garber schoolhouse, which we plan to repair and establish as an educational site. The town of Garber, now abandoned, was founded by John K. Ross. Harold Bell Wright patterned his characters Old Matt and Aunt Mollie after Ross and his wife Anna.



We Hillcrofters were given a private tour of the capital and governor’s mansion. Gov. Parson, the first lady, and Lt. Gov. Kehoe had dinner with us. They spent nearly six hours with our group. We are very grateful for the governor’s generosity with his time.

(News and Projects continued on next page)

Mapping the Lost Town of Brushy

The 2020 Annual Report of the L-A-D Foundation featured Curtis and Crystal Copeland of the Hillcrofters for their cooperation in benevolent efforts to document the lost town of Brushy in Shannon County. Brushy was a Pioneer Cooperage Company town built along Brushy Creek between 1928 and 1929. Pioneer Cooperage land was located in the midst of thousands of acres of what was later known as Pioneer Forest.

The town of Brushy hosted a stave mill that was once considered the largest in the world. Stave mills produce thin slats of wood used for making barrels to transport goods and store food. An extension of the Missouri Southern rail line transported passengers, supplies, and barrel staves to and from the town. Brushy thrived for about 20 years during the Depression and World War II. By 1940, the wood thinned out. Brushy was sold in 1950.

Brushy was erased from maps subsequent to the USGS 1945 topographic map. The L-A-D Foundation included Brushy in efforts to map the historical and cultural resources of Pioneer Forest. These efforts involved locating houses, schools, post offices, and other structures. The Copelands joined with Foundation staff to conduct a historical survey of the abandoned town.

It was fitting for the Foundation to include the Copelands. The Society of Ozarkian Hillcrofters and the L-A-D Foundation have similar goals. The Foundation, incorporated in 1962, acquires and preserves “outstanding areas of natural geologic, cultural, or historic interest,” with a focus on the Missouri Ozarks region. The Hillcrofters are dedicated to identifying and preserving Ozarks attributes, including history and historic sites, folklore, culture, and natural wonders.

SOCIETY OF OZARKIAN HILLCROFTERS

Curtis Copeland and his wife Crystal, of Branson, are both GIS specialists and volunteers for the Society of Ozarkian Hillcrofters. They each have a strong interest in historical surveys and recording geospatial locations of historically important areas. In recent years they have been reviving the Hillcrofters society, which formed in 1931; among its original members were Otto Ernest Rayburn and Vance Randolph. The Copelands recently assisted Pioneer in exploring the history of its lands at the long-abandoned town of Brushy, Mo., and preserving that information.



Exploring and mapping GPS locations in the vanished town of Brushy are, left to right, Brandon Kuhn and Jason Green of Pioneer Forest, former forest manager Terry Cunningham, and Curtis and Crystal Copeland. CURTIS COPELAND

2020 Annual Report of the L-A-D Foundation

For the full article, follow the link. The article begins on page 26. https://ladfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/2020-Annual-Report-web-2021.01.18.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3xLG-H6KHiJWHLX_hLqZJT1n5I32f587vQBx58LJNKUIXluASmN39EVI

(News and Projects continued on next page)

Support for Classes in Traditional Ozarks Music

The Society of Ozarkian Hillcrofters is dedicated not only to educating future generations about Ozarks history and culture, but also to helping instill appreciation and interest. Traditional Ozarks music is an important part of Ozarks culture. It is essential that future generations continue the tradition of this wonderful art form. The Society provides scholarships for youth music camps that teach traditional Ozarks music and instrumentation.

On August 27, 2020, the Society of Ozarkian Hillcrofters presented a monetary award to a Taney County, Missouri, group that is dedicated to teaching young people how to play traditional Ozarks music. The Society's Board voted to contribute \$500 to the Thursday night music jam hosted by Jeff Michel at the Mountain Grove Schoolhouse. Michel has offered this weekly learning opportunity to young people for the past few years. His classes are well attended. The contribution of \$500 was to cover utilities to maintain the school and sustain the classes.



Curtis Copeland (far right), president of the Society of Ozarkian Hillcrofters, and Larry Sifford (far left), board member, present a \$500 check to Jeff Michel at the Mountain Grove Schoolhouse. Michel's classes in traditional Ozarks music meet at this location.

