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Touching 10,000 Years

Greg Wood finds arrowheads throughout his property in Howard County.

THIRTY YEARS AGO, our then new neighbors Lowell and Doris Smith came by to meet Danita and me in person just after we started building our house on farmland we had just bought in Howard County. They were farmers, and in fact, it was Doris who had told me by phone that this farmland might be for sale. Fortunately, I had learned that, at that time, land in Howard County was primarily sold by word of mouth, usually not listed with a realtor. Doris was one of the landowners I'd called to ask if she knew of any land for sale.

As we were standing by the recently excavated hole that would become our basement, Lowell was telling me how he always looked for Native American artifacts (mostly referred to as "points") as he was plowing or discing his ground. Then he looked down and pointed to a rock at our feet and said, "There's one right there." I reached down and picked it up. It was a scraping tool knapped from chert, which was commonly used by Native Americans even though it's not as good as flint in terms of the quality of the material; most points and artifacts are made from gray to brown chert.

I didn't think much about this tool from another era, since I was in the middle of building our house, until I later came across a ball that was made of stone. It was a near perfect sphere. I found out from my brother-in-law, Charles Strain, that it was a Native American game ball used in a sport similar to field hockey. Then Charles told me about all the artifacts he had found and where to look for them. "Creeks and river sandbars are where you'll find the best ones," he explained. "The ones you find out in the fields are usually damaged by farm equipment, but the ones you'll find in the creeks often are in pristine condition." That's because they tended to wash into creeks during heavy rains, especially after a hard winter or drought. "The good ones are the ones that were lost or dropped during hunting and have never been on ground that was plowed or disced," Charles told me.

So I headed to the creek! Our 243-acre farm has a creek that goes completely around its south and west sides in about a mile-and-a-half-long stretch. The first time I went, I found a pristine Hardin point, which was probably used as a knife, that was close to museum quality. It was made from high-quality black chert. It was just by chance that I spotted it lying on a small muddy sandbar in the creek. When I picked it up, I felt like I had touched the last person who had put hands on this relic 10,000 years ago.

You may think, *Wow, that's a long time ago*, and *How do you know that?* Well Charles came over, and he brought his books with him that showed how to identify specific artifacts and when they were made.

Over the years, I have had the opportunity to find about 100 artifacts, mostly from our creek. But I give all the credit to Charles, who had a collection of almost 1,000 artifacts himself, who inspired me, making me realize that, especially in Howard County, you can literally find an artifact just about anywhere. Charles made special frames for displaying his own artifacts, and Danita asked him to make some of these frames for me as a Christmas present one year.

Sadly, Charles had cancer and passed away just over two years ago. He was only 58. Melinda, Danita's sister and Charles's wife of 24 years, manages our *Missouri Life* Mercantile. Melinda is artistic with crafts and decorations, and she keeps *Missouri Life* looking spiffy. Charles was an incredibly energetic guy and a full-time sculptor. You can see his work at several locations in Missouri, including Central Methodist University in Fayette, Westminster College in Fulton, and Cherry Hill Dental in Columbia.

But his other passion, which I now share, was looking for Native American artifacts. He always gave thanks and praise to the people who made the artifacts he found, and now I do the same. There's just something about holding in your hand and touching something made 500 years ago, sometimes even 10,000 years ago, that nothing else can compare to. It's a reminder of both the brevity of our lives and the enduring legacy that human hands have created.

