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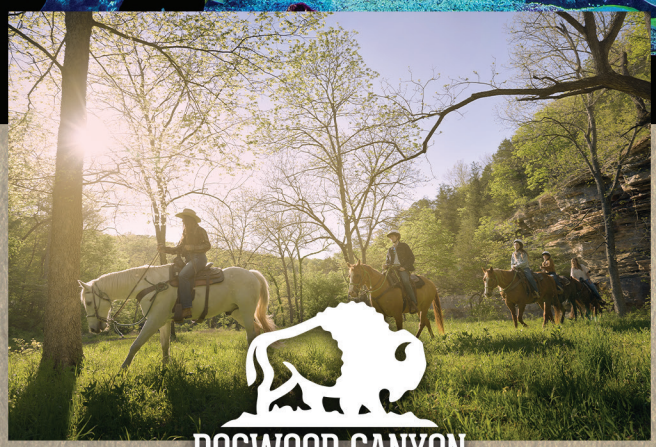
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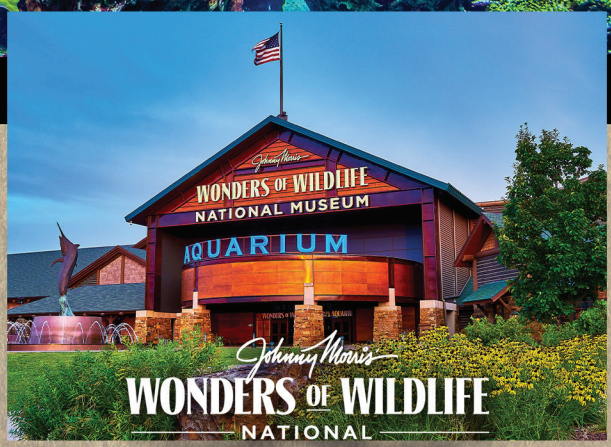
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FUJI/ISTOCK

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ON THE COVER

The Mennonite community in Versailles is a bustling hub filled with shopping, dining, and culture.

DIANA WEST

DREAM, EXPLORE, & DISCOVER

MISSOURI LIFE, Vol. 52, No. 3, 2025 (USPS#020181; ISSN#1525-0814) Published eight times a year in January, March, May, June, July, September, October, and November by Missouri Life Inc., PO Box 57, 208 Columbia Street, Rocheport, MO 65279 for $21.99. Periodicals postage paid at Rocheport, Missouri, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Missouri Life, PO Box 57, Rocheport, MO 65279. © 2022 Missouri Life. All rights reserved.

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Finding William

IT WAS LAST JULY WHEN I FIRST MET WILLIAM WELLS BROWN, a fugitive slave who was featured in my article "Reader, Are You an Abolitionist?" in our January/February 2025 edition.

I have always been entranced by US history. For example, Silver Dollar City in Branson has been a favorite location of mine since I can remember. Once a year in the summer, and some years in the fall as well, my family of six would travel from Columbia to the 1880s-based theme park in the Ozarks. Between weekend marathons of *Little House on the Prairie* and yearly visits to Silver Dollar City, my parents instilled in me a deep love and appreciation for the past (and for flower-patterned bonnets and covered wagons, of course). Because of my love for history, uncovering William's story was like striking gold.

One month after beginning my job at *Missouri Life*, I was knee-deep in searching for figures or stories based in Missouri related to the Underground Railroad. But I was having an exceptionally hard time finding any.

I slowly began to realize why I hadn't heard of Underground Railroad conductors who were Missourians; Missouri was a border state at the time, meaning that (very simply put) states to the north of Missouri were free states and states to the south were slave states. Missouri was a mixed-bag of political opinions and parties where you could never be quite sure who was a friend or foe. Amidst the rough waters of Missouri politics, Underground Railroad conductors kept their lives quiet and their secrets even quieter.

After weeks of searching, I was still having little luck. It seemed impossible to find Missouri-based stories with firsthand accounts, in-depth descriptions, or specific locations. That was, until I found William Wells Brown.

I had been spending my time looking for stories told in secret, but as it turns out, I was looking in the wrong place. I found William Wells Brown within a book published over 100 years ago, his autobiography written in 1847: *Narrative of William W. Brown, a Fugitive Slave.*

In one eight-hour workday, I read William's book, and it took me for quite the ride. His story was written so beautifully and with such intricate detail that I could see each moment play out like a movie in my mind as I read. Alone at my desk as afternoon dimmed into evening, I snickered at jokes that were cracked, internally raged as injustices were inflicted, and cried as friends were lost. My gut tightened as attempts to gain freedom failed, and I cheered when William finally crossed the border into Ohio. His account was just brimming with life. I knew it was a story that needed to be shared with our readers.

Along the way on my history adventure, I conducted a phone interview with Patrick F. Ryan, the cultural curator at The Richardson Olmsted Campus in Buffalo, New York, and an expert on William Wells Brown. We connected over our mutual interest in William's story, and he added a lot of valuable insight to my work.

The day I finished the feature (more than five months after I began writing it), I sent the PDF to Patrick for fact-checking. I had almost sent earlier versions of my story to Patrick several times before because I was just so excited to have him read the story. I ultimately decided to do it justice and send my best, most finalized work. After hitting "send," Patrick quickly emailed me back, and his reply shook me: "Coincidentally, today is the anniversary of William's death in 1884."

To me, it was no coincidence. I felt a sort of wink and smile from William at that moment. It was, perhaps, a silent, "Thank you for telling my story."

I love history because of moments like these: personal moments of connection with a time before I existed. Digging up history is, I believe, the closest thing we have to time travel. It makes the hours of research worth it when I get to hop into the time travel seat that the past offers up and let it take me to new people, new perspectives, and new passions. I hope to write about many other stories like William Wells Brown. If you know of other unsung heroes, let me know at Sydney@MissouriLife.com. I would love to tell their stories too.

Sydney graduated from Central Methodist University in the spring of 2024 with a bachelor of arts in professional writing and publication and a minor in comparative religion and philosophy. She began in July of that same year as a summer intern with *Missouri Life* and never left. Now the assistant editor, Sydney enjoys writing stories about people, travel, and of course, history.

Scan this code to read the story about William Wells Brown: *Reader, Are You An Abolitionist?*

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Straight From Our Readers

HIDDEN HISTORY

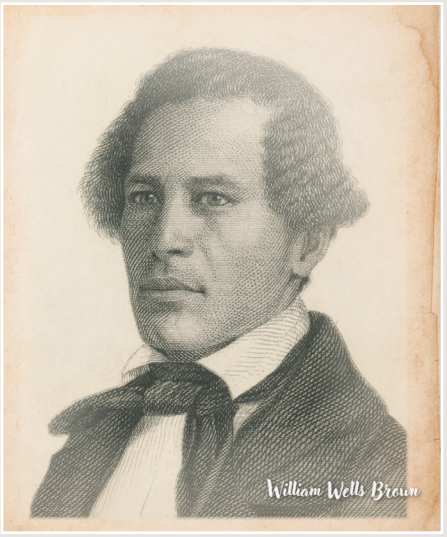
What a fantastic read in this month's issue of *Missouri Life*. As a retired high school history teacher, I am fascinated by the true story you wrote in regards to William Wells Brown ["Reader, Are You an Abolitionist?" January/February 2025]. Many of my students read the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* and were moved by his life experiences. This new account was riveting as well and appreciated since it focused on his life within our state. Thanks for writing this article and opening my eyes to another story of human endurance; when he last saw his mother, I felt the anguish of his despair. Thanks, Ms. Jones.

—Gail Gengler, Hillsboro

Thanks for publishing the article on the life of William Wells Brown. This is an important part of Missouri's history for people to know about. His is a phenomenal story about extreme challenges, survival, and eventual success as an author and playwright. His story should be an inspiration to all of us. Thanks again for sharing his story with us.

—Jan Buhrmann, Jacksonville, Illinois

I truly enjoyed the article about Mr. William Wells Brown. I grew up in Fayette and have lived in the state of California since the 1960s. I grew up during the Jim Crow era in Fayette and was happy to leave. My grandmother was the head cook at Central College and was called the best cook ever in town. Black people could not enroll in the college from the 1940s through the early 1960s. As a lifelong activist, I continue to participate in social justice issues in Fayette, which includes



establishing a monument in recognition of Lincoln School and establishing a yearly scholarship for students and teachers. I have also participated in several Juneteenth celebrations as grand marshal in Fayette. I have learned more about Missouri by reading *Missouri Life* magazine than by living there.

—Bernard Ashcraft, San Leandro, California

BRUTAL BATTLE

I enjoyed reading the article about the Civil War battles at Lexington and Lone Jack ["Two Battlefields in Two Days," January/February 2025]. My mother had the headstone placed on the grave of Bernard Greufe at the Lone Jack Civil War Cemetery. We had a ceremony that included the playing of taps by his great-great-great grandchildren. Four generations were present for the ceremony. Thank you for telling the story of such a sad time in American history. May such a time never be repeated!

—Judy Daugherty, Raymore

JOYFUL JOURNALISM

Andrea, I'm glad you are finding that being a J-school grad isn't all doom and gloom, and there are lots (and I mean lots) of good things that can, will, and do come from your chosen field ["I Am Proud of Journalism Again" November/December 2024]. As a '76 Missouri J-school grad, I can tell you it isn't all bad. I was in J-school when Woodward and Bernstein were kicking Dick Nixon out of office (look them up in your history book) and the times were good ... in fact, the times were great.

I worked for 10 years for Frank Martin II, son of the infamous Frank L. Martin of Missouri J-school library, in West Plains and his grandson, FLM III, at the *West Plains Daily Quill* and learned community journalism from the best. I learned journalism isn't a bad word, and even though I can't say much good right now about much of the national media, it is still a respected profession in many, many circles.

I enjoyed your column and am glad you are proud of what you and the others there at *Missouri Life* create with each issue. It is, indeed, a great publication and destined for greater things in the future. Don't forget that.

—Tony Dolle, Mount Juliet, Tennessee

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Missouri Loves You to Death

Missouri has a wide range of potentially deadly venomous and poisonous threats.

4–6

Elevate your injured limb this many inches above your heart if a venomous snake bites you.

2

The northern cottonmouth typically lives in these areas in Missouri: the swamps and oxbow lakes of southeastern Missouri and the rocky streams and river sloughs of the southern Ozarks.

7

It can take up to this many days to see the full effect of a bite from the venomous brown recluse spider.

2

Missouri is home to this many species of black widow spiders: the northern black widow and the southern black widow (at right).

71

This is the number of toxic plants that can be found in Missouri.

2–5

The stalk of a big red false morel, a poisonous mushroom found in Missouri, typically grows to be this length in inches. This mushroom looks similar to the edible true morel.

5

The poisonous common water hemlock has flowers with this many white petals in compound umbels that span 2–5 inches.

60

Poison ivy can reach this many feet tall as a climbing vine.

ISTOCK/D. BISHOP

Read about more venomous and poisonous threats in the story "Beauty with a Bite" on page 46.

SOURCES: *Missouri Poison Center, Missouri Department of Conservation*

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1

YELLOWSTONE'S MISSOURIAN

Chance Gilliland never expected to be a cowboy or an actor, especially for the *Yellowstone* series.

Chance and his brother Colten first learned how to ride horses from their parents, George and Julie, in their hometown of Bonne Terre. After developing a passion for riding, Chance moved to California where he worked at a nonprofit that saves wild horses.

"Growing up, even though I loved horses, my brother and dad were like the real cowboys. I was more into motorcycles and surfing," Chance says. "Now it's come full circle, and I've gone full cowboy and come back to my roots."

But tragedy struck in 2019 when Chance was seriously injured in a riding accident at his parents' ranch and needed a spinal fusion. After recovering, Chance worked at a ranch in Wyoming where he eased back into riding on a paint horse named Toby.

Chance and Toby were western wear internet influencers when a casting crew saw them online and reached out. Chance then landed his first acting job as a cowboy in a mini-series called *1883*, which is a spin-off of the popular western show *Yellowstone*. The series takes place after the Civil War and details the lives of the Dutton family as they join a wagon train toward Oregon. It also shows how the Yellowstone Ranch in *Yellowstone* came to be.

Since then, Chance has appeared as a cowboy in *Yellowstone*, Season 5; in *1923*, another spin-off series of *Yellowstone*; and as a rider and background actor in *Horizon: An American Saga—Chapter 1*, a Kevin Costner film.

"The resurgence of western shows and movies has impacted my life," Chance says. "Someone from Bonne Terre doesn't think they can go to Hollywood and be a stunt guy in the movies."

Life has gone back to the beginning for Chance, who is named after John Wayne's character John T. Chance in the 1959 western film *Rio Bravo*.

—Pam Clifton

Chance Gilliland rides his horse, Storm, when he returns home from working out west. His mom, Julie, took this photo.

JULIE GILLILAND

2

HOME ON THE RANGE

Dunn Ranch Prairie in Hatfield offers a beautiful, tranquil backdrop as visitors drive the gravel roads bordering its vast prairie. Along the road, travelers will see a fenceline adorned with several cautionary signs warning against the very thing they are hoping to catch a glimpse of: bison.

It's difficult to tell what is more impressive to see: the herd of massive bison grazing on the horizon or the seemingly endless sea of grasses beyond them. The breathtaking view of land is what some of the state's first explorers might have encountered, undoubtedly feeling the same awe as they walked through rolling waves of big bluestem, Missouri's colorful, deep-rooted grass system.

Today, Dunn Ranch Prairie, which is owned by the Missouri Prairie Foundation, offers 4,000 acres of grasslands. The sprawling ecosystem has over 300 native grasses, sedges, and trees and is home to prairie regulars like the show-stopping bison, as well as avian friends like the meadowlark, bobolink, Henslow's sparrow, and prairie chicken. Besides driving along the prairie, visitors can get a great view of the peaceful expanse by hiking the half-mile long Lordi Marker Prairie nature trail and heading up to the observation deck.

The bison were brought to Dunn Ranch in 2011 by The Nature Conservancy, who transported 30 genetically pure species from Wind Cave National Park, South Dakota. The herd has been steadily growing, with over 200 bison today. Brett Perkins, grazing and grasslands coordinator, says bison are their partners at Dunn Ranch Prairie. "A lot of these other species—the birds and critters that occupy this landscape now—could not exist without the bison's presence here."

—Danielle Bopp

To learn more about the area, visit Nature.org.

3

NOVINGER'S COAL MINING PAST

Novinger, in Adair County, is historically known for some of the most successful coal mining in Missouri. Adair County and neighboring counties were home to over 50 recorded coal mines between the years of 1880 and 1966, with Adair County holding the title of third largest producer of coal in the state in 1912. Besides overall coal production, Novinger had the last working deep-shaft mine in the state—the Billy Creek Coal Mine—which was in operation from 1880 to 1966.

On the west side of Novinger, travelers can follow Coal Street, which leads to the Novinger Log Homestead. There, visitors can peek through the windows of a replicated homestead similar to what an early coal miner would have used. One block away from that is the Coal Miners Museum, a quaint stop that tells the story of coal mining and the coal miners that founded the town.

Inside, visitors can experience a simulated coal mine, a blacksmith shop, a library for genealogical research, and donated local farm tools and other memorabilia—such as the massive Novinger City Bank vault from the early 1900s. In the library, visitors can learn about the surprising Italian immigrant population that worked the local mines and the key role of Novinger as a railroad stop for the Missouri and Pacific Railroad in Quincy.

"You could walk through here a dozen times and still find something new to look at," says David Novinger, president of the museum's board and a descendant of town founder John Novinger.

—Danielle Bopp

For more information, visit CityOfNovinger.com.

DANIELLE BOPP

Ambassadors met for lunch at Arrow Rock.

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Missouri Life is seeking volunteer ambassadors who love our state and want to help spread the word about *Missouri Life*. Join dozens of other volunteer ambassadors who represent their counties by sharing story ideas with us, helping us find special people and places, and more. We hold lunch meetings with ambassadors, and you'll receive *Missouri Life* swag. On our website, ambassadors receive a write-up about them and their county. To check whether your county has an opening and apply to be an ambassador, visit *MissouriLife.com/ambassador.*

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Artist Michelle "Mike" Ochonicky from Eureka practices the rare art of scrimshaw. Scrimshaw is the early American art of etching or carving patterns into whale teeth or bone. Mike's hand-etched scrimshaw bookmarks are made of environmentally friendly materials, such as recycled piano keys and cow bone. Find her art in our shop.

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***Missouri Life* has paid to plant over 1,000 trees in the past two years to replace those used to make this magazine.**

Good Finds, Groceries, and a Greenhouse

This family-owned business has local produce, unique finds, and homemade baked goods.

STORY *Sydney Jones*

From top, the Shirk's Greenhouse rotates its plant selection seasonally. The aisles inside the market are stocked with canned goods from local farmers along with a large selection of dried pasta, snacks, and more. Even in the wintertime, blossoming flowers and lush hanging baskets can be found growing inside the greenhouse. Missouri-made items, like Blackberry Hill Farm's apple butter, are featured.

Hidden along Highway 50 in the small community of Centertown is Shirk's Country Market and Shirk's Greenhouse. The market and greenhouse are family owned and offer flourishing plants, homemade sandwiches stacked high with fresh toppings, a large selection of bread and pastries that are baked daily, and specialty items from over 40 local vendors that line the shelves. Shirk's has served up great quality baked goods, lush greenhouse-grown plants, and friendly hospitality for more than 20 years.

While many people travel to Shirk's for the greenhouse plants, the produce, and the canned goods, co-owner Randy Shirk says that one of its major selling points is the bakery.

From the ovens wafts the scent of freshly kneaded dough being baked into bread. It is then sliced and bagged for sale or placed at the build-your-own-sandwich bar in the deli where it awaits the next hungry customer. Similar to a Subway, but with a home-grown twist, customers can order sandwiches, choosing their bread, meat, cheese, toppings, and sauce to create their lunch. Customers can also purchase old-fashioned sodas and bags of chips to complete their filling midday meal. Along with the fresh-baked bread, Shirk's staff also bakes pies, such as strawberry rhubarb, gooseberry, and lemon meringue, which are available year-round.