Articles Section

A Railroad Comes to Branson – Or Is It Lucia?

by Marilyn Perlberg

Before 1900, Branson was a tiny farming settlement. By 1903, Branson was a boomtown. What happened in so short a time? Word arrived that the Missouri Pacific Railroad planned a White River line through the Roark Creek valleys and south into Arkansas.

Before the railroad came, Taney County was already decades old, in existence since 1837. Branson, however, had yet to grow. Most people had settled to the east, along the freight roads that passed through the county seat of Forsyth.

A handful of farmhouses dotted the landscape near the mouth of Roark Creek, along the White River. Most historical accounts note the additional presence of a cotton gin, a mill, a blacksmith shop and a country school. A general store included the post office that was founded in 1882 and named for the first postmaster, Reuben S. Branson.

The name Branson—for the post office, and thus the town—endured years after the man himself relocated in 1886 to be nearer the county seat at Forsyth. Reuben Branson held a series of county jobs, such as tax collector, clerk and recorder of deeds. In 1900, he was census-taker for the township that included his namesake town. It was his successor as postmaster, William Hawkins, who renamed the town Lucia—pronounced Loo-sha.

When did Branson become Lucia? Ozarks historian Kathleen Van Buskirk, writing in the Ozarks Mountaineer magazine (July-Aug. 1983), dates the renaming from May 2, 1901. For several years, mail at Branson was officially canceled with the name of Lucia. Why Lucia? The renaming to Lucia coincided with developments linked to the coming railroad.

Entrepreneurs saw opportunities in a town that the planned railroad made livelier by the day. Wagonloads of ties passed through to meet the needs of railroad construction up and down the line. The ties came from hardscrabble farmers glad to hack every hardwood tree they owned for needed cash.

Land speculators began buying up the farmlands around the post office that Reuben Branson founded, and the population grew. By early 1903, work crews poured into what is now downtown Branson to prepare a roadbed for the Missouri Pacific's White River Railway, briefly called the St. Louis, Iron Mountain and Southern Railway.

Two sets of real estate developers rivaled each other. One was the Branson Town Company, based in Springfield. The president was Charles Fulbright, who also worked for railroad interests. The Missouri Pacific Railroad wanted to make the line through Branson profitable by commercial and industrial development.

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A local investor, Benjamin B. Price, led the promoters of Lucia. Each set of developers hired a surveyor. Plats divided the towns at College and Commercial streets, with streets laid out differently for each town.

Both plats were filed in October 1903, but the plat for Lucia was filed first. Then, in November, Lucia investors sold out to the Branson Town Company. Continuation of the Branson name was assured.

The first notable businesses sprang up: Sullenger's Saloon, Breedon's boarding house, a new general store and the Commercial Hotel. The Branson Hotel, a project of the Branson Town Company, opened on Main Street. By 1906, the Bank of Branson also opened on Main Street.

By then, trains began to arrive at the newly built Branson depot. Soon, regular freight service opened up markets to farmers. Shipments of livestock, farm products, minerals, mussel shells for buttons, logs and lumber products quickly made the depot a busy place.

On January 21, 1906, the first passenger train arrived, completing a 12-hour run between Newport, Arkansas, and Pleasant Hill near Kansas City, Missouri. After Harold Bell Wright published his highly popular novel of 1907, "The Shepherd of the Hills," trains brought the first big waves of tourists. Readers were eager to visit the hills west of Branson where Harold Bell Wright set his novel.

The automobile has long since replaced the train, but new generations of tourists can still visit the settings of "The Shepherd of the Hills." Tourists can still see the Bank of Branson downtown and the Branson Hotel. They can still find Sullenger's Saloon at the northwest corner of the intersection of Main and Sycamore streets, where it was relocated from its original site and renamed. A train ride can still be had by visiting the old Branson depot.

And Lucia? Evidence that it existed remains to be seen in the misaligned north-south streets south of Main. The Lucia plat is the reason drivers must veer to the left or right at College Street.

-- Previously published in Branson Quarterly 4 (Holiday Edition 2005): 6–9. Reprinted with permission and slightly revised.

“I Had Drunk Branch Water”: The Life of Townsend Godsey

by Gwen Simmons

A well-known Ozarks figure is the writer and photographer Townsend Godsey. His most prominent work is the book “These Were the Last,” a photo collection that documents folkways of the Ozarks. One might assume that Godsey was born and raised in the Ozarks hills, but his trajectory to the Ozarks is much more complicated.