GREG WOOD
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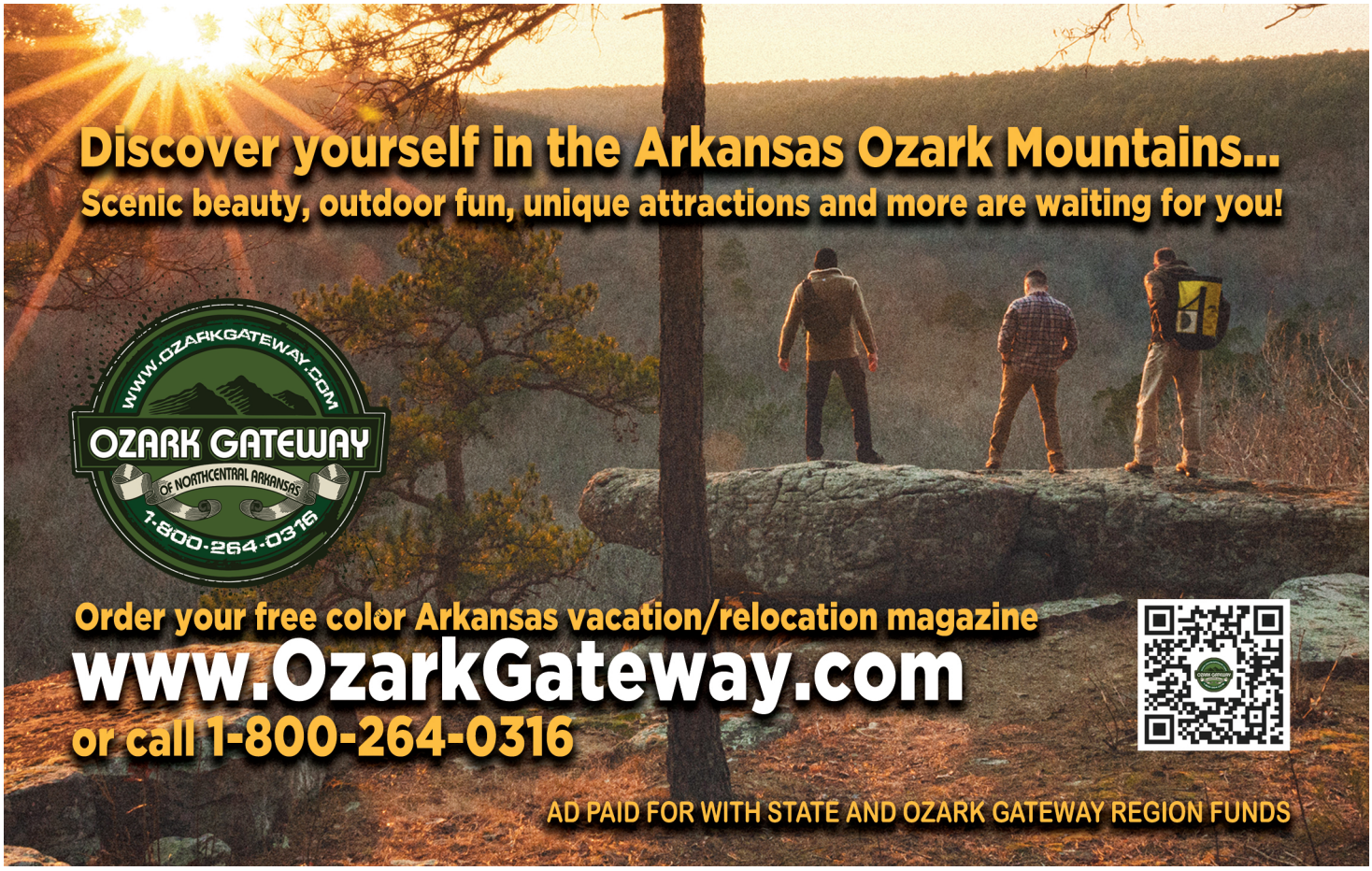
Watch for Greg's new column, "Dispatches from Boonslick Trail Farm," in the next issue.

GREG WOOD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From Pen Pals to Page

MORE "FIRST" WOMEN

In your March/April 2025 edition of *Missouri Life* ["Missouri's Fearless First Women"], you gave recognition to six very deserving women for being first at something, which is admirable. It is as inevitable as it is admirable that others would be overlooked. My question: Where is Rose O'Neill? Rose and her family moved to Taney County, Missouri, in the late 1800s, building what was to become her beloved residence, Bonniebrook. While spending time in New York, Paris, Connecticut, and the Isle of Capri, where she also had residences, it was Bonniebrook that captured her heart and to which she retreated and always considered home. Rose was the highest paid female illustrator in America by 1914, according to the State Historical Society. Rose created her famous "Kewpie doll"—which was to take the world by storm—at Bonniebrook in 1909. By World War I, [the doll] was being produced by several dozen factories, turning out millions of Kewpies to meet an insatiable demand around the world. The Kewpie doll was patented in 1913. Rose O'Neill is deserving to be included in any listing of Fearless First Women of Missouri.

—Jim Sandfort, Ballwin

Jim, you'll be glad to know we published a feature, "Ten Missouri Artworks that Help Us Understand Our History," July/August 2020, that included Rose. We also wrote a feature in our October 2002 edition on Rose's life and her residence, Bonniebrook. We have digitized it for you on our website! Visit MissouriLife.com and search for "Bonniebrook" to find Rose's story. —The Editors

AI WOMEN

Just an observation, does your artificial intelligence "illustrator" think that all women have reddish-brown hair? ["Missouri's Fearless First Women," March/April 2025] Also, it seems to think that married women, Mrs. Baxter, Mrs. Byrum, and Mrs. Edwards, for example, don't wear wedding rings.

—Bill Wallace, St. Charles

Bill, sharp eyes! We were so busy regenerating images to remove six fingers and other oddities that we lost the rings. With the hair color, we tried to create a "universal woman." —The Editors

ALPACA ADVENTURE

Thank you for the great alpaca farm story ["A Woolly Trek," January/February 2023]. I wanted to make sure your readers were aware of YaYa's Alpaca Farm in Harrisonville. It is a wonderful place with great tours and products for sale.