Many of the products sold at Shirk's are from local businesses, including Buttonwood Farm's fresh eggs, Three Story Coffee, and Blackberry Hill Farm's apple butter. Shoppers can also browse through local nonfood products like Amish-made, eco-friendly patio furniture made with Polywood, handmade wooden cutting boards, and home decor items.

Shirk's Country Market focuses on supporting local farmers by bringing in fruit and vegetables that are grown in Missouri. In the summertime, Shirk's carries Missouri-grown peaches from Bader Farms and Amish-grown strawberries by the crate. In the fall, it offers Missouri-grown Jonathan apples. Just a few feet from Shirk's Country Market is its sister store: Shirk's Greenhouse. The greenhouse is a large metal structure with multiple different spaces where customers can browse or shop year-round. The greenhouse employees work year-round to grow flowers, potted plants, herbs, and more.

During holiday seasons, the garden center carries specialty plants, including pumpkins, gourds, and mums in the fall; poinsettias and Christmas cacti in the winter; and hibiscus and sunflowers in the summer. "Spring is by far our busiest season with Mother's Day as the peak. The whole winter our eyes are on spring," says Michael Shirk, general manager of Shirk's Greenhouse.

Shirk's Greenhouse is both a grower and a retailer, and the business grows a wide variety of plants on-site. "The most rewarding part about the business is being able to grow a beautiful product that brings joy to our customers," Michael says.

Alongside the plants, Shirk's Greenhouse sells pots in all shapes and sizes, plant stands, watering cans, plant seeds, and plant bulbs.

"I believe our greenhouse is special because we are a family-owned business that started from the ground up, and we are blessed for the livelihood it provides for us and our community," Michael says.

Visit Shirk's Country Market and Greenhouse in person at 345 Route U, Centertown, or browse the website: ShirksCountryMarket.com.

SYDNEY JONES, SHIRK'S GREENHOUSE

MissouriLife TV

Available on YouTube

Take the journey to Lexington, Missouri, founded over 200 years ago on the bluffs overlooking the Missouri River. This town is a one-stop shop for all things history, entertainment, and dining. Join us as we dine at the beautifully restored 1884 bank building, Ten Twelve Main, which offers a menu featuring locally grown beef. Together, we will also relax at the River Reader Bookstore, which invites visitors in with the allure of a comfortable atmosphere full of books and coffee. A tour of Rasa Orchards will entice you to come and experience locally grown apples and peaches. Join us on a trolley tour highlighting the town's monuments and historic homes—one such home is the Anderson House, located on a former Civil War battleground.

Historic Courthouse

The Anderson House

Host Meredith Hoenes

Madonna of the Trail Monument

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Here Comes the Bridal Cave!

Bridal Cave offers a place for weddings, cave tours, and other outdoor fun.

STORY *Andrea Kaneko*

When people walk into the gift shop at Bridal Cave, an active cave in Camdenton, they are met with stacks of binders organized by date that are overflowing with photos. One binder holds a black-and-white photo of a couple from the 1950s, complete with the iconic women's pin curl hairstyle, while another has a photo of a couple from the 1980s, who are both wearing oversized Coke bottle glasses. No matter the decade, each picture depicts a couple who got married inside the Bridal Chapel of Bridal Cave.

"We host several weddings a year. We've hosted over 4,500 of them to date, and they started about nine months after we opened up for tourism in 1949," says Lindsey Webster-Dillon, public relations and events manager for the cave. "We get couples from around the world."

The Bridal Chapel area of the cave, which is in front of a large drapery formation called the Pipe Organ, isn't meant to fit more than about 40 people, but the first wedding brought about 117 people. "That first wedding was probably so far outside of the box that it really drew quite a crowd," Lindsey says.

While Bridal Cave is known for being a unique wedding venue, it also offers electric-lit, lantern-lit, or black-light tours of the cave's cascading stalactites and rising stalagmites. Visitors can take an almost hour-long tour along a half-mile, paved walkway that snakes through the cave. The walkway follows the natural curves and tight spaces of the cave, making many areas along the tour quite narrow. The path leads visitors about 200 feet underground, past mineral formations and clear pools.

"It's always 60 degrees inside of the cave. So if it is winter and it is 10 degrees outside, it is still 60 degrees. If it is summer and it is 110 degrees, it is still 60," Lindsey says. "It's a nice even-temperature activity to do."

From top, the first wedding held in the cave's Bridal Chapel was in 1949 for Mr. and Mrs. Basil H. Cole; the same area is still used as a ceremony space today. The clear pool, named Mystery Lake, hosts an old wooden structure that lies on its floor. Couples can get married in front of a large drapery formation called the Pipe Organ.

Besides the cave, the area also features gemstone mining, a half-mile nature trail through Thunder Mountain Park, a gift shop, an observation deck with a view of the Lake of the Ozarks, and an outdoor classroom.

Missouri has more than 7,000 caves, which is why it is known as the cave state. Bridal Cave is one of the thousands of cave systems that make Missouri ... well, Missouri!

To learn more about the Bridal Cave and Thunder Mountain Park, visit BridalCave.com.

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What's the Buzz?

A local beekeeper shares his love for honeybees, beekeeping courses, and creamed honey.

STORY *Sydney Jones*

Jeremy Bradshaw is the owner and sole caretaker of the 150 beehives and approximately one million bees that make up his business, Humble B, in Poplar Bluff. The catch? He's allergic to them.

Jeremy's unexpected adventure with hives began in 2018. "A friend of mine had some beehive boxes, and so he asked to put his bees on my farm," Jeremy says. "At first I was like, 'I'm allergic to them, to be honest with you.'" Eventually, Jeremy ended up taking his friend's beehives but placed them on land far away from his house. "I stayed a long ways away from them, but then I got to reading and watching YouTube. Within a week, I had me a bee suit, and I was elbow deep in the hive. They just intrigued me."

As someone who is always onto the next project or adventure, Jeremy quickly grew an appreciation for the hardworking nature of bees. "Honeybees [worker bees] only live for six weeks during the prime collection part of the year," Jeremy says. "Everybody in the hive has a job, and the hive depends on all of them working together." He became fascinated by their way of life, each bee having a job to do and laboring hard to do it.

For Jeremy, the humming from the hives and the scent of the honey brings him a lot of peace. "I'm a hyper person really, and they kind of calm you down. It's very calming and relaxing to work a hive," he explains. "And when you first crack open the beehive and you smell the pollen and fresh nectar—the dried down honey—it's the best smell."

Jeremy's passion for beekeeping has grown ever since he became fascinated with beehives. In 2018, he decided to open his business, Humble B, where he harvests the "liquid gold" from his hives and sells it for others to enjoy.

Along with his growing love for honeybees, Jeremy has grown an appreciation for educating others about honeybees and the work that they do. Jeremy serves as the vice president of the Dexter Bee Club and teaches a beginners bee course so that others can learn the art of beekeeping. In this six- to eight-hour long class, he goes over the beekeeping equipment and what to expect when caring for a hive. Jeremy also offers an advanced course where students can put on bee suits, venture onto his farm, and physically work with the hives.

Top, Jeremy Bradshaw holds up a section of one of his hives. Jeremy presents at festivals and events around Missouri, bringing in live hives to show visitors how bees create their honey.

In addition to the beekeeping courses, Jeremy also does educational events. "I truly enjoy presenting to people that know nothing about them. I mean, you tell somebody it takes 12 bees their entire life to make one teaspoon of honey, and they have to visit almost a billion flowers to make that one teaspoon. It's just the amazement in their faces," he says. During his demonstrations, Jeremy covers the life cycle of a honeybee and the different types of honeybees.

Humble B sells a range of products from whole honeycombs to honey packaged in vintage Muth bottles. One of his most popular products, creamed

JEREMY BRADSHAW

honey, is commonly sold to people who prefer a lighter honey option that is flavored. "It's sometimes hard to sell the raw, so I got into making creamed honey. We have seven different flavors," he notes. Humble B's creamed honey flavors include traditional creamed honey, jalapeño, strawberry, elderberry, blackberry, chocolate, and cinnamon. Jeremy regularly ships creamed honey all over the United States, with sales spanning from California to New York.

Humble B sells honey products from its website, and also in person at farmers' markets across the state. Its products can be found on the shelves of over 50 stores around Missouri, such as Opys in Ellington, Archer Gift Co. in Poplar Bluff, and The Nature Cottage in Piedmont.

For more information, visit HumbleBLLC.com or Humble B on Facebook.

Left, Jeremy Bradshaw's Humble B honey products are sold at farmers' markets across the state. Below, Humble B's honey classes take place on Jeremy's farm where he teaches alongside his wife, Kimberly. Hives are stored in boxes, typically constructed of wood. A single box can hold tens of thousands of bees. Jeremy, though allergic to them, regularly has a few thousand bees swarming him as he works with the hives.

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AN OPULENT ARTIST IN THE OZARKS

While looking for a Halloween wreath for her large front door, Air Force veteran Jane Weissner decided that she would make her own. Jane enjoyed the experience so much that she chose to keep crafting wreaths for future holidays. When July rolled around, she began to make patriotic-themed wreaths and—after encouragement from her daughter—began to offer them for sale on Etsy. "They started selling like crazy," Jane says. After moving to Branson from Arizona in 2022, Jane's business, Ritzy Glitzy Wreaths, boomed, eventually reaching over 2,500 wreaths having been sold through her online store. Jane takes inspiration for her wreaths from the nature surrounding her in Branson, but it's the feeling that she gets while creating that keeps her crafting. "It's good for me," she says. "I was diagnosed with stage one breast cancer, so it really helps me to just stay out of my head, put my mind somewhere else, and love what I do." *—Sydney Jones*

RitzyGlitzyWreaths.com

A LONG-LIVED BUTCHER LEGACY

Alewel's Country Meats began in 1932 as a small-town grocery store in downtown Concordia. Since then, Alewel's has moved to Warrensburg and remains a well-loved store for the locals. The original owner of Alewel's, Hugo Alewel, began his business with old family recipes from Germany. In 2017, Austin Alewel, a fourth generation Alewel, joined his father Randy in the business. The family now works with farmers from Springfield and Kansas City to provide fresh sausages, pork chops, smoked turkey legs, beef jerky, bacon-wrapped beef steak fillets, whole smoked chickens, whole hams, and much more.

"We've been in business now for 93 years, and that doesn't happen on a fluke," Austin says. "There's a lot of hard work that's gone into this." *—Sydney Jones*

Alewels.com

From left: Roger Alewel, Austin Alewel holding his son Walker, and Randy Alewel

JANE WEISSNER, ALEWEL'S COUNTRY MEATS

A WOODWORKING WONDER

Jon Ortmann began woodcrafting as a teenager and found a passion for the art. After working for years in the corporate world, he decided to go full time as a woodworking artist and open Ortmann Woodcraft in 2015 alongside his wife, Debbie.

The Ortmanns began showing their products at art shows and soon grew a following among people who like functional, high-end, wooden art pieces, including pens and engraved cutting boards. The Ortmanns were contracted to create President Donald Trump's inauguration pen for the 2016 election. "Ever since then, we have landed really cool and really unique government contracts with every walk of life," says Jon. "It's really cool because not only are you doing what you love, but they're relying on the quality of your product to be an impressive gift for somebody that they hold in very high regard." Visitors can see the Ortmann's showroom in Patton at 13552 State Highway 72. *—Sydney Jones*

OrtmannWoodcraft.com

AN ULTRAVIOLET UNDERTAKING

Winner, winner, marble printer! Marble Graphics in Jefferson City offers laser engravings and UV printing on awards, trophies, plaques, drinkware, name badges, and paperweights. The business, which was started in 1983, has been owned and operated for the last five years by Chris and Leslie Balk. Before the couple took over, the business would laser engrave and hand-paint products, which was a time consuming task. Leslie and Chris soon found a more efficient way to add color to items—UV printing. "It sped the process up. Now we are usually a two- to three-day turnaround for plaques or awards we have in stock," Chris says. "We can make our own plaques and awards. Nobody else does that in the state."*—Andrea Kaneko*

MarbleGraphics.com

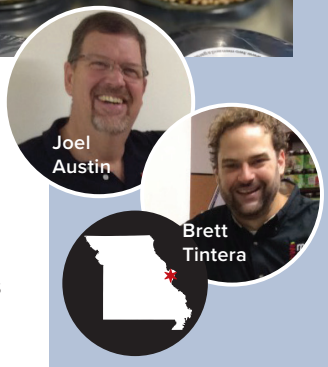
A START-UP WITH BRINY BEGINNINGS

Two Men and a Garden—a pickle and canned goods business—grew out of the discovery of a few old family recipes on notecards and a passion for being in the garden. Co-owners Brett Tintera and Joel Austin began gardening together in 2006 in St. Louis, attempting to create delicious canned goods for their own families. "It was trial and error for sure," Joel says. "Funny story about our dill pickles is that originally our recipe said 'two mustard seed.' To show you how clueless we are, we used two seeds. Later, of course, we realized it needed to be two teaspoons."

The two friends soon perfected their recipe and opened their own business: Two Men and a Garden. Joel's daughter, Tara, designed a Two Men and a Garden logo for the friends as a joke one Father's Day, but the name—and the original artwork—stuck. "We fell in love with it," Joel says. To this day, the logo is the same as the original.

Brett and Joel say they owe all their success to Chris and Mani Manes, the owners of the Greenhouse Market, a St. Louis-based produce shop. While organizing produce to sell one weekend, the women took a chance on Joel and Brett's pickles. "They sold out on the very first weekend," Joel says. "Our goal for the business was to make enough money from the greenhouse to buy a new tiller. It was an ambitious goal at the time!" The goal was met, and the business is still growing.

The Two Men and a Garden team have always chosen to include fresh ingredients and exclude preservatives in their products. "We've stuck to our original fresh, whole ingredients," Joel says. "We source fresh whole garlic and mince it for each and every batch," Joel adds. The owners pride themselves on offering products that do not contain preservatives. "We ask potential first-time buyers to read our ingredients list before buying. It's amazingly simple," Joel says. *—Sydney Jones*



ORTMANN WOODCRAFT, MARBLE GRAPHICS, TWO MEN AND A GARDEN

Save Room for Seafood

Truffle & Sorrel brings seafood to Sedalia.

STORY *Chef Daniel Pliska*

During the summer season, the restaurant hosts many musical performances. Chef Chris (at left) and some of his crew posed with Brody Buster, a nationally known blues musician.

I truly enjoy receiving recommendations on restaurants that are housed in historic buildings. Truffle & Sorrel, a seafood and chophouse restaurant, is one such establishment. Located in the historic Trust Building in downtown Sedalia, the restaurant was recommended to me by my chef friend, Curtis Adams from SGC Foodservice.

According to chef and owner of Truffle & Sorrel, Christopher Paszkiewicz, the building has a long history. He says, "Originally the Missouri Trust Building acquired the land and started building it in 1886. Missouri Trust Company failed, due to the Great Depression, and Sedalia Trust opened just six months later in 1932." In 2023, the back half of the building was demolished and replaced with a beautiful courtyard. In 2024, Chef Chris opened his restaurant Truffle & Sorrel.

Chef Chris's background in fine dining started in 2004 when he worked at the Hilton Ocala, a resort in the horse country of Florida. His career path then led him to the Hilton President Hotel in Kansas City, the Marriott at Kansas City's Country Club Plaza, and the 1886 Crescent Hotel in Eureka Springs, Arkansas. After that, he did a six-year stint as the executive chef at Hotel Bothwell in Sedalia, prior to opening Truffle & Sorrel. Having lived in both Florida and Arkansas, he specializes in southern-style seafood. The menu at Truffle & Sorrel reflects this with dishes such as the Charleston Shrimp & Grits, Classic Bacon-Wrapped Filet, and Connecticut Lobster Roll.

The menu at Truffle & Sorrel begins with starters, small plates, boards, and sides. One of the options that I found interesting was the Truffle & Sorrel Board, which consists of bone marrow, smoked pork belly, hatch chile sausage, grilled bread, Johnny cakes (a grilled or pan-fried cornmeal flatbread), pickled okra, pickled red onion, fried green tomatoes, white

The Truffle & Sorrel Board comes with bone marrow, pork belly, sausage, grilled bread, Johnny cakes, okra, red onion, and fried green tomatoes with white remoulade and barbecue sauce.

remoulade, and barbecue sauce. This is an intriguing combination of taste profiles. Another unique item to start with is the Caviar on Johnny Cakes topped with crème fraîche, red onions, chives, and chopped hard-boiled eggs.

The main courses include chops, steaks, and seafood items. Chef Chris says a popular meal is the smoked prime rib: a hefty one-pound thick slice of prime rib served with au jus, horseradish sauce, and a side of horseradish mashed potatoes, which accentuates the flavor of the prime rib.

Other meat options include the grilled lamb chops, southern fried chicken, and heritage bone-in pork chops, which are topped with peaches. The menu also has four kinds of Chef's Risotto, a selection of mac & cheese, and two different types of lobster rolls.

Another alluring option that the restaurant offers

TRUFFLE & SORREL

Above, the smoked prime rib is one of the most popular menu items. The food at Truffle & Sorrel could be paired with a drink from the bar: an old-fashioned, Tom Collins, Manhattan, Aperol spritz, or classic mojito. Below, Johnny cakes topped with caviar is one of the restaurants more unique appetizers.

is a Dinner for Two, which is served in the vault at Truffle & Sorrel. This unique experience comes with champagne and a four-course dinner with special menu options. Due to the special preparation of the chef's menu tastings, this option must be preordered by reservation.

Chef Chris says he currently carries around 30 whiskeys and bourbons. Some of the popular drinks with his guests are the: Smoked Old-Fashioned, Sazerac, Hurricane, and Planter's Punch.

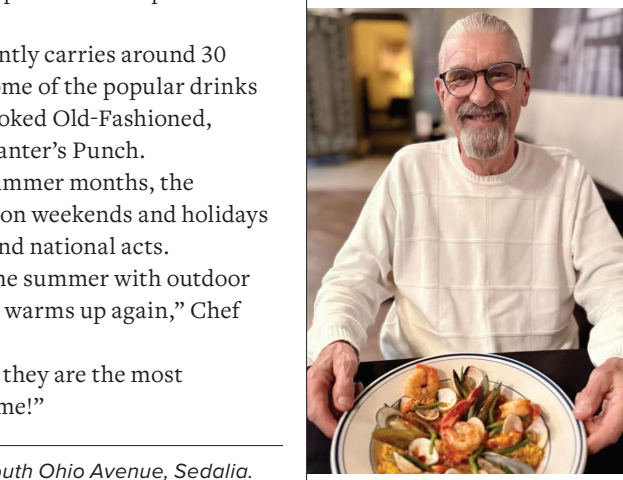
During the spring and summer months, the courtyard hosts live music on weekends and holidays with both local, regional, and national acts.