William Townsend Godsey was born March 21, 1905, in Maryville, Missouri, near the Iowa border. After graduating from high school, he enrolled at Northwest Missouri State University where he studied journalism and wrote for the college newspaper. However, his time at the college ended after one year because of a dispute over an article in that paper. Godsey was chastised by the college president, and as he recalled, “That’s when I became a ‘dropout’ ... “I just felt I wouldn’t be happy there” (Stubblefield).

Godsey did find happiness in writing, which led him to jobs for the Maryville and St. Joseph newspapers. He went on to write for the Miami Daily News in Florida. He eventually returned to Missouri, where he married Helen Miller in 1927. That was also the year the Fish and Game Department employed him as a publicist. More newspaper jobs and freelance work followed until Godsey was asked to join the newly created Missouri Conservation Commission. In 1938, Godsey founded and served as first editor of the Missouri Conservationist magazine.

Another of Godsey’s initiatives established the Nature Knights program for children. Nature Knights chapters were created across the state to teach kids about conservation and reward them with medals and certificates upon completing each level of curriculum. When searching for someone to design those certificates, Godsey contacted a Missouri artist just getting started in his career. That artist took the job. His name? Walt Disney. Those certificates will look familiar to those who have seen the animated feature “Bambi.”

In 1941, Godsey moved his family to Hollister, Missouri. Freelancing often meant bartering, as he said, “I traded photos for food, firewood, hound dogs; you name it” (Stubblefield). During this time, Godsey was elected mayor of Hollister, serving one term which he said was plenty. In 1945, the peripatetic Godsey moved on, working in public relations at Stephens College and as a photography instructor in Los Angeles.

Eventually he found his way to Central Missouri State University as a public relations director. In 1960, he completed his bachelor’s degree in English at that university, followed by a master’s in journalism from the University of Oklahoma (Godsey). Throughout this time Godsey continued his freelance career, conducted workshops, taught classes, and dreamed about returning to the Ozarks. The Godseys and their three young children had lived in the Ozarks at least four times before returning for good in 1965.

The job that finally settled the family in the Branson-Hollister area was a public relations job at the School of the Ozarks. Godsey would eventually be named vice president of public relations and associate professor of mass media, playing a pivotal role in establishing the mass media department.

Although Godsey was not a native-born Ozarker, his admiration and respect for the culture were manifest. During his sojourns in the region, he met other notables, including Vance Randolph, May

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Kennedy McCord and Otto Rayburn. But, as he says, “They were writers. ... And I saw the need for somebody making a photographic record of some of the primitive survivals such as brush arbor meetings, baptizings in the creek, and sorghum making before they went out of the picture completely” (Ex-Newspaperman). Godsey’s determination to photograph Ozarkers and their traditions led to the publication of “These Were the Last” in 1977. The black-and-white photographs capture the essence of the native Ozarker, and today’s researchers still use them.

Another of Godsey’s significant works is the book “The Flight of the Phoenix,” written with his wife, Helen, who gets top billing as author. In 1977, M. Graham Clark, president of the School of the Ozarks, contracted the couple to write a history of the school. The book debuted in 1984 and remains the definitive history of the first 75 years of the school, now College of the Ozarks.

A project of Godsey’s that has proved just as impactful as his writing or photography is the Ozarkiana Collection. In 1968, he established the Ozarkiana Collection at Lyons Memorial Library on the School, now College, of the Ozarks campus. This resource of books, articles, photographs and media documents the history and culture of the Ozarks. Godsey’s vision for this treasure trove included an endowment to fund its development and maintenance. His friendships led to the donation of photographs from Vance Randolph, letters penned by Rose O’Neill, and radio broadcasts of May Kennedy McCord. Today, the collection is widely used by researchers.



When Townsend Godsey died on May 18, 1994, he left behind an impressive body of work, some published under his nom de plume, Will Townsend. The works include more than 500 published articles and photo features, 20 plays, three books, three films and 20 View-Master reels. Awards included an honorary doctorate from the School of the Ozarks, the Pioneer Award from the Branson Chamber of Commerce, and posthumous induction into the Missouri Photojournalism Hall of Fame.

When asked once why he kept coming back to the Ozarks, Godsey smilingly replied with an old Ozarks saying, “I had drunk branch water” (Stubblefield). In other words, the Ozarks had cast a spell on him from which there was no escape.