—Pam Ackermann, Lee's Summit

We agree! It was included within the "Discover Northwest Missouri's Hidden Gems" feature in our May 2023 issue. Visit MissouriLife.com to read that story. —The Editors

HOMETOWN HEART

I just finished reading Lorry Myers's "The Reason Why" [about why Lorry's kids moved back to their hometown] in the January/February 2025 magazine. I can totally relate! When we first got married, my husband was stationed with the Marine Corps in the California desert. We fell in love with it. But after his service, we moved back home to Missouri. Years ago, when we first started contemplating retirement, we had discussed moving back to the desert that we missed and loved so much. For the past 40-plus years, we have lived in the same town we grew up in. Our kids were raised here and now our grandkids. All of our friends and families are here; everything we know is right here. As retirement time is now upon us, I am rethinking that move to the desert. All the trials and tribulations we have been through these many years have been made easier by all of us still being close by and able to help one another. I cannot imagine being 1,700 miles away and trying to deal with the things we have been through. And so we will remain in Missouri, our home, and travel about the country.

—Deborah Cashatt, Liberty

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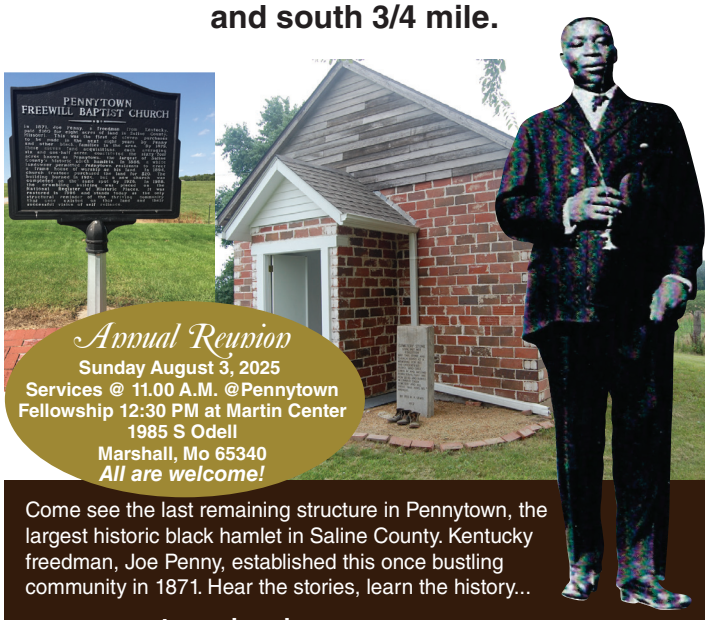

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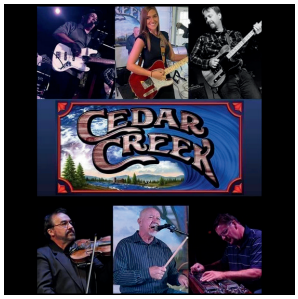

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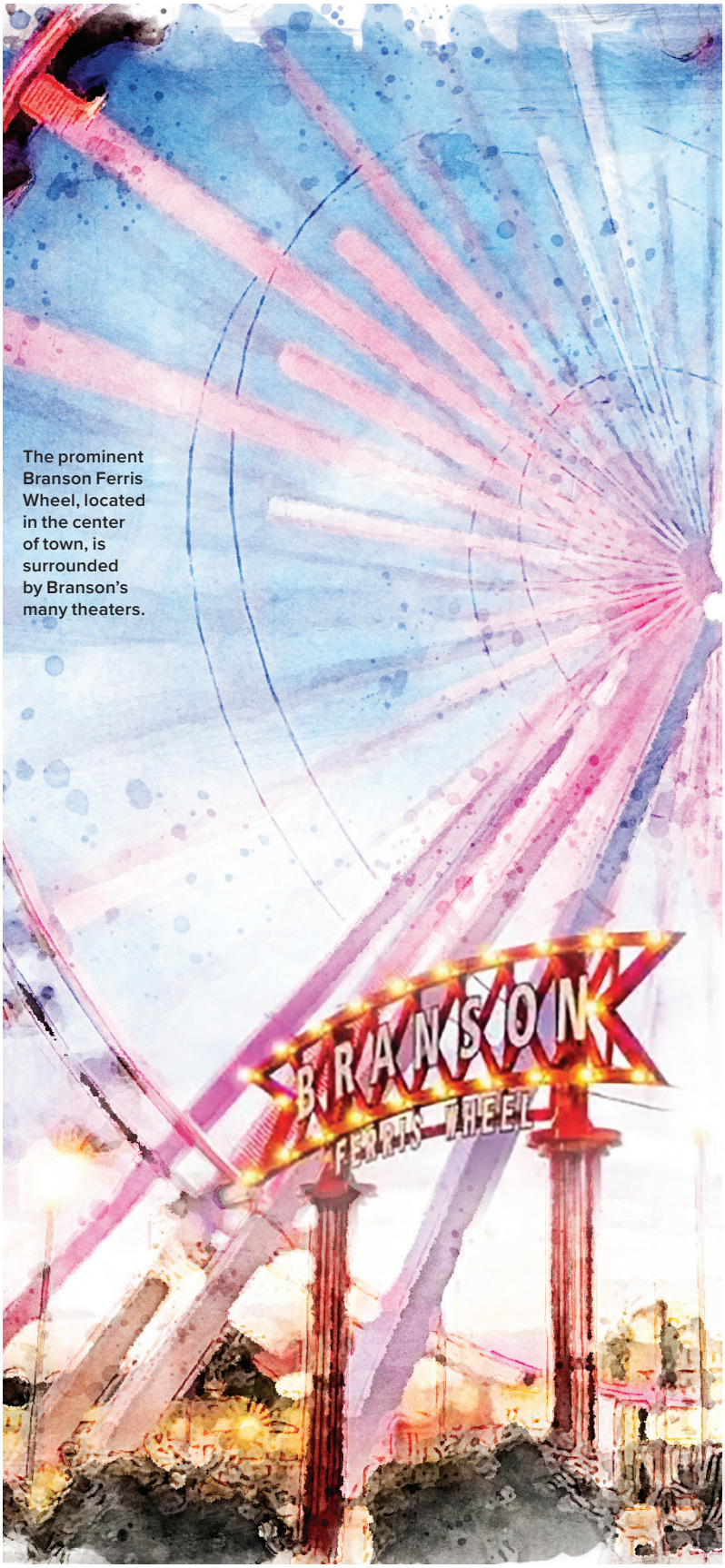