"I can't wait to kick off the summer with outdoor concerts when the weather warms up again," Chef Chris says.

"I cook for everyone like they are the most important person, every time!"

Visit the restaurant at 322 South Ohio Avenue, Sedalia. Find the restaurant's hours of operation for lunch and dinner at TruffleAndSorrel-Restaurant.com.

Truffle & Sorrel offers a seafood boil, which comes with a sumptuous amount of snow crab legs and shrimp, along with a variety of special dipping sauces and small sides.



Chef Chris strives to provide the best personalized service to his guests, including this seafood paella, which was requested for a frequent customer's birthday.

CHEF DANIEL PLISKA is a certified executive chef and author. He teaches culinary arts at Ozarks Technical Community College in Springfield.

The Rite of Spring

IF FALL IS THE SEASON of the hunter in Missouri, then spring is undoubtedly the season of the angler. If my grandfather, the late W. L. Dolle of Cape Girardeau, was anything, he was a fisherman. I'm told he fished in the fall, but I only remember fishing with him in the spring.

I remember the first of the many times my grandfather took me fishing before I was old enough to fish by myself. I was six and remember my father waking me in the predawn darkness of a cool spring morning to get dressed so I would be ready when my grandfather came to pick me up. I fumbled with my clothing in the darkness of my room and had to ask my dad to help me button my shirt and tie my shoes.

The wait seemed like forever as I sat on the back porch with my dad, knowing my grandfather was about to pull up at any moment and honk his horn, letting us know it was time to go. It was dark when my grandfather arrived at our two-story white house on Independence Avenue that morning, and it was dark when we returned.

My grandfather was methodical when it came to organizing his fishing gear in his car. His gear was ready to go as soon as we pulled up; no time was wasted sorting or assembling gear before we started fishing. He used an ancient Pfleuger bait-casting reel and a very stiff rod. He never had a backlash with the reel that I remember. The few times I was allowed to cast with it, well ... that's why it's called a bird's nest when a bait-casting reel backlashes.

My grandfather caught fish that day, something I learned to expect of him. In fact, I don't ever remember him losing one of any size. On the flip side of the fishing coin, I didn't catch a fish bigger than my small hand on our trip. In my mind's eye, I can still see his casts hitting their marks, while mine all too often fell short or worse—sailed into a nearby bush or snagged in an overhead tree.

I started skipping rocks when the fishing slowed that day, and my grandfather reminded me I was scaring the fish. I was a young boy with the attention span of a sour gnat, yet somehow, he tolerated my inattentive foolishness on that outing.

During the next two or three years we fished together several times—always in the spring.

A family move from Cape Girardeau to Poplar Bluff when I was nine wasn't a great distance away, but it was far enough that the fishing trips with my grandfather became few and far between.

During the ensuing years, we vowed to fish together each spring, but the promises were never kept. The social and extracurricular demands of high school, my enlistment in the US Air Force, the academic demands (not to mention the distance) while attending the University of Missouri–Columbia, and then the demands of a real-world job prevented me from keeping my end of the deal. Hindsight being 20/20, I could have skipped a Friday evening date in high school and made the short hour-long drive to take my grandfather fishing on a Saturday morning. His death in late spring of 1977 ended any chance of us fishing together again.

I still fish now and then, mostly in the spring. Surprisingly, I usually catch a fish or two. Sometimes the fishing gods smile upon me, and I catch a fish of bragging size. My casts, for the most part, find their marks, though I still manage to snag a tree or bush if I'm not paying attention. If the fishing is very slow, I still try my hand at skipping rocks across the water. I'm proud to say my rock skipping has improved quite a bit throughout the years.

But none of those things seem nearly as important today as they did when I was six years old, sitting on my back porch with my father in the predawn darkness of a cool spring morning, waiting for my grandfather to take me fishing.

I still fish now and then, mostly in the spring. Surprisingly, I usually catch a fish or two. Sometimes the fishing gods smile upon me, and I catch a fish of bragging size.

BY TONY DOLLE
FOREVER FISHING

TONY DOLLE

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The Power of Secrets

A *Missouri Life* staff member explores the destructive force of secrets and the healing power of truth.

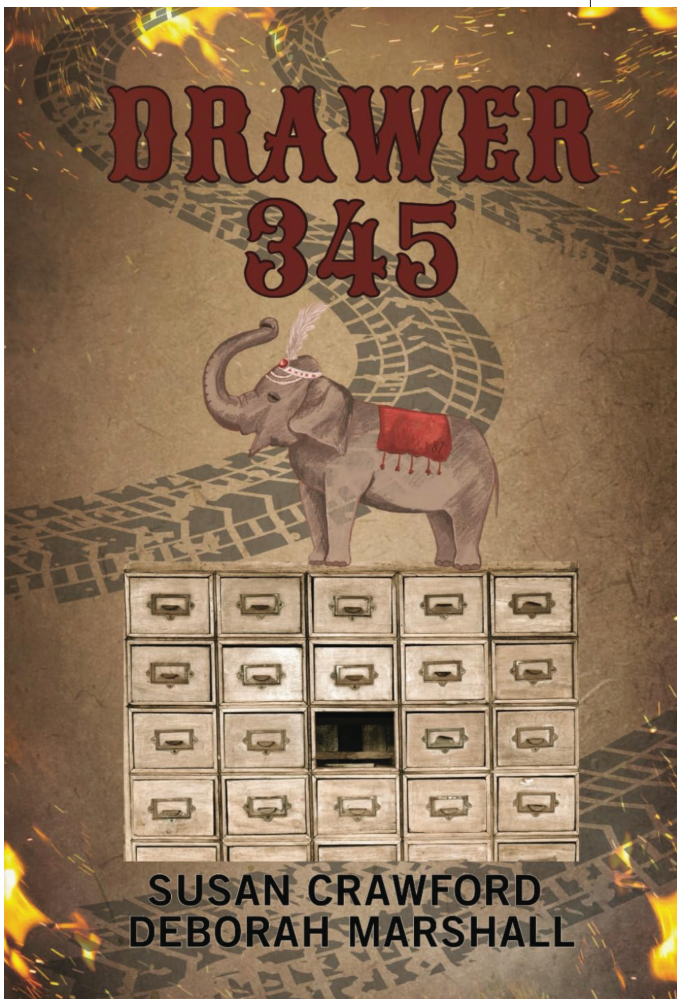
REVIEW BY *Evan Allen Wood*

We often encounter the phrase "what you don't know can't hurt you," or some variation of it, in the dialogue of movies and television shows. Usually, it's heard right before the events unfolding in the story prove just how much a secret harms those it is kept from. The concept has basically attained cliché status at this point, while a related question remains unsettled: How much damage can one secret do?

Drawer 345, penned by *Missouri Life*'s own vice president of sales and development, Deborah Marshall, along with her sister Susan Crawford, provides one answer to this question. In this book, the authors tell the secret history of their families, who reside in Missouri, tracing them back to the middle of the 19th century. As the tale unfolds in chronological order, the lives of each character interweave, setting in motion the puzzling circumstances of the present.

As they outline in the book's epilogue, Deborah and Susan undertook a search for their father's biological parents, and in part, finding them came to fruition because of fateful timing and the kindness of strangers.

DRAWER 345
Deborah Marshall and Susan Crawford, 178 pages, memoir, Neleh LLC, paperback (6 by 9 inches), $19.95.



THE PUBLISHER

What their search yielded comprises the contents of the book: a circus-owning family's meteoric rise, the troubles of its subsequent generations, love stories, elopements, children given up to an orphanage, ties with organized crime figures like Al Capone, and an adoption carried out under extremely dubious circumstances.

As the narrative moves forward, it becomes clear that a secret can not only harm those it is kept from but it can also echo through generations and wreak havoc well after its keepers have passed away. But as the truth is revealed, other questions come to the surface: How transcendent is the power of honesty? Can it heal all the damage done by deception?

The story told in *Drawer 345* is a quintessentially American one, touching on and driven by many significant historical events of the 19th and 20th centuries.

Told in a straightforward and absorbing voice, it will likely feel relatable on some level to anyone who has undertaken genealogical research and uncovered intriguing details from the past. On the other hand, if you haven't yet had that exciting experience, this book could potentially serve as the inspiration to go digging, both for buried secrets and for the truth that they conceal.

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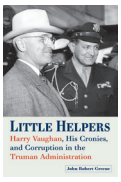
History Comes to Life

These books detail the history of Missouri towns and well-known figures.

HAMILTON, MISSOURI: A PLACE OF PRIDE AND PROGRESS, *Dennis Cox, 156 pages, historical nonfiction, Personal Chapters, hardcover (11 by 8.5 inches), $29.95.* Hamilton is the birthplace and boyhood home of J. C. Penney. This book uses historical and current photos, informational essays, and a detailed timeline to highlight the rich history of Hamilton and what gives it its allure. Details about the town's historic homes and the families that built them will interest history buffs.



LITTLE HELPERS: HARRY VAUGHAN, HIS CRONIES, AND CORRUPTION IN THE TRUMAN ADMINISTRATION, *John Robert Greene, 420 pages, historical nonfiction, University of Missouri Press, hardcover (6 by 9 inches), $40.* The presidency of Harry S. Truman, a Missouri native, is analyzed in this book along with how he interacted with General Harry H. Vaughan, who brought unreputable figures into the White House and carried out fraudulent activities. Truman was aware of what was occurring but seemingly turned a blind eye. The author uses primary and archival sources to describe Vaughan's scandals.

THE ADVENTURES OF HENRY YEAGER, *Henry Smith Yeager Jr., 164 pages, memoir, Scriptor Publishing Group, paperback (6 by 9 inches), $14.95.* Step back to a time without cell phones and television in this story about Henry Yeager's life in Kansas City and Arkansas. The author details his childhood in the 1930s and 1940s, including when he joined the US Marines at age 17. He paints a picture of what Kansas City was like during that time, as well as his experiences in adolescence and life. From mishaps to adventures, he details it all.

THE PUBLISHERS

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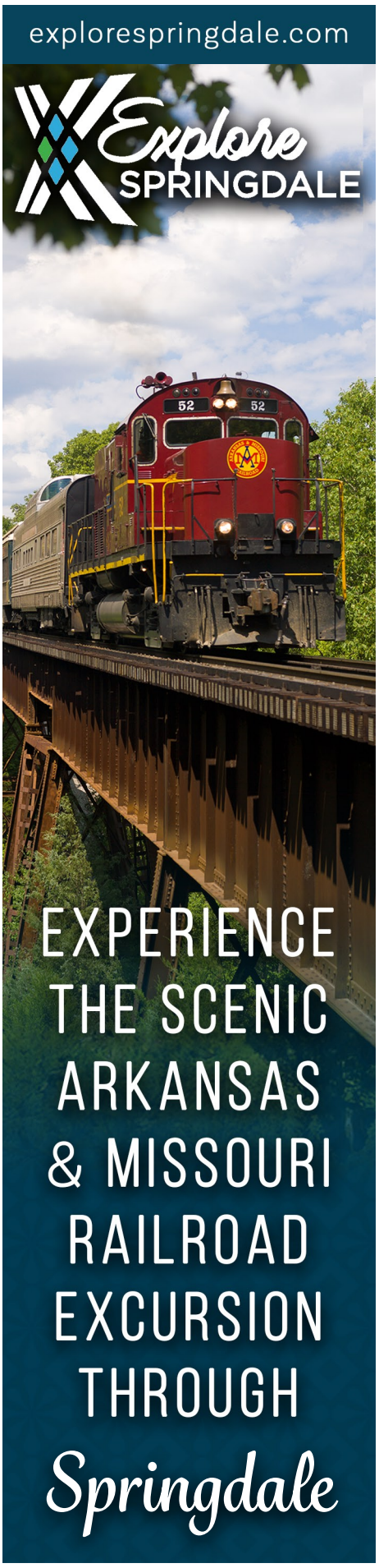
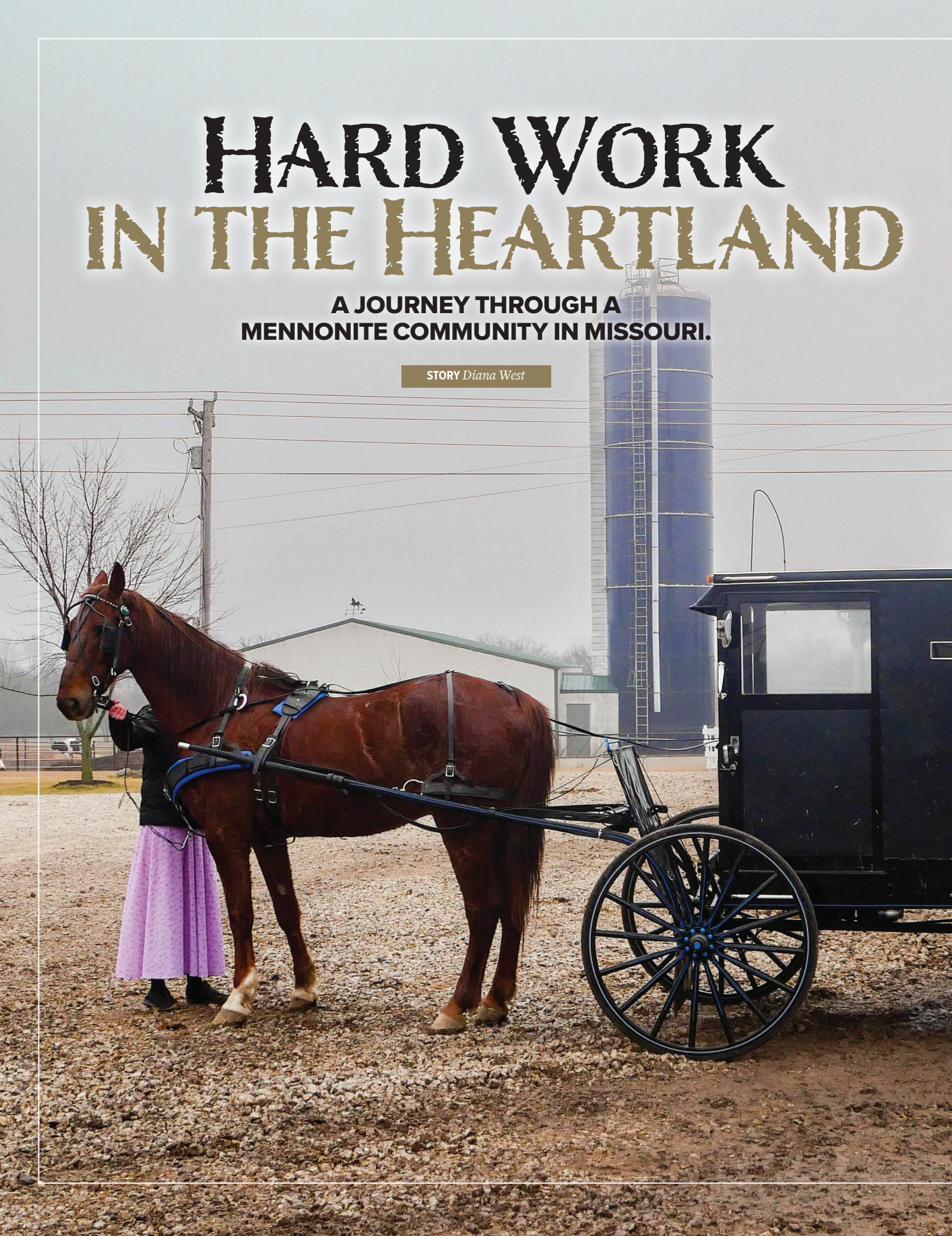


Hard Work in the Heartland

A JOURNEY THROUGH A MENNONITE COMMUNITY IN MISSOURI.

STORY *Diana West*



One-horse buggies are a common sight along roads near Versailles, Missouri.

SYDNEY JONES

Driving down a rural road near Versailles, Missouri, I saw barefoot children frolicking alongside feisty Fidos, a country cafe, and people traveling by horse-and-buggy and bicycles. What I didn't see was more telling: television antennas and satellite dishes. That's because I was traveling through a Mennonite community, where modern technology is rarely used in daily life.

"It's a way of separating ourselves from the world," says Owen Hoover, co-owner of Hoover's Bulk Food Store and member of the Mennonite community in Versailles. "Some are more progressive using the internet and smart phone, but filtering and accountability are required," he says. Electricity usage or a home phone is typical. "Others do not allow internet or computer access," Owen says.

Being a Mennonite encompasses more than religion; it's a way of life evident in their family and work environment, lifestyle, and community involvement. With an abundance of Mennonite businesses that visitors can frequent, Versailles offers an inside look into the Mennonites and their way of life.

THE MAKING OF THE MENNONITES

Mennonites are Anabaptists—a Protestant denomination that began forming during the Reformation. Anabaptists emerged in the sixteenth century as church leaders began disagreeing with many Catholic practices, leading them to split from the Catholic church. The name Mennonite was adopted from the Dutch Anabaptist priest, Menno Simons, who renounced Catholicism in 1536.

Throughout the ages, Anabaptists and other Protestant denominations were persecuted, imprisoned, and even executed by the Catholic church. But the Anabaptists and some other denominations were also persecuted by Protestants because of their belief that there should be a confession of faith before baptism, rather than baptism at birth, as Catholics and some Protestant denominations practice. Consequently, the Anabaptists moved numerous times throughout Germany, Switzerland, and Poland, finally settling in North America in the 1700s.

THE MOVE TO MORGAN COUNTY

Mennonites, with their Swiss-German customs, moved into mid-Missouri in the 1960s and 1970s, seeking cheap, fertile farmland. Versailles had a dwindling population in the mid-twentieth century, but today, the area is thriving with more than 100 Mennonite businesses.