Photo courtesy of College of the Ozarks

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A Conversation with Louis Allen: Wainwright, Historian and Founder of The Wagon Project

by Hayden Head



Founder of The Wagon Project

The Springfield Wagon Company was founded in 1872 and grew into Springfield's second largest employer. The factory stretched from Booneville to Campbell and lay three blocks north of the downtown square. I'm not sure exactly how many men worked there, but I can tell you a story of sorts. The spokes of the wagon wheels were turned on offset lathes that gave the spokes their elliptical shape. A hickory stock could be lathed in a matter of seconds. Anyhow, when a spinning stock reached a certain speed, it would give off a high whine and when it did, every one of those workers would hit the floor, because that sound meant a flying spoke was about to spin across the room at something like 100 miles an hour and at just about head height. It always pays to understand the sound of your machinery.

-- Louis Allen

Louis Allen, Ozarks native and resident of Rockaway Beach, Missouri, just might know more about the Springfield Wagon Company than anyone else alive. And his knowledge is not limited to the history and cultural significance of the Springfield wagon: A skilled woodworker by trade, Louis can also take the scraps of a ruined wagon and restore them into a perfect facsimile of the original. He founded The Wagon Project as a nonprofit enterprise to teach aspiring wainwrights—wagon builders—everything they need to know about reconstructing and preserving the wagons. The following is my conversation with Louis.

Louis, tell us how you became interested in the Springfield Wagon Company.

I don't know if you remember, but about 25 years ago, a Renaissance theme park called Camelot opened and closed in Blue Eye, Missouri. The street performers—many of whom ended up camping in my backyard—suggested converting it into a Western-style theme park, and so I consulted with a man from New York about that possibility. Well, this fellow had been a carriage driver earlier in his career, and he was the one who told me about the Springfield wagon. I grew up in Springfield and hadn't even heard of it!

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What was it about the Springfield wagon that captured your imagination?

For starters, the Springfield Wagon Company was Springfield's first manufacturer. When the railroad came to Springfield, a few savvy businessmen realized that farmers, craftsmen, trappers—anybody who hauled anything—would need wagons to carry their goods to the railhead. So that's how the factory got its start. At the peak of wagon use, there were over 800 wagon factories across the country, and the wagon that dominated all others was the Springfield wagon. Here's an interesting trivia fact: A lot of those wagon companies shifted into automobile production. Studebaker, for example, began as a wagon company, as did Buick. Even the Springfield Wagon Company shifted to the production of trucks; a 1941 catalog shows the Campbell "Humping to Please" trailer trucks.

And how did the Springfield wagon come to dominate the market?

A lot was advertising boast—they advertised quality, and they were good salesmen. When other wagons were selling for \$55, the Springfield wagon sold for \$65, and that \$10 up-charge represented a week's wages. Then the Springfield Wagon Company bought out Peter Settler, another wagon manufacturer, and with it the name of the Old Reliable. For pioneers making their way out West, you can't have a better name than that! But the Springfield company also hired good craftsmen, so they lived up to their hype.

When most people think of wagon trains, they think of Conestoga wagons, which were manufactured in Pennsylvania. You can thank the movies for that. Conestogas were noted for their freight abilities, and though they had the same wheelbase—59 and 5/8 inches—as other wagons, the Conestoga was 12 feet



long. By contrast, the Springfield wagon was 3 feet by 10 feet. And there was a reason for that. Each inch of depth in a Springfield wagon box represented one bushel. That way when the wagons pulled up to the trading post, the merchant could stick a yardstick down into the grain and know how many bushels were in the wagon. The wagon bed of a Conestoga, on the other hand, was bow-shaped; some people have speculated they were shaped that way because they were built by shipwrights. That's a good story; it's just not true. The bottom of the bed was shaped more or less like a boat, so

when you hit a bump, your belongings would shift to the interior of the wagon instead of falling off the sides.

Conestogas were good for well-traveled paths, but the smaller Springfield wagon was much better for uncharted territory, what we call "off-road" today. Wagon builders also adapted the wheels to the terrain. Wagon wheels in Oklahoma and Texas might be as wide as 4 inches because the soil was sandy. In the Ozarks, however, the wheels would be much thinner so the horses or mules could pull the wagon more easily through mud; the wheels would sink down and find the rock base and not bog down. You could more easily go over a downed tree in a Springfield wagon. It was just more maneuverable.