The prominent Branson Ferris Wheel, located in the center of town, is surrounded by Branson's many theaters.

Branson Shows by the Numbers

Branson's borders overflow with iconic theater productions, cover band concerts, daring acts, and magic.

30

Branson's Entertainment District has more than 30 theaters.

15

The Legends in Concert is a collection of live tribute artists and celebrity look-alikes who have performed in 15 countries.

6

SIX, an a cappella group that makes a full orchestra with only their voices, is made up of six brothers.

35,000

The Dolly Parton's Stampede, a show with aerial acrobatics, musical acts, and horseback stunt riders, is housed in a theater of this size in square feet.

15

This was the age of popular illusionist, Reza, when he made his debut in Branson.

65

The Shepherd of the Hills outdoor drama, a performance adapted from the book of the same name, has been running for this many years.

30

During the Smoke on the Mountain show, at least 30 gospel songs are sung.

To further explore Branson and its shows, see page 30.

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SOURCES: *Branson/Lakes Area Convention & Visitors Bureau*

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ROCK AROUND MISSOURI

CoMo Rocks, an indoor rock-climbing gym in Columbia, offers a welcoming and accessible fitness activity for both individuals and groups.

When CoMo Rocks opened in 2022, there was a lack of facilities for climbing in central Missouri. "It was hard to find each other because there wasn't a central hub where we could all meet and gather all ages and all walks of life," says Wil Pamieri, co-owner of the gym.

The climbing gym, also co-owned by David McGee, has almost 10,000 square feet of climbing terrain, including climbing walls for bouldering—a form of rock climbing without ropes—and rope climbing. It also has a weight-lifting area, climbing classes for all ability levels, yoga classes, and a gear shop that offers climbing gear rentals.

The gym is mostly membership based, but it does offer day and group passes. Whether you are looking for something to fill the afternoon or an event venue for a birthday party, corporate team-building exercise, class field trip, church group, scout troop, or bachelor/bachelorette party, this gym offers a fun and nonjudgmental environment to gather. CoMo Rocks also has competition teams, climbing clubs, camps, and weekly events.

The gym has climbers from age two and a half to 75, who attend its events and activities, Wil says. "We have a real fun mix across generations and abilities that we're finding coming into our doors." *—Andrea Kaneko*

205 East Nifong Boulevard, Suite 120, Columbia • CoMoRocks.com

BARBECUE BETTER WITH THIS MUSTARD

For Charlie Adams, the start of the barbecue season each spring brings back memories of his grandmother Adora Spencer teaching him how to make her sweet and spicy mustard. "I remember helping mix the ingredients in a saucepan when I was 10," he recalls.

Charlie continued to make the mustard for friends and family throughout the years. Then, in 2010, after his job was eliminated by the firm where he had worked for 32 years, he decided to produce and sell the mustard commercially.

The problem was that he had no idea how to proceed.

After a trip to the National Mustard Museum in Middleton, Wisconsin, and a visit with the museum's curator, he returned to St. Charles with a plan and a list of food industry contacts. Soon, he was in business, selling Adora's mustard at farmers' markets under the name Grandpa Spencer's Mustard.