"We get a lot of business from Mennonite advertising," says Bryan Jones, editor and publisher of the weekly community newspaper *The Morgan County Statesman*. "I am personally grateful they support us. We try to support

Excelsior Fabrics sells men's straw hats, fabric, and sunbonnets. Dutch Country Store offers a sandwich bar where customers can customize a hearty lunch. Hoover's Bulk Food Store sells freshly baked bread.

them too. Our employees frequent their shops." He once wrote an editorial refuting complaints about Mennonite horses' manure littering the streets. He admonished those complainers by pointing out that cars emit exhaust, which contains harmful substances and damages the environment much more than biodegradable horse manure.

OLD ORDER RULES AND REGULATIONS

Most Mennonites in Versailles are Old Order, which is divided into two subgroups: horse-and-buggy and conservative. Horse-and-buggy Mennonites adhere to a life with no modern technology and aim to stay separated from the world, which includes not using electric tools or cars. Conservative Mennonites, however, allow the use of cars, phones in their homes, and public power lines.

Both groups follow the *Ordnung*—a German word loosely meaning rules and discipline—which is a blueprint that outlines taboos and what behavior is and is not acceptable. It reads, "Let us be plain and humble in our home, clothing, carriages, and everything we own." I talked to local members of four different Mennonite church conferences, which each have their own interpretation of the Ordnung: Groffdale (horse-and-buggy), Weaverland (conservative), Jefferson City (conservative), and Eastern (conservative).

Bill Idlewine, a church deacon in Morgan County since 2022, says, "Old Order refers to the style of church government and practices, such as, we don't have Sunday School. We believe it is the parents' duty to teach their children the Bible." Deacons are ordained leaders elected by the congregation for life. They assist the minister with baptisms and communion. Deacons also try to help wayward members make amends and return to the fold.

"If the wayward member is not willing to do that, they could be excommunicated," he explains. Unlike the Amish who shun excommunicated members, Mennonites still allow them to be part of their life. This consists of time together in the family home, being able to sit

DIANA WEST, SYDNEY JONES, ANDREA KANEKO

around the family table, and including excommunicated spouses in business dealings. The Amish split off from the Mennonites in the late 1600s, partly because the Amish exercise a total shunning of excluded members.

Bill didn't grow up Mennonite. He studied German in high school and read the Martin Luther translation of the Bible. In Oregon, just before his 17th birthday, he converted from Catholic to Mennonite. He says, "I discovered a faith better aligned with my own understanding of scripture." He moved to the Versailles area in 1978 and married a Mennonite, Anna Mary Leid, two years later. They had seven children, and today, their grandchildren number 54, all residing in the area. Large numbers of children help the Mennonite church to flourish.

He says Mennonites congregate in meetinghouses, similar to a typical chapel or church building, as compared to Amish who meet in their homes. Mennonites sing primarily in German with no music accompaniment while worship services are conducted in a mixture of German, Pennsylvania Dutch, and English.

Mennonites are known for dressing modestly to adhere to conservative standards. Men typically wear plain long-sleeved shirts with no collar and dark colored pants supported by wide black suspenders with no belt or tie. Women typically wear a white prayer head covering and cotton dresses in small print patterns with a high waist, loose-fitting skirt, and elbow-length sleeves.

TRAVEL AND TRANSPORTATION

Transportation for Mennonites may include one-horse carriages, bicycles, cars, and trucks.

Those who belong to the Weaverland conference drive cars that are black with some chrome to church and other social gatherings. "You'll see all black cars because that was the original color," Owen says. Owen adds that they are allowed to drive work vehicles that are other colors, but they cannot be red or another bold color.

"One of the reasons that we use the horse-and-buggy is that we believe that it helps keep our families and communities closer and more tightknit," Bill says.

He adds, "We don't believe the car is evil, but we feel the overall use of a car brings a lifestyle not conducive to living a simple Godly life." Having said that, Bill does accept a ride by car from a coworker to his bookkeeping job at Diesel Track Service, as the store is located eight miles from his home.

As opposed to the Amish, who do not condone bicycles as a type of transportation, many Mennonites—both adults and children—travel by riding bicycles.

Josiah Hoover, who is unrelated to Owen and belongs to the Groffdale conference, owns World of Wheels in Versailles, a bicycle sales and service shop that has been operated by his family since 1974. Half of Josiah's business is from Mennonites, and the rest is from non-Mennonites who are interested in bicycle recreation.

After completing eighth grade, Josiah started working at World of Wheels full time and decided to buy the business at the age of 20 in 2020. "I'm the only full-time bicycle shop in the area," he says. "Customers come from as far as Jefferson City and Columbia."

MENNONITE EDUCATION

Most Mennonites in the area attend a private country school until they complete the eighth grade. After eighth grade, students typically complete their GED (General Educational Development), which is the equivalent to graduating from high school.

In 1972, the US Supreme Court ruled in *Wisconsin vs.*

Some businesses have reserved spaces with hitching posts for one-horse buggies. Josiah Hoover shows a bicycle for sale at the World of Wheels bicycle sales and service shop.

DIANA WEST

An employee at Gathering Grounds Coffee Co. hands a coffee to a customer. The coffee shop offers walk-in, drive-through, and pick-up services. Sixteen-year-old Colleen Hoover works as a full time baker in her parents' business, Hoover's Bulk Food Store.

Yoder that Mennonites and related groups are exempt from states' mandatory education laws, citing the fact that the eighth grade education provided by the Mennonites is usually comparable or superior to the education provided by most public high schools.

"We believe the rest of their education should be completed at home," Owen says. After completing school, boys might start working full time in the family business or on the farm, and girls might begin by helping a mother with a new baby or doing housework. However, some women take full-time positions outside of the home.

THE MENNONITE SHOPS

Owen's 16-year-old daughter, Colleen, works full time at Hoover's Bulk Food Store, which Owen and his wife, Carolyn, have owned for 17 years. The store offers jellies, spices, locally grown produce, baked goods, and more. "Today, I'm the head cook," Colleen says as she bustles about the store's kitchen. Depending on the day, Colleen can be found baking pies or loaves of bread or making other sweet treats, including pans filled with Caramel Pecan Cinnamon Rolls.

Not many Mennonite women operate their own businesses. However, Edna Zimmerman, a member of the Groffdale conference, says the community doesn't mind that she owns Stamper's Delight, a scrapbook supply store. She bought it three years ago and works out of a building on the property where her family lives. She says, "I'm married, and it is important to have the business close by so I can keep up with my household duties." The 45-year-old mother of seven children, aged five to 20, says, "I was a stamper for 20 years before."

Similarly, Anna Lois Weaver started Creative Resources in the basement of her home in 2013. A flashing sign in her front yard advertises her African violets, dried flower arrangements, arts and crafts books, storybooks, wall art, and supplies. She accepts credit cards, which is not always the case with Mennonite-operated businesses. Anna belongs to the Eastern Conference, a conservative church that allows her to drive a dark-colored car. She wears a dress with a small print pattern and elbow-length sleeves, but no collar or cuffs, and a white prayer head covering over her hair, which is pulled back under the covering.

In addition to these businesses, many other Mennonite business owners have worked hard to make a living in the small town of Versailles. Some, like Brian Martin, owner of Gathering Grounds Coffee Co., moved to Versailles to pursue their dreams while making a positive difference.

Brian, a member of the Jefferson City conference, recognized an opportunity in the community "to provide a welcoming coffee experience."

Brian sees the positive impact of the traditional Mennonite work ethic on his business. "We were raised to give our best in everything we do," he says. But his mission for Gathering Grounds goes beyond that. His vision was born from his love for God and his desire to share this with the community. His business model for the coffee shop has always been "to create an experience where guests can feel the love of Jesus, where we can give exceptional customer service, and people can leave revived and inspired through coffee and relationships." Young women working at the shop can be seen wearing

SYDNEY JONES, ANDREA KANEKO, DIANA WEST

traditional white prayer coverings on their heads, reflecting their commitment to both faith and modesty.

Another notable gathering spot for locals and people on their way to nearby Lake of the Ozarks is the KenMar Cafe. Wendell Schmidt, a regular there, comes in one to three times a week. "It's like family," he says. "I can catch up on local news, and the food is good."

The cafe is located in a 700-square-foot two-bedroom ranch-style home.

Margaret Nolt, co-owner and member of the Weaverland conference, explains the name KenMar, "It's a combination of my husband's name, Kenny, and my name." She prepares breakfast and lunch four days a week—Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday—using farm-fresh food. "We make everything here except the ice cream," she says.

Fabric and sewing supply stores are essential to have in Mennonite communities, as women typically make their families' clothing. One fabric store, Excelsior Fabrics, has a wide selection of materials. The walls are lined with a rainbow of patterned bolts of fabric—there are hundreds of colors and designs to choose from. Batting is sold by the yard on three-foot-wide rolls and is sorted by loft (thickness). The shop also sells women's and girls' sunbonnets, hand-knitted winter hats, head coverings, and men's straw hats in their natural shade—a golden yellow—or in black.

Another Mennonite-owned business is L & R Clocks and Repair, a clock servicing shop. Lee Roy Zimmerman, owner of L & R Clocks, is a third-generation clock repairman. Lee Roy works eight-hour days, six days a week, repairing clocks and is booked four months ahead.

As customers enter, the sounds of bonging, cuckoos, and ticking timepieces add to the ambience of the shop's showroom. Lee Roy offers an assortment of new and antique clocks, including kitchen clocks that are more than 100 years old, cuckoo clocks, grandfather clocks, and mantel clocks. Two calendar clocks show the date in addition to time. One of the calendar clocks is a perpetual clock that automatically moves forward to tell the date and knows which months have 31 days and even when leap year occurs. "That's a neat old clock," Lee Roy says.

THE COMMUNITY'S HEART

Menno Simons, the founder of the Mennonite denomination, continually aimed to create a harmonious community focused on faith, humility, and peace. "We who were formerly no people at all, and who knew of no peace, are now called to be a church of peace. True Christians do not know vengeance. They are the children of peace. Their hearts overflow with peace. Their mouths speak peace, and they walk in the way of peace," Menno once said.

Versailles Mennonite community member Bill Idlewine sums up the Mennonite experience, affirming the values that Menno upheld; "It has been a blessed journey and, in simple terms, you can say that I like the Mennonite lifestyle. There is a peace that comes with the quiet life and of being a part of a tight, extended family."

DIANA WEST

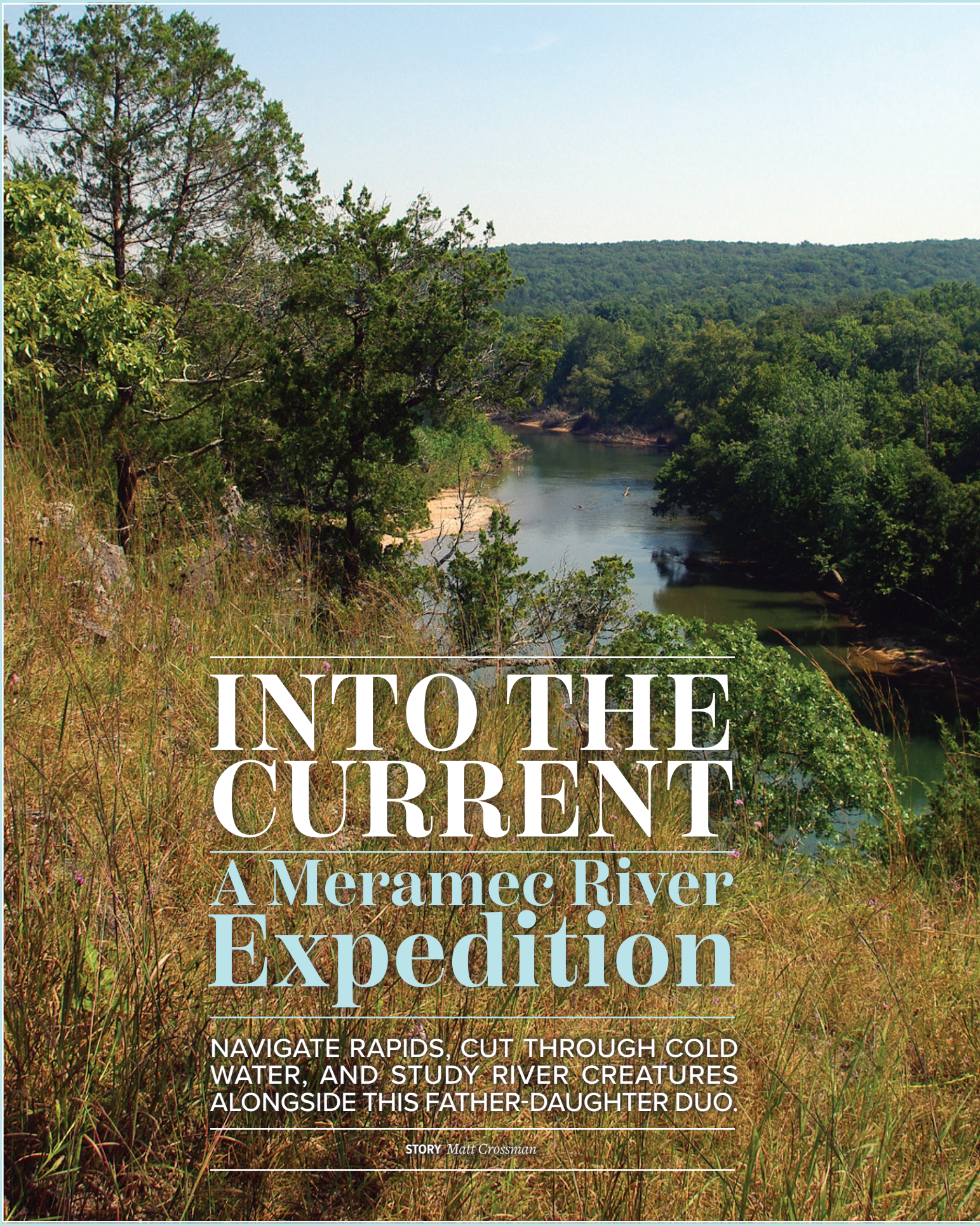
Excelsior Fabrics has all of its fabric options lining the walls of its store. The store offers other miscellaneous items as well, including discounted shoes and children's toys. Creative Resources offers handmade signage, stickers, books, school supplies, puzzles, and more. These two kitchen clocks, on display at L & R Clocks and Repair, are more than 100 years old.

IN THE STORY

Hoover's Bulk Food Store
9376 MO 52, Versailles, MO 65084
World of Wheels
20118 Highway C, Barnett, MO 65011
Creative Resources
16971 Highway C, Barnett, MO 65011
Stamper's Delight
17702 Brookside Road,
Barnett, MO 65011
Gathering Grounds Coffee Co.
13501 MO 52, Versailles, MO 65084
KenMar Cafe
18734 Highway K,
Versailles, MO 65084
Excelsior Fabrics
39990 Excelsior Road,
Versailles, MO 65084
L & R Clocks and Repair
16225 Buttercup Road,
Barnett, MO 65011

OTHER MENNONITE SHOPS TO VISIT

Martin's Goods & Gifts
14384 Highway E,
Versailles, MO 65084
Morgan County Seeds
18761 Kelsay Road,
Barnett, MO 65011
Sunshine Foods
19532 Highway C,
Barnett, MO 65011
Cedar Valley Chimes
17974 Highway C,
Barnett, MO 65011
Roadside Country Store
36402 State Highway E,
Latham, MO 65050



INTO THE CURRENT

A Meramec River Expedition

NAVIGATE RAPIDS, CUT THROUGH COLD WATER, AND STUDY RIVER CREATURES ALONGSIDE THIS FATHER-DAUGHTER DUO.

STORY *Matt Crossman*

The Meramec River spans 218 miles and drains into the Mississippi River.

ISTOCK, EARTH'S CLASSROOM

My daughter sat in front, and I sat in the back as we maneuvered our canoe along the Meramec River in east-central Missouri. Across a leisurely two-day float, I watched her progress from never having been in a canoe, to following my instructions, to anticipating my instructions, to completing them before I could speak.

This is not to say we navigated the river seamlessly—I mean, it was completely my fault when we spun 360 degrees because I was distracted by eagles soaring overhead and wasn't paying attention to the current as it related to the nose of our canoe.

She seemed to enjoy that spin—I won't tell her it was a mistake if you won't—so we teamed up to turn a few circles just for fun. As our nose and tail almost clipped other canoes—and sometimes did—and as our fevered paddling "accidentally" sprayed our friends with water, we laughed in delight. That was fitting because the most important lesson we learned from our two days on the Meramec River with Earth's Classroom was to take joy in Missouri's rivers.

Bill and Jody Miles, founders of the nonprofit learning center Earth's Classroom, have shepherded, entertained, and educated more than 77,000 participants on herpetology, ornithology, camping, canoeing, caving,

From left, Bill Miles, Oliva Brown, and Jane Crossman present a longnosed gar, which was caught with a hand-casting net during a limnology (study of freshwater ecosystems) lesson.

and more. But they're never far from the water. "We are the river state. We have so many rivers to take advantage of," Jody said.

And there are so many ways to take advantage of them. Our two-day trip on the Meramec consisted of three parts: It was part celebration of our water, part scientific study of our water, and part family fun on our water.

GNARLY RIVER CREATURES

At each of several stops, Jody and Bill threw in nets to capture and examine the vast array of living creatures in the Meramec, the most biologically diverse river in Missouri. It is home to more than 120 fish species, 47 kinds of mussels, the highest density of crayfish on earth, and many butterflies. I don't know exactly how many there were, but I've never seen such a variety or abundance, and that's just counting the ones that landed on my hat.

The objects of our study ranged from a paddlefish, an ancient relative of sharks, to bugs smaller than my fingernail to fish the size of my pinkie. We also studied birds overhead, turtles on logs, and cicadas.

At one stop, Bill plopped the creatures caught in his net into a white plastic tub. Jody peered inside and reacted like a baseball card collector who had just opened a new pack and found her favorite player. "I'm so excited! I can just go home now," she joked. She tipped the tub so Bill could see it. "Isn't that awesome?"

The specific part of the catch that aroused her passion was a dragonfly nymph, a creature so bizarre I wonder if God was messing with us when he made it. It has an arm attached to its face that it uses to grab food and stuff it in its mouth. It swims by shooting water out its butt, a mode of transportation that makes adults and kids alike giggle.