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How many Springfield wagons are left to us today?

Well, that's impossible to say but not many. Over 200,000 wagons were manufactured by the Springfield Wagon Company, but most are gone now. That's the problem: Like so much of our local Ozarks history, the memory of the Springfield wagon is all but lost. In some ways, however, the wagons are still very much with us. I'll give another interesting piece of trivia: Rocket shuttle boosters are undersized because they have to be shipped on railways, and the rails are 59 and 5/8 inches apart. Sound familiar?

You said that's the wheelbase of the wagon.

Exactly. What happened was that when America was building her rail system, we bought our equipment from England. Their rail equipment was adapted from their road equipment. And their road equipment was adapted to the ruts that chariots left in roads built by the Romans. Those chariot wheels were, you guessed it, 59 and 5/8 inches apart, about the width of two horse rumps. So, in a way, you can say that wagons will always be with us.

Tell us more how the wagons shaped the culture of the Ozarks.

For one thing, the little towns that sprang up around here were spaced about 5 miles apart. A team pulling a wagon could go from one town to the next and back again in about a day. A 10-mile trek meant an overnight stay somewhere. And in fact, encampments grew up all over the Ozarks. A famous encampment was at Delawaretown on the James River. A wagon team could make it from Springfield to Delawaretown in about a day and another day would take you to Branson or Kimberling City. By the way, Delawaretown was also the site of the first trading post in the Ozarks. The Menards founded the trading post, but I don't think they are any relation to the Menards we are familiar with today.

And of course, the wagons were used at the harvest. The wagon would be driven over a row of corn called the down row, leaving a row standing on either side of the wagon. The corn would be plucked and thrown into the wagon from both sides; the young'uns—usually, 6 to 8 years old—followed the wagon and picked the down row, the corn stalks that had been pushed down. Sometimes, a board would be mounted on one side of the wagon—it was called the banger board—and the corn would be thrown in from the other side only. That way, if the corn was tossed too high, it would hit the banger board and fall into the wagon. In many ways, a wagon was more efficient and less expensive to put in the field than a truck. I heard of a family in Bois D'Arc that used draft horses and a wagon to harvest corn up until a couple of years ago.

fall into the wagon. In many ways, a wagon was more efficient and less expensive to put in the field than a truck. I heard of a family in Bois D'Arc that used draft horses and a wagon to harvest corn up until a couple of years ago.

But eventually, automobiles and farm machinery spelled the end of the wagon.

Of course. As I said before, it wasn't the railroads that made wagons unnecessary; if anything, they spurred the production of wagons. And surprisingly enough, World War II was good for wagon factories,

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because rubber and fuel were required for the war effort. Wagons used neither. But eventually, the machines won out. About the railroads, I have another digression you might find interesting, though it doesn't really concern wagons. Do you know where the Frisco line got its logo?

I have no idea.

It was either at the depot in Monett or the one in Marionville where the stationmaster stretched the hides of animals he trapped on the side of the depot. Frisco was looking for a logo—I'm not sure what they would have called a logo in those days—and one of the bosses saw the tacked down hides and thought it would make a fitting symbol.

Interesting!

Well, that's the sort of history we're in danger of losing.

Which makes the perfect segue to The Wagon Project, which, as I understand it, is the nonprofit you established to preserve the history of the Springfield Wagon.



That's right. When I became aware of the Springfield Wagon Company and the important role the Springfield wagons played in almost everyone's life, I wanted to commemorate both. But then I realized that the rapid disappearance of the physical wagons made something more than commemoration necessary. That's when I decided to apply my woodworking skills to rebuilding the wagons. My goal is ultimately to have a teaching shop where I can teach a younger generation how to restore the old wagons while visitors watch the process.

What's more, there is a real need for the preservation of these wagons. As you know, people love re-enactments and Cosplay where they dress up in period costumes and relive history as authentically as possible. Well, you can't re-enact a Civil War battle or the settling of the West or the journey of Laura Ingalls Wilder without wagons. It would be like trying to re-enact the lunar landing without rockets. Participatory recreation seems to me the best means of preserving this important piece of Ozarks history.

Where can people go to learn more about The Wagon Project?

They can call me at 417-689-7345 or write to me at P.O. Box 24, Rockaway Beach, MO 65740.

Thank you so much for your time and sharing your vision with us.