"Adora should really be getting all the credit, but Grandpa Harry Spencer [Adora's husband] was the biggest fan of the mustard," Charlie says.

In 2014, following Adora's example, Charlie developed his own hot and spicy horseradish mustard recipes and added two new products to his line.

Today, Charlie is retired but continues to operate his mustard business as a hobby, selling at local markets and specialty food stores around the St. Louis metropolitan area. "I do ship all over the country, mostly to people who follow mustard competitions," he says. "We have won over 20 awards."

With the barbecue season approaching, there are plenty of creative ways to enjoy this award-winning, gluten-free mustard.

—Jim Winnerman

GrandpaSpencers.com

2

COMO ROCKS, GRANDPA SPENCER'S MUSTARD

RELAX IN HANDCRAFTED HOSPITALITY

Entering EC Reed's Mercantile & Hotel in Marble Hill feels like stepping back in time.

A luncheonette and soda fountain inside the Mercantile features vintage equipment rebuilt by co-owner Everett Reed (the "E" of EC Reed's). The 1953 Hamilton Beach milkshake mixer, 1951 Coca-Cola dispenser, 1947 draft dispenser, and 1949 stainless steel soda fountain "all have dings from use over the years, and that's the way I want them—not repainted or restored to look new," Everett says.

Keeping with its classic style, the luncheonette serves handcrafted sodas and shakes, homemade pies, and from-scratch food. The counter stools were taken from old closed Woolworth stores and given a second life inside of EC Reed's Mercantile & Hotel. "We make our own ice cream too," says co-owner and Everett's wife, Christy Reed (the "C" of EC Reed's). Shoppers will also find Missouri- and US-made products in its Mercantile.

The couple purchased the 1898 building in 2020 and renovated it to be a 14-room boutique hotel. Wondering how Marble Hill, population of 1,000, can support this vintage-inspired hotel?

"You'd be surprised how many people choose to stay here rather than a franchise," says Christy. "People want a different experience." —*Kim Hill*

301 First Street, Marble Hill • ECReedsMercantile.com

EC REED'S, NEWBURG CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

EXPLORE AN EDUCATIONAL CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

Since opening in 2008, the Newburg Children's Museum has made it its mission to provide a safe and educational place for children, says Nancy Allen, the managing director of the museum.

"We're trying to show the children that there is a life beyond Newburg—that they have the potential to do whatever they want," Nancy says.

With its 10 themed rooms, the museum is full of hands-on activities, including dissecting microscopes, insect displays, fossils, black-light areas, taxidermied animals, and toys. Each room aims to educate children while also keeping their curiosity and interest piqued. The cave area is a fan favorite, Nancy says, where kids are allowed to put on headlamps and crawl through the cave.

"One thing is, a lot of parents say, 'Don't touch that!' It's a hands-on museum. Things are meant to be touched. If things get broken, it's okay," Nancy says. "It might spark an interest in a child, and that's really the whole purpose of it."

The museum, which is in a refurbished three-story home, is run solely by volunteers and through donations. "Sometimes it's a struggle. Honestly, I don't think anybody thought it would last this long, but it's really having an impact," Nancy says.

Beyond a place to play and explore, it has educational programs and events for children. In 2024, the museum had more than 1,200 participants in its after-school and summer-school programs. —*Andrea Kaneko*

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A LEATHER NECESSITY

Saleigh Mountain Leather Company in Hermann handcrafts leather goods that are excellent in quality and taste. Both durable and beautiful, these wallets are created for everyday use. The wallet pictured here, the Rachael, is built with soft brown leather, reinforced stitching, a zippered coin pocket, gold hardware, and a detachable wrist strap.

KEEP TRACK OF YOUR GLASS

Wanda Tyner from Lee's Summit creates glass art—including the glass charms pictured here. Each charm fits a range of different drink glasses, including wine glasses and champagne flutes. When attached to a glass, the colored trinket allows people to keep track of their drinks. Cheers!

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Missouri Life **has paid to plant over 1,300 trees in the past two years to replace those used to make this magazine.**

Expand Your Palette

A local artist broadens the creative scene in Warsaw.

STORY & PHOTOS *Sydney Jones*

Kim Pearcy was an art teacher for 16 years before she decided to venture out and open Creative Palette—an arts and crafts studio and boutique in Warsaw. After COVID-19 shut down schools nationwide, Kim began selling paint kits to customers. "They would have everything they needed in a little kit," Kim says. "They'd order them on Mondays, and they'd pick them up on Fridays. It worked out great and gave people something to do." Noticing the paint kits were quick sellers, Kim took her side hobby and transformed it into a full-time business. The arts and crafts studio thrived throughout 2020 and has since continued to expand.