When the nymph grows into an adult dragonfly, it will have four wings—each of which it can operate independently. This will make it nimbler than most flying things. I left it unsaid at the riverside but now confess that looking up close at dragonflies has always given me the heebie-jeebies. If they suddenly grew to be massive, they'd star in monster movies, to say nothing of my nightmares.

GLACIAL SWIMMING CONDITIONS

I learned quickly that Earth's Classroom, now in its twenty-sixth year of operation, was a very fitting name, as class was always in session, even when we were playing. I felt bad for the fly fisherman we encountered at lunchtime. He thought he had found a quiet place to pull rainbow trout out of a stretch of the river near Meramec Spring. Then the 11 of us rolled up—Bill, Jody, my daughter, another dad, two moms, four teenage girls, and me—spread across six canoes. Our excited chitter-chatter chased him away.

He should have stayed to hear us squawk when we got in the water (that felt cold at the time) on river right. As if to dare us, Jody described how crystal clear—and markedly colder— the water was on river left where Meramec Spring met the river. I swam over there, following the girls even

Top, Bill Miles instructs the group on river safety and hydrology along the Meramec River. Jody Miles displays a softshell turtle that they found on the float trip.

though they squealed when they reached the spring.

When I reached that cold water, it felt like someone grabbed the skin on my back and cinched it to make it tighter. With a diving mask on, I dunked my head underwater to examine whether it was as clear as Jody described.

Yep, but not so clear that I wanted to linger, because it was also cold. I swam back across, and river right, which just a few minutes ago had chilled me, now felt like a warm bath.

Late the first afternoon, we parked our boats on river left. Bill taught the girls to set up their tents and then let them do it themselves. We stayed up late talking around the campfire before reluctantly scattering to our tents.

GRATIFYING FINAL DISCOVERIES

I woke up early the next day and walked along the river, casting a line every now and then with the hope of catching a trout. I had no luck, probably because they were all stuffed full of cicadas and had no use for the bait I offered them. That was Bill's interpretation anyway, and I'm not going to argue with an expert.

Storms had been forecast for that afternoon, so we quickly ate breakfast, packed our tents, and got back on the river. We stopped near a section of swiftly moving water, and the girls floated through it on their backs again and again.

At our last stop, the girls joined Bill in scouring the river for life. They pulled up rocks to see what creepy-crawly creatures dwelled underneath. One of them pulled out a crayfish and carried it over for Bill and Jody to identify.

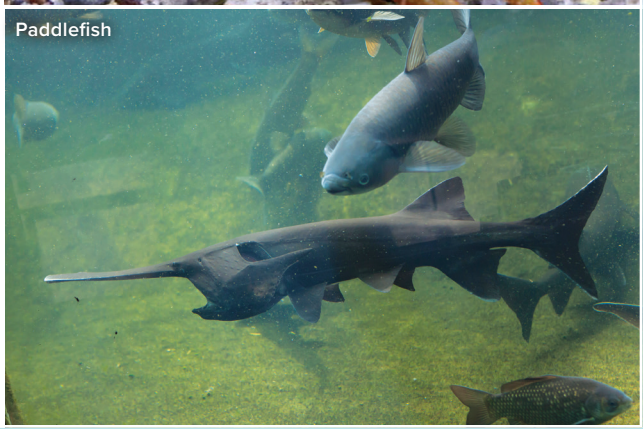
Most creatures they recognize on sight. This one looked very much like two different species of crayfish, so they scoured their reference books to properly identify it as a saddleback—a unique find indeed. "You caught a critter that's found nowhere else in the world but this river," Bill told her.

We quickly returned that critter to its home so the next group exploring this incredible river could enjoy it too.

Dragonfly nymph

Adult dragonfly

Saddleback crayfish



Paddlefish

EARTH'S CLASSROOM, ISTOCK

Wading in the Waters

THE GREAT BLUE HERON HAS A HOME IN THE HEARTLAND.

STORY *Andrea Kaneko* **PHOTOS** *Aneeta Brown*

Frawnk. Frawnk. Frawnk.

Often mistaken for a crane, the great blue heron is known for the noise it makes: "frawnk." This species of heron, a commonly spotted Missouri bird, is about three- to five-feet tall and characterized by its long bill, wings, legs, and S-shaped neck.

This bird typically eats small animals like fish, snakes, and frogs and dwells near rivers, lakes, and ponds. Most of the time, the great blue heron is standing like "a stone statue," but then suddenly, "they will dart their beak into the water and oftentimes come out with a fish or frog," says Bill Mees, a 15-year member of the Columbia Audubon Society, a society centered around bird education and preservation.

While they often hang out by the water, these birds nest in colonies of hundreds in treetops near food sources. The

Unlike many birds that fly with their neck outstretched, great blue herons fly with their neck in an S-shape.

The best time to find the great blue heron foraging for food is around dawn and dusk.

From top, most great blue herons grow extra long plumes, which are feathers that extend from their head, neck, or tail, to attract mates. These species of heron tend to wait for prey to come to them before swiftly attacking.

From top, these herons will often remain motionless in shallow water before impaling prey with a technique called the “bill jab.” While great blue herons breed in large groups, they tend to hunt alone.

group nesting sites are also known as rookeries. The nests are made of sticks and vegetation.

Great blue herons usually lay three to six eggs, which are incubated for about a month. If this species of heron can make it past its first year of life—70 percent don’t, due to predators—then they can live for about 15 years, says Kristen Heath-Acre, ornithologist for the Missouri Department of Conservation.

The great blue heron is typically a year-round resident of Missouri, but some migrate to the south in the fall. “I think more are sticking around in Missouri lately because of climate change. They need open water,” Kristen says. “They can’t stick around if there’s ice over lakes and ponds, but climate change warms things up.”

Lucky for Missouri, the great blue heron is one of the few dozen animal species that are increasing in abundance in the state, Kristen adds.

“Biodiversity is always good for Missouri,” Kristen says. “So having a native species that is common with a healthy population size is a good sign for our ecosystem here.”

A GUIDE TO MISSOURI'S POISONOUS AND VENOMOUS THREATS

Beauty with

Missouri is truly a place of natural beauty from its rolling Ozark hills to its blossoming native wildflowers, but it is not without its downsides. Missouri is home to poisonous mushrooms and plants, along with venomous spiders and snakes that pose a dangerous threat to humans. As the weather warms and nature starts coming to life, be on the lookout for some of the most common poisonous and venomous threats in Missouri.

GREEN-SPORED LEPIOTA

Green-spored lepiota may appear majestic, but they should be avoided. They are large, white mushrooms with broad caps and white gills that can turn a grayish-green color. Their stalk is 3- to 10-inches tall with a 3- to 12-inch cap. "They look very similar to the portabello mushrooms you buy at the grocery store," says Malissa Briggler, state botanist for the Missouri Department of Conservation. "They are big, white, fleshy mushrooms but are terribly poisonous." They can cause violent gastrointestinal upset, including severe vomiting and diarrhea.

These mushrooms are found in meadows in large grass areas, usually in a circular pattern called "fairy rings."

Their seasons are summer and fall. "You will see them come up when there has been a long dry spell, then we get a lot of rain," Malissa says. "Then, you will see them along rural roads in Missouri and in cow pastures."

Other poisonous fungi

False morel: They look similar to edible morels but have caps that bulge outward with wrinkles rather than pitting inward with ridges.

Amanita: Many amanitas have the distinguishing feature of a fleshy ring on the stem.

Jack-o'-lantern: This mushroom is known for its bright yellow-orange color, similar to that of a pumpkin.

Jack-o'-latern

ISTOCK, WIRESTOCK

EASTERN COPPERHEAD

The native eastern copperhead is a venomous snake with pinkish, tan, gray, or copper skin, a triangular broad-shaped head, and bands in a bow-tie shape down its body. “A lot of our other snake species that have banding patterns like that—those bands will actually be the opposite,” says Jeff Briggler, herpetologist for the Missouri Department of Conservation. “They will be narrow at the base on each side and the widest in the middle. So that’s a good characteristic that you can tell the copperhead from that pattern.”

While this snake species has mild venom and isn’t typically aggressive, it may strike if touched, startled, or stepped on. Keep an eye out for them from mid-March to early November, as they are most active during this time. The snake can be found in open forests, rocky hillsides, brushy areas along creeks, and leaf-covered paths. “They like that edge effect—so if you have forest butting up against grassland,” Jeff says. “Because they do like that edge effect, they can be difficult for people to see.” They eat mice, insects, lizards, and other small prey. This is a protected species, meaning it is illegal to kill them unless they are in such close association with humans that they are likely to bite someone.

Western pygmy rattlesnake

Other venomous snakes

Other venomous snakes in Missouri include the **northern cottonmouth**, **timber rattlesnake**, **western pygmy rattlesnake**, and **eastern massasauga rattlesnake**.

a Bite

STORY *Andrea Kaneko*

MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION, STOLZ, GARYUS FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE

How do you tell the difference between venomous and nonvenomous snakes?

Venomous snakes will have:

- Vertical pupils, as opposed to round ones
- Fangs, as opposed to small rows of teeth
- A single row of scales on the underside of the tail, as opposed to two rows
- A triangular broad head, as opposed to a round head

POISON IVY

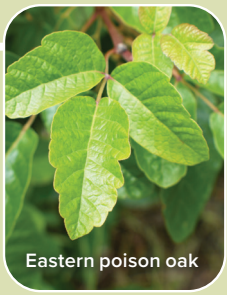
It isn't a surprise to most Missourians that the poison ivy plant is something they should avoid. This plant is a common woody shrub or vine, which typically grows in prairies, forests, fields, and marshes. It has three leaflets containing toxic oil. "With poison ivy, the phrase, 'leaves of three, let it be' is pretty catchy," Missouri botanist Malissa says.

People can get rashes and blisters ranging from mild to severe from coming in contact with the plant. If the plant is burned, its oils can be transmitted from the smoke. "It's all over outside in our yard or if we're on a hike or out camping," says Julie Weber, director of the Missouri Poison Center. "It is very important to be able to identify it because you can be exposed to it in a number of ways, by touching it or the deadly burning it—or maybe somebody even picks it, like a child can ingest it."

The plant can be found in the spring, summer, and fall and can have different colored leaflets ranging from green to red to yellow, depending on the season. In the fall, this plant produces white waxy berries.

Another poisonous plant

Eastern poison oak: Similar to poison ivy, this plant has three leaflets. In contrast to poison ivy, both sides of all three leaflets of poison oak have distinct notches. Poison oak berries are also hairy, rather than smooth and waxy.



Eastern poison oak

ISTOCK, MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

What is the difference between poisonous and venomous?

Venomous refers to creatures that inject toxins when they bite or sting, while poisonous refers to organisms that release toxins after they have been eaten, inhaled, or absorbed through the skin.

BROWN RECLUSE

The brown recluse spider, known for its grayish-brown body and a violin shape on its back, is small but mighty. The spider is only about an inch long and is typically nonaggressive, yet if it were to bite, the site can ulcerate, or cause a deep wound, which can lead to damaged tissue and infection. "Sometimes a person can feel the bite and sometimes someone can't," Julie says. "What can happen is that it will get real red and itchy. It gets a red ring shape around it with a black dot in the middle. It can look like a bull's-eye."

These spiders don't like to dine on you though. They aim for other spiders and insects, which they catch by hunting rather than catching them on a web. "As their name suggests, they're pretty reclusive. A lot of times, as long as you're not going to bother them, they're not going to bother you," says Emily Althoff, an urban entomologist for MU Extension who has researched brown recluse spiders. "They like to hide in these dark, hidden places." They can be found in attics, basements, drawers, closets, and other crevices and also between clothing and sheets.

Another venomous spider

Black Widow: The females are black with a red hourglass shape on their body, and the males are smaller with more of a brown coloring. Bites from this spider can be serious and cause severe pain, muscle cramps, abdominal pain, back pain, and hypertension. *See page 12 for a photo.*

Anyone who has a reaction from encountering any of these threats should immediately call 911 and/or the Missouri Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222.

MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION

What are other common threats Missouri has?

Besides venomous and poisonous threats, Missourians can also be at risk for vector-borne diseases, typically caused by ticks and mosquitoes. Ticks and mosquitoes pick up diseases by sucking the blood of infected animals, which they can then pass on to humans when they suck their blood. Some common Missouri vector-borne diseases include Lyme disease, ehrlichiosis, tularemia, Rocky Mountain spotted fever, and West Nile virus.

STORY *Jim Winnerman*

How Missouri Got Its HEEL

THE HISTORY BEHIND MISSOURI'S BOOTHEEL.

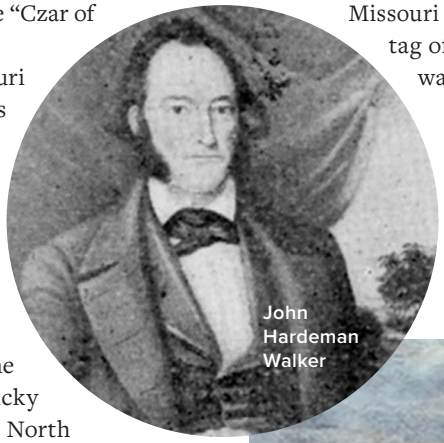
When the earth began to rumble in the trading settlement of New Madrid in southeastern Missouri on December 16, 1811, it was the start of a series of earthquakes that would continue in the area for months. Three of the tremors were among the largest to strike North America since European settlement.

At the time, the area was America's sparsely inhabited western frontier, and fearing what might come next, most of the pioneers fled the area. Between a five-mile-long crevice opening in the earth and the riverbed of the Mississippi River being heaved up, reversing the course of the river, the frontier was spilling over the edge with ominous signs of what the future might hold.

'CZAR OF THE VALLEY'

John Hardeman Walker, unlike others, was not intimidated by the earthquakes. John had arrived with his family from Tennessee and settled in New Madrid in 1810. As his neighbors packed and headed to safer ground, he saw an opportunity to buy more land and expand his cattle and farming enterprise. So he purchased his neighbors' land a parcel at a time.

In a few years, his immense land holdings and cattle herds had earned him the nickname "Czar of the Valley."



John Hardeman Walker

By 1817, the population of Missouri had reached 60,000, and the citizens of the Missouri Territory petitioned Congress for statehood.

The proposed southern boundary was to be a straight line across the bottom of the new state. It was a sensible border that connected with the already established straight-line borders separating the existing eastern states of Kentucky from Tennessee and Virginia from North Carolina.

Below the suggested border, the 980 square miles and 627,000 acres of what would become Missouri's Bootheel remained inside what was known as the Arkansas Territory. Included in this area were John's vast landholdings.

When plans for the border became known, John and others in the vicinity were not happy. There are accounts of John complaining that he did not want to be an Arkansan "because the Arkansas climate ain't healthy, and the people ... can't read nor write. Also, they says Arkansas is full of bears and panthers and copperhead snakes, so it ain't safe for civilized folks to stay there overnight even."

As John and his cohorts began to organize and lobby legislatures in Missouri and Washington, DC, more reasonable arguments were presented as to why there should be an appendage on the bottom of the Show-Me State.

THE SAFE STATE

First, the area in question had more in common with the Mississippi River towns of Cape Girardeau, Ste. Genevieve, and St. Louis than it did with the Arkansas Territory where its proposed incorporation was planned. Missouri had larger population centers, a larger base of industry along the Mississippi, a more established agriculture industry, and rapidly growing towns due to westward migration.

Moreover, Bootheel citizens led by John didn't want to be subject to the administration of the Arkansas Territory government. Being part of the territory meant they would be without the protection that being a part of a state would bring. Also, Arkansas was not nearly as close to statehood when Missouri was admitted to the Union. Missouri became a state on August 10, 1821. Arkansas wouldn't become a state until June 15, 1836, 15 years later. John and his cohorts wanted to be part of a state that offered an established system of laws for the state, as well as laws under the federal government.

The arguments were persuasive enough that when Missouri statehood was approved in 1821, the tag of land now known as the Bootheel was included.

Using the St. Francis River as the western border and the Mississippi River about 37 miles to the east as the eastern border, legislators voted favorably to drop the southern straight-line border 34.5 miles south.

This painting of John Walker is located at the New Madrid History Museum. The museum is open seven days a week.

John's land was safely inside Missouri's boundaries, but he was not done being a spokesperson for the land. To help enforce the laws of the new state, he served as sheriff of New Madrid County from 1821–1822 and then as a judge on the county court in 1823.

In 1857, he laid out and plotted a town on his own land. In honor of Sam Caruthers, who first represented the area in Congress, he named it Caruthersville. Today the town is home to about 6,500 residents.

John is still in Caruthersville. He died in 1860 from cholera and rests beside his wife, Sarah, behind the United Methodist Church. Along with 10 other headstones, the tiny cemetery is surrounded by a wrought iron fence. John Hardeman Walker's grave lies within the Bootheel he was instrumental in creating.

Big Oak Tree State Park serves as a sample of the swampland that would have been pervasive in the Bootheel before levees walled off the Mississippi River. The park and Bootheel are in the Mississippi Lowlands, one of six natural divisions of the state.

STORY *Jim Winnerman*

A Whole New World

TRAVEL TO MISSOURI'S BOOTHEEL AND MISSISSIPPI LOWLANDS TO FIND THE DIFFERENCES.

John Hardeman Walker's efforts in 1821 were successful in including Missouri's Bootheel inside the newly formed state border and keeping it out of the Arkansas Territory. But on a visit to "the boot," I discovered something John might have been surprised to learn. More than 200 years later, the area remains a part of, and yet apart from, the rest of Missouri. The geography, agriculture, food, wildlife, and culture are decidedly southern in nature.

THE SWAMPLAND

While traveling down Missouri Route 53, a natural geographic demarcation line alerts visitors they have entered the Bootheel. Known as Crowley's Ridge, a line of low hills runs diagonally across the top of the Bootheel separating it from the rest of southern Missouri. Crossing over and driving down the southern side of the ridge, I was taken aback to discover the terrain was immediately as flat as the plains of Kansas.

I had read that the Bootheel had been swampland—the result of millions of years of sediment deposited as the nearby Mississippi River flooded—but, I mean, this land was as flat as the water on a rural pond.

In the late 1800s, timbermen harvested the trees that had thrived in the rich flatland soil, and a massive project to drain the swampland and plant crops followed. Fields of cotton—a crop I had associated only with southern states—were everywhere. The Bootheel is responsible for Missouri ranking fourth nationwide in cotton production, with almost 400,000 acres cultivated in Missouri annually.