My pleasure. I very much appreciate the work the Hillcrofters is doing to preserve the best of the Ozarks.

-- Photos courtesy of Hayden Head

In Memoriam: Layne Morrill

Our board of directors lost a valuable colleague and good friend when Layne Morrill died on January 30, 2021. Layne will be dearly missed. Even with the mobility challenges he faced due to health issues, Layne always managed to attend our events and to enjoy visiting with members.



Layne had deep roots in these Ozarks hills. His great-grandfather was the iconic Levi “Uncle Ike” Morrill of “The Shepherd of the Hills” fame. Layne loved his Ozarks home and cared about preserving not only his Morrill family history but also conserving the Lakes region and the country depicted in “The Shepherd of the Hills.”

Layne made promoting the Ozarks his life’s work, and it would take a book to cover all of his accomplishments. He was a realtor and developer in the Branson Tri-Lakes area for many years. He was politically active and served his community on many boards of directors. He was a director for the White River Valley Electric Cooperative and for decades strongly advocated for the rural electric cooperative system.

Additional details about Layne Morrill’s life can be found in the obituary provided by the Stumpff Funeral Home in Kimberling City, Missouri, which is available at <https://www.stumpfffuneral.com/obituary/robert-morrill-sr>.

Book Release Mark Kumming

Mark Kumming announces the 2020 release of his book “Hee Haw Theater, Branson, Missouri: Ozark Showcase for the TV Stars.” The book serves as both history and memoir. The Hee Haw Theater operated in Branson from 1981 to 1983, and Kumming was the concession manager for almost the entire three-year run.

According to Kumming, the venue occupies an unusual place in the history of live music theaters in Branson. It essentially is the “missing link” because it bridged the gap between the family-owned and operated theaters of the 1960s and 1970s as well as the trend of celebrity owned/leased-and-operated theaters that began with Roy Clark’s Celebrity Theatre.

The Hee Haw Theater was the brainchild of Tom Lutz, a writer for the popular country music variety show “Hee Haw” that aired in syndication on national television from the late 1960s through the early 1990s. Lutz resided in the Ozarks. He believed that a “Hee Haw” theater featuring stars from the TV show would be well received in Branson. He pitched the idea to the TV show’s producers. He then supervised construction of the theater and managed it when it opened to the public.



The theater was the first venue to feature nationally known country music and comedy performers at each show. It became the Ozarks showcase for the “Hee Haw” TV stars. Lutz was also among the first theater operators in Branson to have experimented (unsuccessfully) with offering off-season shows in November and December of 1981. Hee Haw cast member George “Goober” Lindsey wrote in his autobiography that Hee Haw Theater was “ten years before its time.”

During its run, the Hee Haw Theater showcased more than a dozen of the TV stars who appeared on “Hee Haw.” More than a dozen of the stars performed in Branson, including cast members LuLu Roman, Archie Campbell, Grandpa Jones, Kenny Price, Cotton Ivy, Misty Rowe, Gordie Tapp, George Lindsey, The Hager Twins, Roni Stoneman, Gunilla Hutton, Grady Nutt, and Buck Trent. Individual TV cast members performed for one or two weeks before being replaced by another “Hee Haw” TV star.

The book is illustrated with dozens of photographs of the “Hee Haw” TV stars that appeared in Branson, along with house band members and theater employees. Mark Kumming, theater concession manager,

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tells the story as only tells the story as only an “insider” could. His book features many behind-the-scenes stories about the TV stars and theater staff.



former theater employees.

Included also are comments or photographs contributed by some well-known Branson entertainers of years past and present, including musicians Wayne Massengale, Mike McGee, Elaine Fender-Smith, Randy Plummer, Kerry Blue Blumer, comedian and actor Jack McDowell, “Hee Haw” cast member Cotton Ivy, and Branson sound and light engineer “Captain” Joe Millington, and several

Contact Information: The book may be purchased at amazon.com or through Mark Kuming’s Ozarks Hills Press, 238 Lee Town Drive, Pea Ridge, AR 72751; phone 479-721-7741 or email markandjanette@cox.net. Contact Mark Kuming for additional information or to schedule an interview.

-- Photos courtesy of Mark Kuming.

Guidelines for Authors

For topic ideas, see areas of interest on page 1. Submit the manuscript as a Word document in Times New Roman 12 point, double-spaced. 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. 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. Be sure to include your name, address, phone number, and email address with your submission.

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