What began as selling painting kits soon grew into offering a multitude of different creative classes, such as classes for beading, ceramics, wooden sign painting, candle making, wreaths, and canvas painting. Classes are led by Kim, who guides participants through the creative process from start to finish. "When class participants come in, I check them in and give them whatever supplies they need. Every class kind of varies, so when they come, it's a new experience every time. It's not like it gets old," Kim explains.

In addition to classes, the shop also has a boutique section with items for sale—the majority of which are handmade by Kim. Shoppers can browse through hand-dyed T-shirts, Kansas City Chiefs merchandise, key chains, water bottles, and more. If customers are in the mood to create something new, they can customize hats, charm bracelets, or necklaces. There's something for every age, including a Create a Critter station that is similar in concept to Build-A-Bear, and Creative Palette's newest addition: a black light splatter painting room. Inside the room, lit with black lights, visitors can rent out the space to spray, fling, and squirt neon paint onto canvases, the walls, and each other.

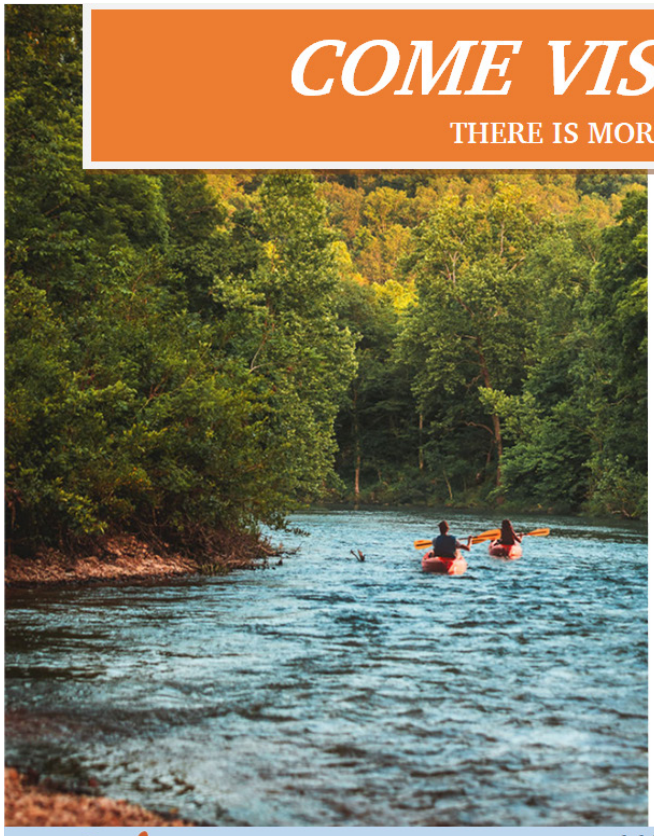
The Creative Palette boutique offers seasonal merchandise, like these recent Easter art pieces. In addition to crafts, shoppers can buy Kansas City Chiefs decor or apparel. The classroom walls are covered in paintings similar to ones that Creative Palette students can make. Shoppers can have custom car diffusers or hats created for them while they shop.

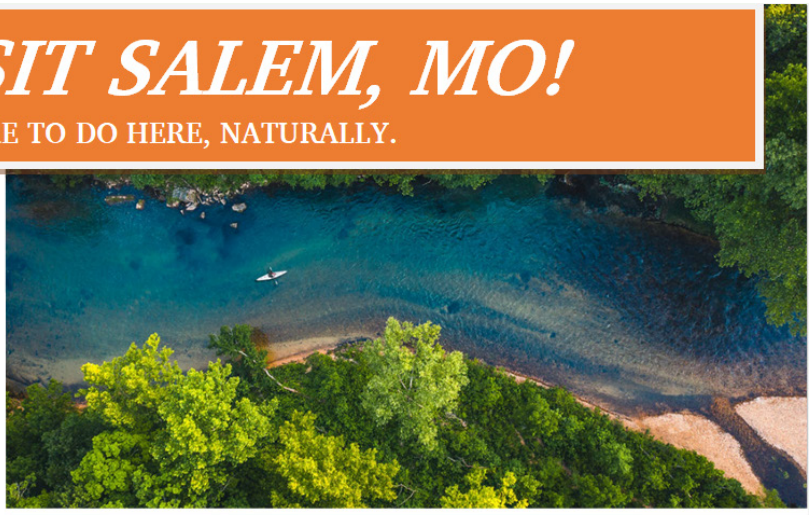
At Creative Palette, visitors can expect to find something fresh and exciting to spark their creativity, as Kim regularly adds new inventory, classes, and experiences. "All you can do is just keep evolving as other things evolve," Kim says. "That's the nice thing about art. It doesn't get stuck in one place, right? You can always change and go another direction if you need to." The best parts about owning the business, according to Kim, are getting to teach others to embrace their artistic side and experiencing how creativity brings joy into the lives of each participant. "I love teaching. Now I get to teach kids and adults, and it's on my schedule," she says. "You're here to be happy. You're here to paint and leave the world behind at the door."