The Bootheel soil is also perfect for growing rice, placing Missouri fourth in rice production, with almost 200,000 planted acres. Another southeastern Missouri crop is peanuts, with an estimated 15,000 acres under cultivation.

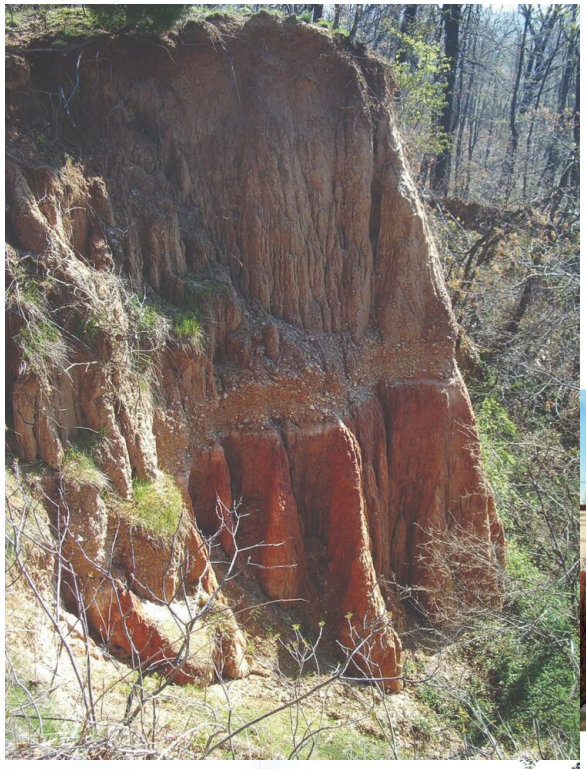
I had been referred to Riley Bock, a lifelong resident of New Madrid and former president of the State Historical Society of Missouri, for background information on the area. Talking to him about my surprise at seeing the trio of southern crops, he volunteered that "even some of the Bootheel wildlife is different."

He also added, "Parcels of remaining swampland along the Mississippi River are home to southern critters like swamp rabbits, alligator snapping turtles, and birds such as Mississippi kites, fish crow, and the prothonotary warbler. They are not found elsewhere in Missouri."

In 2023, Missouri produced almost one million bales of cotton.

JIM WINNERMAN; SCOTT MYERS, MISSOURI STATE PARKS

The columns outside the Marston Welcome Center, off Interstate 55 and outside New Madrid, replicate the seismometer reading during the 1811 New Madrid earthquake. The New Madrid History Museum presents the history of the Mississippian culture and people.



From top, an eroding cliff at Morris State Park shows a sequence of deposits but no visible bedrock on Crowley's Ridge. Note the deposits of sands and clays with a band of pebbles and then a loess cap above. The Hunter–Dawson Home State Historic Site is an antebellum home built on a bend of the Mississippi River.

A SOUTHERN TWANG

I mentioned I detected a southern drawl in Riley's voice. Riley, a former lawyer, said he was made aware of his accent and slower pace of speaking after presenting closing arguments at a trial in northern Missouri. "I talked for an hour and a half," he said. "Afterward, the court clerk told me someone local would have delivered the same speech in a half hour."

As I explored the Bootheel, I heard the same accent with whomever I talked to. I was surprised again!

Baughn Merideth, the assistant county commissioner of Pemiscot County, told me Bootheel residents don't usually identify themselves as midwesterners.

"I am more inclined to say I am 'a southern,' or 'from the northern Delta,'" he said, referring to the fact that the Bootheel is the northernmost point in the Mississippi Delta.

In Hayti, I ate lunch at Chubby's BBQ, a beloved local favorite where owner Nicholas Cartee noticed I was a stranger. When I mentioned I was writing an article about the Bootheel, he sat down to talk. Between greeting every arriving customer by name, he mentioned he views the Bootheel as a small community where everyone helps each other when needed.

"Our location also has an influence on where younger people go to college," he said. "Kids down here tend to go to the University of Mississippi, Arkansas State, or Mississippi State."

Another southern influence is apparent on restaurant menus. Turnip greens, okra, collard greens, and fried green tomatoes are common side dishes.

A FRIENDLY FAREWELL

In New Madrid, I walked past the 1915 Classical Greek Revival County Courthouse before passing underneath the vertical art deco marquee of the Dixie Theatre, unquestionably a southern name.

At the New Madrid Historic Museum, I asked administrator Jeff Grunwald if there was a picture of John in the museum, and he pointed to a painting just above the reception desk. There was the "father" of the Bootheel, dressed as a frontiersman, looking out over his land and a herd of cattle in the early 1800s.

When I inquired about the devastating series of earthquakes in 1811, Jeff told me to walk to the top of the levee next to the museum and read the sign. I did and discovered it read: "You are standing on the New Madrid fault line."

I took that as a good reason to head north and back home, but I did stop to walk the nature trail at Morris State Park atop Crowley's Ridge, where I encountered Missouri State Park Ranger, Corporal Wade Dare. When I remarked that people in the Bootheel had seemed exceptionally friendly and kind, he said, "Up north, people may hold a door open for you, but down here, they hold the door and then ask, 'How is your day going?'"

CHRIS CRABTREE AND MICHAEL COMER. MISSOURI STATE PARKS; JIM WINNERMAN

Some of these locations are actually north of the horizontal line that could have been our southern border, but they are all in the Mississippi Lowlands area and are the gateway to the Bootheel.

More to see

Hunter-Dawson Home State Historic Site
This white antebellum home was built by the successful businessperson William Washington Hunter who moved to the area in 1830. Almost all the home's decor is original and includes what is believed to be the largest remaining collection of Mitchell and Rammelsberg furniture.
312 Dawson Road
New Madrid
MoStateParks.com

Dunklin County Museum
Located in a 1903 building and used as the Kennett City Hall and a Masonic Lodge, this museum displays local historical memorabilia and a nationally recognized collection of miniature machines created by Cecil E. Anthony.
122 College Avenue
Kennett
573-888-6620

Mingo National Wildlife Refuge
This 21,676-acre refuge is located on the shores of Lake Wappapello and preserves bottomland hardwood trees, which provide a habitat for migratory birds. It has elevated trails that lead visitors above the water and through the swamp.
24279 Missouri Highway 51
Puxico
FWS.gov

Towosahgy State Historic Site
Once a fortified village and ceremonial center, this 54-acre site was home to the Mississippian peoples who lived in southern Missouri between AD 1000 and AD 1400. A grassy path passes the remaining four mounds and exhibits.
County Road 502
East Prairie
MoStateParks.com

Higgerson School Historic Site
Open from 1930–1968, this authentic, restored school is an excellent example of a rural school where eight grades were taught in one room by one teacher.
307 Main Street
New Madrid
New-Madrid.mo.us

Grave of William H. "Major" Ray
As an American-folk figure, Ray was the famous mascot for Buster Brown shoes. Standing 44-inches tall, he traveled the United States as the company icon who "lived in a shoe with his bulldog Tige."
One mile southwest of Hornersville on Missouri State Route 657

Big Oak Tree State Park
In this state park, towering hickory and oak trees more than 120 feet tall offer visitors a stunning backdrop on their hike through Missouri's swampland.
13640 S Highway 102
East Prairie
MoStateParks.com

JIM WINNERMAN

Visitors climb the temple mound at Towosahgy State Historic Site.

Places to eat

Kennett
Downtown Bistro
Burgers, Greek specialties, and other comfort fare, plus a bar
101 1st Street
573-559-2777

Caruthersville
Cole Moma's Family Restaurant
Cozy restaurant with a kids' menu
2521 State Highway D
573-333-1119

Holcomb
Strawberry's BBQ
Southern-style barbecue
107 Main Street
573-792-9689

New Madrid
Taster's Restaurant
Traditional American diner
25 Villa Shopping Center
573-748-2044

New Madrid
El Braceros
Extensive menu of classic Mexican fare and drinks
530 US Highway 61
573-748-6166

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Sweet Tarts in a Bottle

The rise of Missouri's "off-dry" wines.

I KNOW I'M SUPPOSED TO like complex red wines; that's what they told me in sommelier school. (There is no such school, by the way, but roll with me for a moment.) People with fancy initials after their names such as MS, MW, DipWSET, or SWE (those are all actual wine accreditations) are required to be obsessed with Bordeaux, Burgundy, the finest Barolo or Champagne, and Napa Cabernet.

But many Master Sommeliers and Masters of Wine are Riesling fanatics. It's true that Riesling—sweet, dry, somewhere in between—is often their jam. Most great Riesling is grown on steep slopes in Germany and Austria, though there are worthy examples in France's Alsace region, Australia, the US Pacific Northwest, and even South Africa. What all of these vineyards have in common is the weather. The temperature outside is either cool or cold, and the grapevines struggle to fully ripen the grapes.

That's changing, though, due to demonstrable global warming. A few decades ago, the top German Rieslings were so unripe, so tart, that a favored way to produce them was to leave some of the grape's natural sugar unfermented, rendering the wine sweet. That sweet–tart combination was sometimes intensely dramatic, producing the unique character that has made these wines famed for centuries. These days, there are fewer and fewer such experiences; indeed, most German Riesling is made as dry wine today. Some of us old-timers still seek out those showy sweet-tart wines.

Perhaps surprisingly, we can still get a bit of that thrill with Missouri wines. Yes, Riesling is rarely grown around here (it's both too hot and too cold, and that's our damnable weather), but other grapes prosper, like Vignoles, Vidal Blanc, Valvin Muscat, and Traminette. Moreover, the myth that Missouri wines are always sweet is based upon similar circumstances to that of traditional German Riesling—the grapes are just too tart by themselves. Some people really like very tart wines; most people don't. So, the grapes that succeed in our weather have, for years, been produced with unfermented grape juice left in them to sweeten them up.

The devil will always be in the details. Wine drinkers who are not used to Missouri wines have complained that the wines produced in our state are too sweet, and perhaps they have been, at least to those discriminating consumers. The last few decades have seen winemakers adopt a lighter touch and, even more, winegrowers have grown adept at ripening their grapes so that incipient tartness isn't so aggressive. The new wines are better described as "off-dry" than sweet, a term meant to suggest just enough sweetness to balance the inherent tartness of the grape. These off-dry wines differ from semi-sweet or sweet wines, as they lack the noticeable, defined sweetness that those wines possess.

It's further evidence of the evolution of midwestern winemaking; the wine industry continues to grow here not simply because there are more wineries but because there are better and better wines. If what you like is bone dry wines, there are plenty of those too. But if you crave some fruity sweetness in your white wines, excellent choices abound.

ISTOCK/D. BISHOP

BY DOUG FROST
Doug is both a Master of Wine and Master Sommelier, one of only three in the world to achieve both titles. He lives in Kansas City.

GREAT EXAMPLES OF OFF-DRY WINES

Blumenhof Valvin Muscat
Dale Hollow Vignoles
Defiance Ridge Traminette
Hermannhof Traminette
Jowler Creek Vignoles
Mathany Family Vignoles
Stonehaus Farms Vidal Blanc

Get to Know Our Grapes

Here are Missouri's most popular varietals.

Walk into a tasting room at a Missouri winery and you may notice something: the varieties of wine you're used to seeing in the aisles of supermarkets—wines like Pinot Noir, Malbec, and Chardonnay—are absent. Instead, you find yourself looking over a selection of unfamiliar names, and you may be unsure what to order. Your best bet is to tell whoever's pouring your wine for a recommendation, but if you want to flex your knowledge of Missouri-grown grapes, here is a cheat sheet of some of our most common varieties.

NORTON
It's not a coincidence that the most common grape grown in Missouri is also our state grape! It's at many Missouri wineries.
Sweet or Dry: Dry
Origin: American-European hybrid
Compare: Cabernet Sauvignon or Zinfandel

CATAWBA
This varietal was once the most commonly planted grape in the country. Henry Longfellow wrote a poem about the wine made from it.
Sweet or Dry: Varies
Origin: American
Compare: Rosé

VIGNOLES
This is the main white grape grown in Missouri, and as such, many Show-Me State wineries produce it. It can range anywhere from a citrusy, fruit-forward bottle to a sweet dessert wine.
Sweet or Dry: Varies
Origin: American-European hybrid
Compare: Riesling

CHARDONEL
This variety of wine is less than 100 years old and was the result of blending classic Chardonnay grapes with another French-American hybrid known as Seyval Blanc.
Sweet or Dry: Dry
Origin: American-European hybrid
Compare: Chardonnay

CHAMBOURCIN
The most recently created variety of Missouri wine traces its lineage back to the hybrid grapes created by Albert Seibel in the late 19th century in order to increase disease resistance of grapes. Grown commercially since 1963, this variety makes dry reds and Rosés.
Sweet or Dry: Drier
Origin: American-European hybrid
Compare: Pinot Noir

DON KASAK

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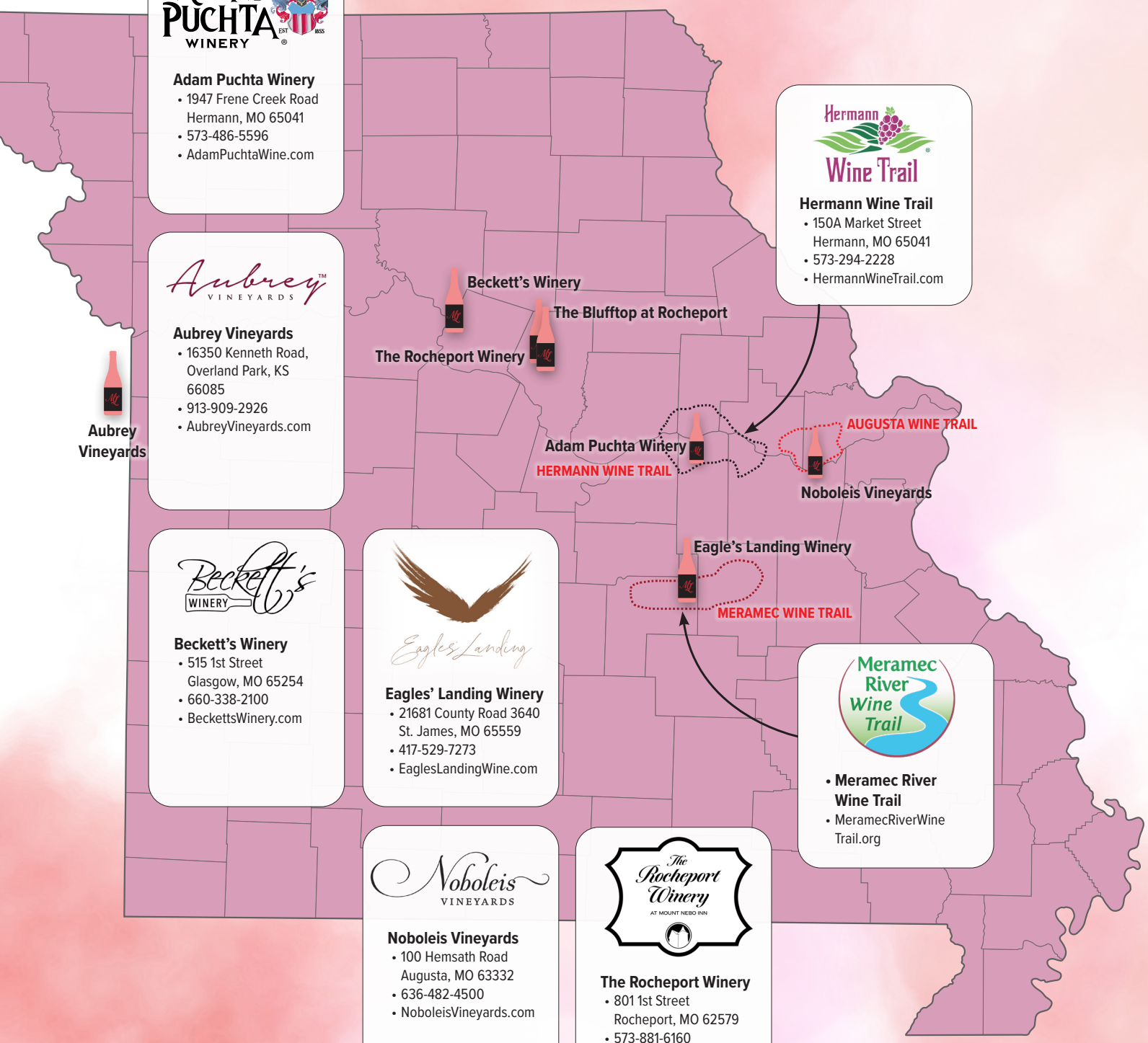

Adam Puchta Winery
- 1947 Frene Creek Road
  Hermann, MO 65041
- 573-486-5596
- AdamPuchtaWine.com

Hermann Wine Trail
- 150A Market Street
  Hermann, MO 65041
- 573-294-2228
- HermannWineTrail.com

Aubrey Vineyards
- 16350 Kenneth Road,
  Overland Park, KS
  66085
- 913-909-2926
- AubreyVineyards.com

Beckett's Winery
- 515 1st Street
  Glasgow, MO 65254
- 660-338-2100
- BeckettsWinery.com

Eagles' Landing Winery
- 21681 County Road 3640
  St. James, MO 65559
- 417-529-7273
- EaglesLandingWine.com

- **Meramec River Wine Trail**
- MeramecRiverWine Trail.org

Noboleis Vineyards
- 100 Hemsath Road
  Augusta, MO 63332
- 636-482-4500
- NoboleisVineyards.com

The Rocheport Winery
- 801 1st Street
  Rocheport, MO 62579
- 573-881-6160
- RocheportWinery.com

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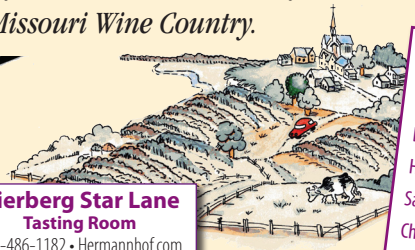

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Holiday Fare ..... Nov. 15-16, 2025
Say Cheese ..... Dec. 13, 2025
Chocolate ..... Feb. 28-March 1, 2026
Farmers' Table ..... April 11, 2026

Hermann to I-70 (Exit 175) 15 miles

Visitor Center
573-789-0771
301 Wharf Street, Hermann

Dierberg Star Lane
Tasting Room
573-486-1182 • Hermannhof.com
338 E. First Street, Hermann

19

Hermann

Reserve Cellars
573-486-3320 • Hermannhof.com
34 Reserve Cellars Lane, Hermann

Hermannhof Winery
573-486-5959 • Hermannhof.com
330 E. First Street, Hermann

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TICKETS

Underlined Twice

"MOM," MY DAUGHTER, HILARY, SAID in a tone that reminded me of me. "You have to pay attention."