Visit Creative Palette at 216 West Main, Warsaw.

COME VISIT SALEM, MO!

THERE IS MORE TO DO HERE, NATURALLY.





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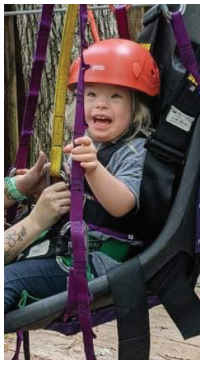
Tourism Tax Dollars at Work

A Camp Without Limits

Wonderland Camp provides a summer experience for children and adults with disabilities.

STORY *Andrea Kaneko*



From top, Wonderland Camp gets about 1,700 campers every summer. Counselor Haley Weir (left), camper, and counselor Sarah Lange are enjoying the summer sun. Counselor Sydney Baska (left) helps a camper on the climbing wall. The camp makes all activities accessible to each camper.

WONDERLAND CAMP

Summer camp is a rite of passage for many people, with late-night giggles, swimming-goggle tan lines, and chants that fill camp cabins. The Wonderland Camp in Rocky Mount opens its door for these heartfelt memories to be shared by all—no matter their ability.

For 54 years, Wonderland Camp has been providing people with disabilities an opportunity to attend an overnight camp for a six-day session during the summer. Amenities at the camp include a climbing wall, swimming pool, ropes course, miniature golf course, basketball court, playground, treehouse, and giant swing, each designed to be accessible to every camper. So whether a camper is crafting, singing karaoke, tie-dyeing, paddleboarding, or fishing, each activity is catered to their individual needs while safety precautions are considered.

"Many campers meet people at camp and make lifelong friends," says Mike Clayton, director of fund development and communications for the camp. "We have some campers that have been coming to our camp for 20 or 30 years. They come every year."

A stay at the camp includes meals, air-conditioned cabins, laundry services, and a view of the sparkling Lake of the Ozarks.

The Wonderland Camp staff includes clinical personnel, such as a licensed practical nurse and master's prepared nurse; administration who are college educated and have experience in caring for people with disabilities; certified lifeguards; and about 125 camp counselors and additional staff. The on-site clinical personnel are able to administer medication and accommodate dietary needs.

"It's very rewarding to the people that work here," Mike says. "I think they get as much out of the experience as our campers do."

The camp counselors, paid positions that include room and board, are required to be at least 15 years old. Additionally, people 15 and older can apply to be assistant counselors, which are daytime positions. All counselors are screened through an intensive interview and attend a week-long training program to ensure they know how to care for campers.

"It's really heartwarming to see the smiles and the laughter and the high fives that our campers give our counselors," Mike says.

The campers start from age six, and there's no maximum age. "Some of our campers are in their 80s. So it's a really neat experience to see all the different age groups of people that we serve here at the camp," Mike says.

The camp is a not-for-profit, but it does not recieve federal or state dollars. It requires camp fees and donations in order to maintain its extensive services, staff, and individualized care, Mike says. Summer camp sessions are $1,050 per camper.

"When you can bring your camper to camp and leave them with us, you can rest assured that we will keep them safe and sound and happy, well fed, and taken care of. That way you can go enjoy a bit of a respite," Mike says.

The camp has additional weekend sessions beyond the summer season. To register for camp and for more information, visit WonderlandCamp.org.

It's Time To **Explore**

Mexico, Missouri
Mainstreet of the Midwest

June

8 National Trails Day, Scattering Fork Outdoor Center
11-14 2025 Miss Missouri Competition, Missouri Military Academy
14 "*Annie Kids*" Production, Presser Arts Center
28 "*Charlotte's Web*" Production, Presser Arts Center

PRESSER ARTS CENTER

July

4 Noon Lions Club Firework Display, Mexico Optimist Ball Fields
8 Stay Out of the Sun Day, Scattering Fork Outdoor Center
12 Uplift Color Splash and Dash, Teal Lake Shelter
17-22 Audrain County 4-H and Youth Fair, Audrain County Fairgrounds
19-20 "*High School Musical Jr.*" Production, Presser Arts Center

August

10 Unplug & Be Outside, Scattering Fork Outdoor Center
22-23 Mexico Jaycees Soybean Festival, Downtown Mexico
30 Mexico Young Farmers Truck and Tractor Pull, Audrain County Fairgrounds

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Promotional Funding Provided By The Mexico Tourism Tax

www.mexicomissouri.net

Tree to Table

A woodworker fills the artisan sawmilling gap in mid-Missouri.

STORY *Andrea Kaneko*

When people think of sawmills, they often imagine large corporations rapidly shredding hundreds of trees. Woodland Hardwoods, a sustainable sawmill at Rocheport, is chopping away at these assumptions.