"What?" I asked Hilary, pretending I didn't know.

"You will be traveling alone, so you just can't go wherever you want," sighed my oldest child, suddenly turned parent.

It was number one on the list and underlined twice, so my children had to know the day was coming. This was the list my husband, Randy, spontaneously created by drawing a line down the middle of a piece of notebook paper. On one side he labeled it as "To-do Trips" and on the other side as "Will-do Trips." One side had covered bridges and state parks, wineries, and arenas. The other side listed travel destinations with historical significance or stunning views.

Then, my husband died, and the list turned into something else—something unexpected.

Number one on his list and underlined twice was Washington, DC, a city Randy had been to before. My husband was a proud Vietnam veteran who flew there with the Honor Flight. Randy came home from that trip to DC moved and motivated by his unexpected emotional experience. Our children have toured our nation's capital. Family and friends have been there. Practically every eighth grader in America has been to Washington, DC.

Sadly, I've never been.

So Washington, DC, became a purpose, simply because on the list, Randy had underlined it twice. I knew I needed to go mostly to prove to myself that I could, but there was also another reason I had to go.

Before my children knew it, my suitcase was packed, and my trip was planned. They weren't happy that I was traveling alone, and I have to admit, it gave me cause for concern simply because I am used to someone watching over me.

Still, I promised.

The day I naively kissed my husband goodbye, walked out of the hospital, and left him behind, Randy winked at me and teased, "Get out that list."

"I promise," I replied, never realizing the weight I would carry with those two spoken words.

I remembered that promise as I walked my husband's path in our nation's capital. I touched the names of his friends etched on the Vietnam wall. I posed by the Missouri pillar, the place where Randy had stood holding the photo of his father dressed in his World War II uniform. With tears I witnessed the Changing of the Guard and knew with certainty why my husband underlined this twice.

So, Washington, DC, became a purpose, simply because on the list, Randy had underlined it twice. I knew I needed to go mostly to prove to myself that I could, but there was also another reason.

"You have to go," Randy told me, with something unexplainable in his voice. "Everyone should go."

He was right.

I looked up at the grandest monuments, spent hours inside awe-inspiring museums, and breathed in deeply the price of freedom. Every step of the way brought me closer to keeping my promise and understanding the reason this trip was number one on the list.

The reason it was underlined twice.

I was a lone traveler in a big city, surrounded by strangers who were constant reminders of my daughter's parental warnings. But a promise made will motivate you to do hard things.

Things you never thought you'd do.

It was an indescribable honor to make my way through the list of monumental things my husband dreamed of showing me.

When my time in DC was done, my promise was kept, and my tears were spent. I came home a changed person.

I also came home to the hugs of my children who continue to worry about me traveling alone and need to be reminded over and over of something that trip to DC taught me: I am never alone.

BY LORRY MYERS
TRIP OF A LIFETIME
Lorry@MissouriLife.com

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SOUTHWEST

Taco de SOMO
MAY 1, SPRINGFIELD
Best taco competition, Chihuahua fashion show, and music. Farmer's Park. *TacoDeSOMO.com*

Cinderella
MAY 1–11, BRANSON
Historic Owen Theatre. *BransonArts.org*

Mother Road Mayhem
MAY 2–4, JOPLIN
Truck, car, Jeep, and SXS show, plus a concert. Route 66 Event Center. *MotherRoadMayhem.com*

Two Witches, No Waiting
MAY 2–4 AND 9–11, CARTHAGE
Comedy dinner theater. *StonesThrowDinnerTheatre.com*

Community Yard Sale
MAY 3, REPUBLIC
Community Center parking lot. *RepublicParks.com*

Corn Dog Kickoff
MAY 3, SPRINGFIELD
Sample more than 40 different fair foods. *OzarkEmpireFair.com*

Derby Day Party
MAY 3, SPRINGFIELD
Music, food, drinks, and a horse race. University Plaza Hotel and Convention Center. *Eventbrite.com*

'S Wonderful Concert
MAY 3, SPRINGFIELD
Symphony orchestra with the St. Louis Ballet. Juanita K. Hammons Hall for the Performing Arts. *SpringfieldMoSymphony.org*

ArtsFest
MAY 3–4, SPRINGFIELD
More than 120 artists and live entertainment. Historic Walnut St. *SpringfieldArts.org*

Missouri Beef Days
MAY 3–10, BOLIVAR
Street festival, ag expo, beef and bourbon pairings, banquet, rodeo, parade, and concert. Throughout town. *MissouriBeefDays.com*

Gigs in the Garden
MAY 3, 11, AND 18, SPRINGFIELD
Concerts by local performers and cultural activities. Springfield Botanical Gardens. *PeaceThroughPeople.org*

Spring Planting Festival
MAY 4–5, MANSFIELD
Expert talks, vendors, garden tours, and local food. Baker Creek's Ozark Village. *RareSeeds.com*

Kenny Wayne Shepherd
MAY 6, SPRINGFIELD
With blues legend Bobby Rush. *GilliozTheatre.com*

Animal Art in the Park
MAY 8, REPUBLIC
Visit the petting zoo animals and then paint a portrait of one of them. J. R. Martin Park. *RepublicParks.com*

Concerts in the Wild
MAY 8, SPRINGFIELD
Bryan Copeland concert. *DickersonParkZoo.org*

Food Truck Friday
MAY 9, CARTHAGE
Variety of food trucks and music. Central Park. *ExperienceCarthageMo.com*

STEMLiner Aviation Expo
MAY 10, HOLLISTER
Medal of Honor recipients, military and civilian aircraft, and demonstrations by FIRST Robotics. Branson Airport. *ExploreBranson.com*

Truman Day
MAY 10, LAMAR
Historic demonstrations, WWI reenactors, dog show, wagon rides, and crafts. Harry S. Truman Birthplace. *BartonCounty.com*

Hairball: Silver Anniversary
MAY 10, LAMPE
1980s rock experience with pyrotechnics. *BlackOakAmp.com*

Prehistoric Artifact Show
MAY 10, SPRINGFIELD
Prehistoric Native American artifacts from collectors from eight states. Ozark Empire Fairgrounds. *OzarksArrowheads.com*

Buffalo Days
MAY 24, GREENFIELD
"Buffalo" chip chucking competition to see who can toss the patties the farthest (now they use cow patties), parade, games, live music, box turtle races, cake walk, food trucks, 5K run, craft and art vendors, and activities for children. Town Square. *GreenfieldChamber.org*

Absurd Person Singular
MAY 14–18, JOPLIN
Comedy. *JoplinLittleTheatre.org*

Queen of Clean Comedy Tour
MAY 15, BRANSON
Performance by comedian Chonda Pierce. *Yakov.com*

Third Thursday
MAY 15, JOPLIN
Makers market, performances, food, and shopping. Main Street. *DowntownJoplin.com*

Fleetwood Mac Experience
MAY 16, SPRINGFIELD
Tribute band concert. *GilliozTheatre.com*

Sucker Days
MAY 16–17, NIXA
Samples of fried sucker fish, plus arts and crafts, activities for kids, crafts, parade, and music. Downtown. *NixaChamber.com*

Super Mike
MAY 17, JOPLIN
Family-friendly magic, comedy, and illusion. Beshore Performance Hall at the Cornell Complex. *Connect2Culture.org*

The Music Vault
MAY 17, SPRINGFIELD
Springfield Symphony Orchestra's 90th anniversary gala. University Plaza Hotel & Convention Center. *SpringfieldMoSymphony.org*

Summer Splash
MAY 17–18, KIMBERLING CITY
On-water boat show. Port of Kimberling. *AmericanWaterSports.com*

Gone Fishin' Tour
MAY 23, SPRINGFIELD
Blues concert by Christone "Kingfish" Ingram and Samantha Fish. *GilliozTheatre.com*

Patriotic Picnic
MAY 26, RIDGEDALE
Food, live music, fireworks, and fighter-jet flyover. *BigCedar.com*

Silver Sage Renaissance Festival
MAY 26–28, JOPLIN
Lords and ladies, pirates, vendors, and performances. Landreth Park. *SSRF-Village.org*

Ozarks Food Truck Rally
MAY 31, SPRINGFIELD
Gourmet food trucks, plus music and vendors. *OzarkEmpireFair.com*

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NORTHWEST & KANSAS CITY

Mushroom Festival
MAY 1–3, RICHMOND
Arts, crafts, Mr. and Ms. Mushroom contest, sidewalk chalk art contest, and carnival. Town square. *MushroomFestival.net*

First Friday
MAY 2, CARROLLTON
Live music, vendors, and food trucks. Downtown square. *MyHometownCarrollton.com*

May the Force Be with You
MAY 2, INDEPENDENCE
Crafts, *Star Wars* trivia, and LEGO display. Uptown Market. *IndependenceMo.gov*

Brookside Art Annual
MAY 2–4, KANSAS CITY
Outdoor arts festival with 180 local and national artists and activities for children. Brookside neighborhood. *BrooksideKC.org*

Steel Magnolias
MAY 2–4, ST. JOSEPH
A touching and comedic play. Ruby Theatre. *RRTStJoe.org*

First Saturdays Lecture
MAY 3, ARROW ROCK
Missouri folk traditions. State Park Visitors Center. *ArrowRock.org*

Kids' Fishing Derby
MAY 3, LEE'S SUMMIT
Prizes for heaviest fish, casting clinics, and demonstrations. Lake Jacomo South Boat Dock. *MakeYourDayHere.com*

Sheep Shindig
MAY 3, LEE'S SUMMIT
Sheep shearing, spinning, and weaving, plus games, crafts, and music. Missouri Town Living History Museum. *MakeYourDayHere.com*

Citywide Garage Sales
MAY 3, MARYVILLE
Throughout town. *MaryvilleChamber.com*

Apple Blossom Parade
MAY 3, ST. JOSEPH
Parade through downtown. *AppleBlossomParade.com*

Humphrey's Gravel Grinder
MAY 3, SMITHVILLE
100-, 50-, and 25-mile gravel road bike race. Starts and finishes in downtown. *SmithvilleChamber.org*

Celebration at the Station
MAY 25, KANSAS CITY
KC Symphony performs a free concert on the grounds of Union Station and the National WWI Museum and Memorial. *KCSymphony.org*

Sky-High Kite Festival
MAY 3, SUGAR CREEK
See colossal kites, plus food trucks and vendors. LaBenite Park. *IndependenceMo.gov*

Wildflower Hike
MAY 3, TRENTON
Guided two-mile hike. Redbud Trail. *MoStateParks.com*

80th Anniversary Celebration
MAY 4, KANSAS CITY
Heritage Philharmonic concert celebrates its 80th year. Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts. *HeritagePhilharmonic.org*

EMMA
MAY 6–25, KANSAS CITY
Adaptation of Jane Austen's classic. Spencer Theatre. *KCRep.org*

Harry S. Truman 141st Birthday
MAY 8, INDEPENDENCE
Wreath laying ceremonies and free museum admission. *TrumanLibrary.gov*

Puzzle Palooza
MAY 9, BLUE SPRINGS
Teams compete to solve a 500-word puzzle the fastest. Vesper Hall. *BlueSpringsGov.com*

Bark in the Park
MAY 9, RAYMORE
Bring your dog out for a movie night. T. B. Hanna Station. *Raymore.com*

Fishing Derby
MAY 10, BLUE SPRINGS
Ages 5 to 14 compete for prizes, plus free refreshments. Rotary Park. *BlueSpringsGov.com*

Pup Cup Pop Up
MAY 10, LIBERTY
Free treats for you and your dog, vendors, and caricature artists. Stocksdale Dog Park. *LibertyMissouri.gov*

Spring Festival
MAY 10, MARCELINE
Model train, car, and craft shows, tractor cruise, and music. Walsworth Community Center. *MarcelineSpringFestival.com*

Larson's Cruise for a Cause
MAY 10, SMITHVILLE
Car show and live and silent auction fundraiser. Downtown. *SmithvilleChamber.org*

Polish Pottery Festival
MAY 10, WESTON
Polish and Eastern European arts, food, culture, dance, and heritage. Downtown. *RenditionsWeston.com*

Second Sunday Tours
MAY 11, LEXINGTON
Guided trolley tours with living history actors portraying the Legendary Ladies of the early 1900s. Downtown. *HistoricLexington.com*

Music at the Market
MAY 16, ALBANY
Concert and food. Smith Street Park. *MainStreetAlbany.org*

Summertime Bluesfest
MAY 16–17, GLADSTONE
Multiple blues bands. Linden Square. *GladstoneChamber.com*

Sailing
MAY 16–18, KANSAS CITY
Soft rock hits of the '70s and '80s. Helzberg Hall. *KCSymphony.org*

Mug Shots
MAY 17, EXCELSIOR SPRINGS
Sample more than 20 craft beers. Downtown. *VisitExcelsior.com*

Design Your Own Cookie
MAY 17, INDEPENDENCE
Decorate a historic house-shaped cookie. Bingham-Waggoner Estate. *BWEstate.net*

Garment District Grooves
MAY 21, KANSAS CITY
Food truck and outdoor concert by Stan Kessler & Friends. Garment District Place. *KCParks.org*

Fourth Fridays Art Walk
MAY 23, LEE'S SUMMIT
Local artists and live music. Downtown. *DowntownLS.org*

Stock and Trade
MAY 31, ARROW ROCK
Reenactment camp and living history. J. Huston Tavern west lawn. *ArrowRock.org*

Bluffwoods Renaissance Festival
MAY 31–JUNE 1, ST. JOSEPH
Jousting, historical reenactment performances, turkey legs, and vendors. Castle Bridge Event Center. *BluffwoodsRenFest.com*

KANSAS CITY SYMPHONY

To discover hundreds of other events and to enter your own, visit MissouriLife.com/events.

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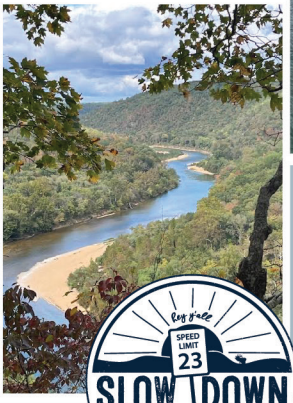

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Blue Spring
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Current River
Klepzig Mill
Elephant Rock Park
Johnson Shut-Ins Park
Ozark Trail
Reynolds Co. Museum
Rocky Falls
Sutton Bluff Rec Area

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5/17 Saddle Club Fun Show - Rolla
5/30-31 Folky Fish Fest - Maramec Spring Park
6/6-7 Annual Route 66 Summerfest - Downtown Rolla

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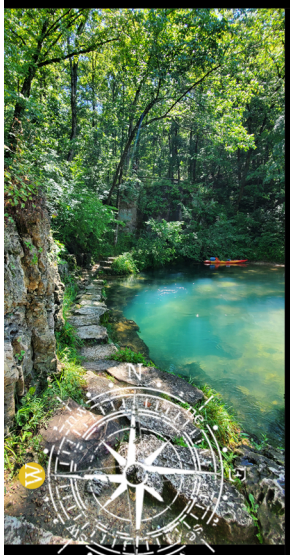

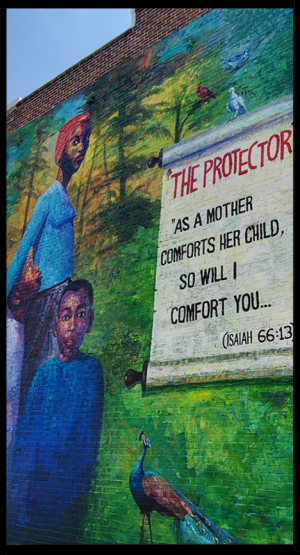

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NORTHEAST & ST. LOUIS

Valley of Flowers Festival
MAY 2–4, FLORISSANT
Food and craft vendors, live music, and parade. Duchesne Grounds. *FlorissantValleyOfFlowers.com*

Alliance Brass
MAY 3, HANNIBAL
Brass band concert. Calvary Baptist Church. *VisitHannibal.com*

Midwest Maifest
MAY 3, ST. CHARLES
Beer, wine, and spirit samples, food and craft vendors, and German entertainment. New Town. *DiscoverStCharles.com*

Cinco de Mayo Street Festival
MAY 3, ST. LOUIS
More than 100 vendors, street food, music, and Lucha Libre wrestling. *CherokeeStreet.com*

Wild Bacon Wine Trail
MAY 3–4, HERMANN
Bacon and wine pairings at six wineries. *HermannWineTrail.com*

Main Street in Bloom
MAY 4–5, ST. CHARLES
Floral displays, parade with the Lewis & Clark Fife and Drum Corps, and Maypole dance. Main Street. *DiscoverStCharles.com*

Pop! Pop! Pop!
MAY 6, ST. LOUIS
Modern string orchestra celebrates popular songs. *TheSheldon.org*

Women in the Wild
MAY 6, ST. LOUIS
Learn about canoeing and kayaking. Spanish Lake Park. *StLouisCountyMo.gov*

Art Fair
MAY 9–11, ST. LOUIS
150 artist booths, food vendors, hands-on activities, and music. *LaumeierSculpturePark.org*

Microfest
MAY 10, ST. LOUIS
Sample hundreds of international and local craft beers. Rhone Festival Grounds. *StLMicrofest.org*

Paper Doll Tour
MAY 11, ST. LOUIS
Samantha Fish concert. *ThePageant.com*

Miller's Landing Day
MAY 10, NEW HAVEN
Celebrate the legend of John Colter (from the Lewis and Clark expedition) with music, historic crafts, reenactors, activities for kids, games, and fireworks over the river at sundown. Downtown. *NewHavenMoChamber.com*

Arcadia Tour
MAY 15, MARYLAND HEIGHTS
Alison Krause & Union Station. St. Louis Music Park. *CenteneCommunityIceCenter.com*

Cocktail Crawl
MAY 15, ST. LOUIS
Try signature cocktails. South Grand Boulevard. *SouthGrand.org*

Geekway to the West
MAY 15–18, ST. CHARLES
Play board games, plus vendors and a game design contest. Convention Center. *Geekway.com*

Makin' Bacon 101 Class
MAY 16, HERMANN
Make bacon with hands-on lessons. *HermannWurstHaus.com*

Cruise Night and Concert
MAY 16, MOBERLY
Depot District. *Moberly.com*

Taste of Maplewood
MAY 16–17, MAPLEWOOD
Food vendors, demonstrations, and entertainment. Sutton Boulevard. *MidCountyChamber.org*

Maifest
MAY 16–18, HERMANN
Maypole dancers, Volksplatz market, parade, German beer, music, food, and craft demonstrations. Downtown. *MaifestHermann.org*

Art Fair & Winefest
MAY 16–18, WASHINGTON
Wine, beer, food, live music, and artists. Farmers' Market. *DowntownWashMo.org*

Wentzville Days
MAY 16–18, WENTZVILLE
Live music, craft vendors, activities for kids, and carnival. Downtown. *WentzvilleMo.gov*

Scottish Games
MAY 17, MANCHESTER
Sheep herding, caber toss, Highland dancing competition, drumming, Celtic rock music, and Scottish food. Schroeder Park. *StLouis-ScottishGames.com*

Dark Star Orchestra
MAY 17, ST. LOUIS
Grateful Dead live concert experience. *ThePageant.com*

Spring to Dance Festival
MAY 23–24, ST. LOUIS
Professional dance companies from across the nation perform. Touhill Performing Arts Center. *DanceStLouis.org*

Missouri River Irish Fest
MAY 23–25, ST. CHARLES
Irish music, culture, and dancing, plus Wee Folk Village and whiskey tastings. Lewis & Clark Boathouse parking lot. *MRIFSC.com*

Wildflower Hike
MAY 24, KIRKSVILLE
Guided one-mile hike. Red Bud Trail. *MoStateParks.com*

Twain on Main Festival
MAY 24–25, HANNIBAL
Celebrate the life of Mark Twain with arts, crafts, music, and beer and wine garden. Downtown. *HistoricHannibalMo.com*

African Arts Festival
MAY 24–26, ST. LOUIS
Celebrate the cultures of African and African-American people with a marketplace, demonstrations, food, and films. World's Fair Pavilion in Forest Park. *StLAfricanArtsFest.com*

Jammin' Summer Concert
MAY 27, O'FALLON
Count of Monte Carlo performs, plus food trucks. Civic Park Bandstand. *OFallonMo.gov*

Shakespeare in the Park
MAY 28–JUNE 22, ST. LOUIS
Performance of *Hamlet.* Forest Park Shakespeare Glen. *StLShakes.org*

State Summer Games
MAY 30–JUNE 1, KIRKSVILLE
Special Olympics. Truman State University. *SOMO.org*

Carnival of Ink
MAY 30–JUNE 1, ST. CHARLES
Tattoo festival with working artists and vendors. Convention Center. *DiscoverStCharles.com*

Murder For Two
MAY 30–JUNE 29, KIRKWOOD
Comedy where two actors play 13 roles. Kirkwood Performing Arts Center. *StagesStLouis.org*

Native Plants Weekend
MAY 31, DE SOTO
Native plant hike, plus petroglyph tour and native plant gardening. Washington State Park. *MoStateParks.com*

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SOUTHEAST

Bags, Bingo, & Blooms
MAY 1, ROLLA
Win designer handbags, vendors, bingo, and flower bar. Oak Meadow Country Club. *VisitRolla.com*

Celebrate the Arts
MAY 2, CAPE GIRARDEAU
Music, theater, dance, and art. Bedell Performance Hall. *VisitCape.com*

Ozarks Mountain Challenge
MAY 3, PATTERSON
Hike up Mudlick Mountain, shuttle down, and repeat nine times in 12 hours to complete a total of 17 miles. Sam A. Baker State Park. *UltraSignUp.com*

Cruise In
MAY 3, PERRYVILLE
Antique motorcycles, trucks, and cars, plus live music. Downtown. *VisitPerryCounty.com*

STOMP
MAY 3, ROLLA
Dance, music, and theatrical performance using brooms, garbage cans, matchboxes, and more. *LeachTheatre.mst.edu*

Swap Meet and Flea Market
MAY 3, ROLLA
Phelps Connection for Seniors parking lot. *VisitRolla.com*

Sip N' Savor
MAY 3, ST. JAMES
Sample wine, beers, and spirits, plus food trucks, live music, and vendors. Downtown. *VisitStJamesMo.com*

Paws for Cause
MAY 3, WEST PLAINS
Dog show with food trucks and vendors. Fundraiser for Ozarks Pet Rescue. Civic Center. *ExploreWestPlains.com*

Strawberry Festival
MAY 3–4, SIKESTON
Berry picking, homemade shortcake, live music, and crafts. Apple Ridge Orchard. *See Facebook*

Plein Air Artist Exhibit
MAY 3–31, POPLAR BLUFF
Exhibit of works by artist Lynne Lancaster. Margaret Harwell Art Museum. *MHAM.org*

Cave Photo Tours
MAY 18, LEASBURG
Amateur photographers can join park staff for a tour which includes extra time for photographs to be taken at specific locations along the tour route. Tour will begin at the visitor center and will last between two and two-and-a-half hours. Dress warm. Onondaga Cave State Park. *MoStateParks.com*

Picnic in the Park
MAY 6, PERRYVILLE
Food truck rally. Perry Park Center. *VisitPerryCounty.com*

Wings & Wheels
MAY 9–10, PARK HILLS
Hot wing eating contest, car show, crafts, Hot Wheels race, car crushing, and beer garden. Downtown. *Business.PHLCOC.net*

Mayfest
MAY 9–10, PERRYVILLE
Craft fair, parade, concerts, and carnival. Downtown. *VisitPerryCounty.com*

Show Me State BBQ Cook Off
MAY 10, KENNETT
Kansas City Barbecue Society sanctioned contest, plus carnival, demolition derby, and music. Delta Fairgrounds. *KennettJaycees.com*

Bugs, Birds, & Blooms
MAY 10, ST. JAMES
Pollinator festival with plant sale, vendors, activities for kids, and educational booths. Maramec Spring Park. *VisitRolla.com*

Chocolate Festival
MAY 10, WEST PLAINS
Tasting competition, silent auction, and chocolate samples. First United Methodist Church. *ExploreWestPlains.com*

Bluegrass Concert
MAY 16, FARMINGTON
Performance by Wolf Creek. Long Memorial Hall. *DiscoverFarmingtonMo.com*

Mountain Music Festival
MAY 16–17, IRONTON
Bluegrass, mountain and Americana music, plus vendors and artisans. Iron County Courthouse Square. *MountainMusicFestival.net*

Dragons in Flip Flops Craft Fair
MAY 16–17, ROLLA
Vendor bingo, scavenger hunt, vendors, and chair massages. Signature Event Center. *PhelpsCountyFocus.com*

Strawberry and BBQ Festival
MAY 17, CALEDONIA
Barbecue and strawberry treats for sale, live music, cow-chip bingo, baking contest, and artisan vendors. *CaledoniaMo.org*

Summer Bash
MAY 17, CAPE GIRARDEAU
Water balloon fights and swimming. Shawnee Park Center. *VisitCape.com*

Crawfish Boil & Music Festival
MAY 17, SIKESTON
Fresh crawfish, music, and a mini-golf course. Rodeo Grounds. *SikestonRodeo.com*

Master Gardeners' Garden Walk
MAY 17–18, STE. GENEVIEVE
Tour private and public gardens, plus plant sale, vendors, and art exhibits. Downtown Historic District. *VisitSteGen.com*

100-Mile Yard Sale
MAY 22–26, JACKSON TO KENNETT
Along State Route 25. *KennettMo.com*

Resurrection
MAY 23, JACKSON
Tribute to Journey concert. City Park. *JacksonMo.org*

Summer Concerts
MAY 23–25, EMINENCE
Different concert each night. Echo Bluff State Park. *MoStateParks.com*

Memorial Day Weekend
MAY 24–26, CAPE GIRARDEAU
Reenactors honor the memory of veterans past and present. *FortDHistoricSite.com*

Silver Screen Sundays
MAY 25, POPLAR BLUFF
Showing of *Dr. No*, the James Bond movie. *RodgersTheatre.org*

Phelps County Fair
MAY 29–31, ROLLA
Agricultural exhibits, rodeo, truck and tractor pull, and concerts. Fairgrounds. *PhelpsCountyFair.com*

Folky Fish Fest
MAY 30–31, ST. JAMES
Folk and new-grass music, workshops, dance sessions, and food and artisan vendors. Maramec Spring Park. *FolkyFishFest.com*

Tattoo Expo and Food Truck Festival
MAY 30–JUNE 1, WEST PLAINS
Tattoo artists, vendors, competitions, and food trucks. Civic Center. *WestPlainsTattooExpo.com*

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CENTRAL

Downtown Live!
MAY 1, COLUMBIA
Concert by Wyatt Flores. Downtown on 9th Street. *VisitColumbiaMo.com*

BBQ Fundraiser
MAY 1, WARRENSBURG
Barbecue, live music, and silent and dessert auctions. The Gathering Coffee House. *VisitWarrensburg.com*

Curtain Up!
MAY 1–4, COLUMBIA
Music, dancing, and theater performances. Macklanburg Playhouse. *Stephens.edu*

***Working*: A Musical**
MAY 1–4 AND 8–11, COLUMBIA
Based on a book by Studs Terkel. *TalkingHorseProductions.org*

Capital City Cook-Off
MAY 2, JEFFERSON CITY
Fundraiser features barbecue, beer, and concert. Jaycees Fairgrounds. *SpecialLearningCenter.com*

Spring Fling at the Bluffs
MAY 2, JEFFERSON CITY
Five Turn Knot & Down Side Up concert. Capital Bluffs Event Center. *VisitJeffersonCity.com*

Magic Dragon Street Meet
MAY 2–3, LAKE OZARK
All makes, models, and years of cars, trucks, and motorcycles. Bagnell Dam Strip. *FunLake.com*

Sister Act
MAY 2–4, SEDALIA
Musical. *LibertyCenterSedalia.com*

Derby Fest
MAY 3, BRUNSWICK
Live broadcast of the Kentucky Derby, samples from distilleries, and stick-pony obstacle course. Downtown. *DiscoverChariton.com*

Spring Arts Carnival
MAY 3, CAMDENTON
Meet authors and local artists, plus storytime and movie night. *CamdenCountyMuseum.com*

Morels & Microbrews
MAY 3, FULTON
Samples from breweries, plus vendors, live music, and fresh and fried morels. *TheBrickDistrict.com*

Fortopia
MAY 22–SEPT. 1, KINGSVILLE
Outdoor exhibition at this 970-acre botanical garden features awe-inspiring forts, including Skully the Pirate Ship and The House That Stands on Chicken Feet. These forts invite explorers of all ages to discover the outdoors and the nostalgia of childhood fort building. *PowellGardens.org*

Harvest Bloom
MAY 3, LEBANON
Food, bounce house, and activities for all ages. Boswell Park. *VisitLebanonMo.org*

Beer, Wine, & Spirit Stroll
MAY 3, WARRENSBURG
Sample regional beer, wine, and spirits. Downtown. *VisitWarrensburg.com*

Superhero Fest
MAY 3, WAYNESVILLE
Comic books and vendors. Comic Hoarderz. *VisitPulaskiCounty.org*

Renaissance Festival
MAY 3–4, KINGDOM CITY
Lords and ladies. Village of Carlingford. *CentralMoRenFest.net*

Curated. Crafted. Created.
MAY 4, COLUMBIA
More than 70 local artisans and makers. Columbia Mall. *VisitColumbiaMo.com*

Lorie Smith Blues Fest
MAY 4, JEFFERSON CITY
Food truck, beer garden, and three blues bands. McClug Park. *VisitJeffersonCity.com*

Dark Side of the Moon
MAY 8, JEFFERSON CITY
Classic Albums Live performs Pink Floyd. *CRMUAmphitheater.com*

Science Friday Live!
MAY 10, COLUMBIA
Science news and stories happening in Missouri. Jesse Auditorium. *ConcertSeries.missouri.edu*

Treat Your Mother Craft Show
MAY 10, JEFFERSON CITY
More than 75 vendors. Jaycees Fairgrounds. *VisitJeffersonCity.com*

MayFair
MAY 10, SEDALIA
Art fair, Kids Zone, food, Soul Root concert, and fireworks show. *LibertyCenterSedalia.com*

Outdoor Expo
MAY 17, WARSAW
Activities on boating, fishing, and hunting, plus beer and wine garden. Drake Harbor. *WelcomeToWarsaw.com*

Picnic & Pickin' in the Park
MAY 18, COLE CAMP
Food, live bluegrass, and jam sessions. Ezekiel Williams Park. *ColeCampMo.com*

Street Corner Symphony
MAY 21, LEBANON
Hip a cappella group. Cowan Civic Center. *ConcertAssociation.net*

A Midsummer Night's Dream
MAY 22–JUNE 1, COLUMBIA
A Shakespeare comedy. *MaplewoodBarn.org*

Wagons for Warriors
MAY 23–24, LEBANON
More than 30 chuck wagons on parade that then set up to serve chuck wagon food. Fairgrounds. *WagonsForWarriors.com*

Mid American Freedom Rally
MAY 23–26, WAYNESVILLE
Memorial presentation, live music, vendors, and bike show. Shrine Club. *VisitPulaskiCounty.org*

Pedaler's Jamboree
MAY 24–25, BOONVILLE
Music and bicycle festival on the Katy Trail. Starts in Columbia. Music and camping at Kemper Park. *PedalersJamboree.com*

For the People Pow Wow
MAY 24–25, JEFFERSON CITY
Native American gourd dancing, drumming, art vendors, and food. Jaycees Fairgrounds *Calendar.PowWows.com*

Scott Joplin Ragtime Festival
MAY 28–31, SEDALIA
Concerts and symposia sessions. Downtown. *ScottJoplin.org*

Grits & Glamour Tour
MAY 29, JEFFERSON CITY
Concert by Pam Tillis and Lorrie Morgan. *CRMUAmphitheater.com*

Anchor Fest
MAY 30–JUNE 1, CENTRALIA
Anchor driving contest, parade, carnival, and crafts. Downtown City Square. *CentraliaMoChamber.com*

Dwight Yoakum
MAY 31, CAMDENTON
OzarksAmphitheater.com

Dinner Under the Lights
MAY 31, LEBANON
Four-course meal on a closed street featuring local chefs. Downtown. *VisitLebanonMo.org*

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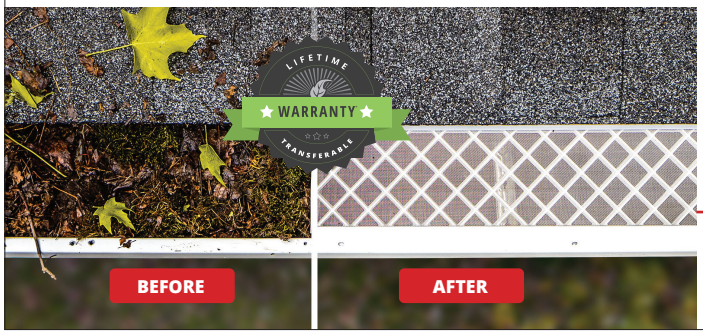

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STRENGTHENING AND PROMOTING THE QUALITY OF LIFE THROUGHOUT MISSOURI

A Labor of Love

One midwife's path to helping mothers bring life into the world.

INTERVIEW *Sydney Jones*

With Mother's Day rapidly approaching, it's the optimal time to address common questions that are asked to practicing midwives. One midwife, Sabrina Bias from Columbia, discusses her mission through midwifery: to help mothers feel empowered, confident, and calm throughout their birthing experiences.

Sabrina Bias

Q| Why did you choose to become a midwife?

A| For my first baby, I had an unnecessary C-section. I was induced, and 24 hours later I was only six centimeters dilated. My labor was deemed 'failure to progress,' but my body simply needed more time. Four years later, I delivered a baby (over two pounds larger) vaginally with no problems. I had my fifth baby out of hospital, and as soon as I had her, I was like, 'I will be a midwife one day. More women need to know this is a valid and safe option.' It was such a completely night and day experience for me.

Q| What education do midwives typically have?

A| It takes several years of education, apprenticeship, and working underneath a preceptor where we are gaining skills as we're gaining knowledge. There are different programs in the United States. You can do a two year program to become a midwife or a four year program. Apprenticeships take usually four years, but you can get it done in two to three years if you're working with a midwife who's that busy. Most of us are certified professional midwives, and so there's a national board that certifies us. Here in Missouri, the Certified Professional Midwife credential, like mine, is recognized as a legal provider.

Q| What might shock readers about midwifery?

A| Only about two percent of women choose to birth out of hospital in this state. In my practice, my C-section rate—the number of women who go to the hospital and end up needing a C-section—is four-and-a-half percent. Hospitals average 33 percent.

Q| How is working with a midwife different from a hospital birthing experience?

A| I serve women who want to experience natural birth. They want to be an active participant in their care and fully understand, 'Why are things being done to me and my baby? What are my options?' At a hospital, you don't get that specialized, one-on-one care, as the doctor's caseload is too big.

Q| What is the best, most impactful experience that you have had as a midwife?

A| We had a mom who had ended up with a C-section for her first baby. She had her second baby this morning (March 4, 2025). As she's going through labor, I can tell she's kind of afraid. There's a lot of fear that is pushed into pregnancy and birth. Labor is like 98 percent mental. She's pulling back during the contractions, and she just kept saying, 'I'm scared. I'm scared. I'm scared.' Her baby's heart rate starts not sounding good, and I was like, 'Listen, if they continue to sound like this in the next 10–15 minutes, we're going to have to go to the hospital.' And so, she started working with me more; she didn't want to go to the hospital because she knew that she would probably have to get a C-section. Her baby's heart rate started sounding better, and then, she had a baby! It was just amazing. I got a little bit weepy because I completely saw myself in that experience. I needed that. That was redemption. It was redemption for all the things I didn't get with my first.

SABRINA BIAS

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