Woodland Hardwoods offers custom wood slabs for craftspeople who create their own furniture. The small family-owned business harvests wood from trees that already need to be removed from properties, such as diseased trees, and also uses other reclaimed wood for sawmilling wood slabs and dimensional lumber.

"The point of the reclaimed wood is to be able to tell its story," says Kassidy Frommann, marketing director and daughter of the owner, Scott Jones. [Scott is also the father of *Missouri Life*'s associate editor Sydney Jones.] "We are taking something that people would discard and don't know how to turn it into something beautiful, but we have all the tools, vision, and eye to be able to get it there."

Besides its sawmilling services, the business also offers services for vacuum kiln drying, sanding, flattening, and surfacing, as well as custom millwork and custom-made live edge furniture that keeps the original edges of the tree bark exposed. The business has made it its mission to encourage a resurgence in the art of woodworking.

"You're going to be able to pick the wood out from the starting point, and you're going to be along with us on the journey," Kassidy says. "We want to work with people who are in the transition, like if they are a woodworker who wants to do something professional. They can just drop it off and come back, but if they want to be a part of that process, they can come in and be alongside us. We want to be able to educate."

This unique "tree to table" business model grew out of Scott's 30 years of experience as a woodworker who made custom furniture. When he used to make live edge tables, epoxy tables, bar tops, and other wood products, he struggled to source the wood locally.

From top, Woodland Hardwoods builds live edge furniture, like this table. From left, Kassidy Frommann and daughter Eden, Scott Jones, Krista Jones, and Kevin Frommann.

"It was really hard to come up with the product, and it was really expensive when we did find it," says Krista Jones, Scott's wife and community engagement director for the business. "This was a way to bring everyone together in the wood community and have a place to go to get what they need."

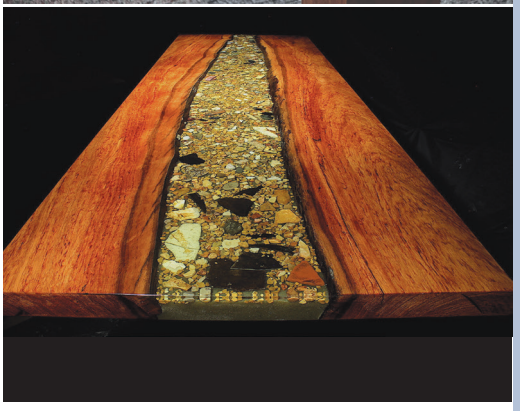
The family business is made up of Scott, Krista, Kassidy, and Kevin, Kassidy's husband, who works as a sawyer for the business.

"I love watching each person shine in their own gifts and strengths that they have been given," Krista says.

Together, they have transformed Scott's dream into a reality by combining each of their backgrounds to create a business.

KASSIDY FROMMANN, MEGAN LARSON PHOTOGRAPHY

Left and below left, owner Scott Jones creates custom-cut lumber, which is tailored to customers' specific requirements. Scott is also a marine veteran. Below, the business specializes in exotic woods and domestic hardwoods, including walnut, oak, maple, cherry, and sycamore. Customers can purchase live edge tables, pool tables, and custom river tables, which are wood tables filled with decorative elements and epoxy.



Kassidy was a former cinematographer and digital relations manager; Krista, a specialist in business development and community engagement; and Kevin, a carpenter.

"We are an entrepreneurial family," Kassidy says. "We really enjoy building and finding solutions and crafting things. So being able to build this has oddly felt very natural."

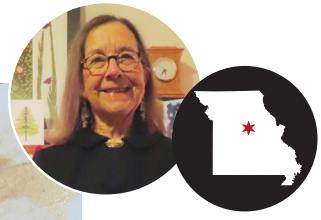
Together, the family has made it their goal to offer what they themselves sought after for years: a business aimed at helping local wood artisans.

To learn more, visit WoodlandHardwoods.com.

MADE IN BUY MO! MISSOURI

When we support and buy products grown, manufactured, processed, or made in Missouri, our state becomes stronger. Buy Missouri is a program within Lieutenant Governor David Wasinger's office that promotes these products to our fellow Missourians, the country, and the world. The Buy Missouri program already has more than 650 members and continues to grow.

STORY *Andrea Kaneko*



GREETINGS FROM KAY

Kay Foley was unhappy at her job when she read *The Artist's Way* by Julia Cameron and became inspired to start a new adventure. In 1998, she decided to create Ampersand Cards, an art and greeting card business based in Columbia. "Julia Cameron's book is all about finding what you love to do and doing it," Kay says. "My business was directly inspired by *The Artist's Way.* I quit my job and took a big leap." Kay sells a wide range of art forms, from bright abstract paintings to collages with handmade paper and hand-written text to hand-drawn children's books. In addition, she creates greeting cards made for a variety of holidays, featuring original collages, verses, and photographs. "I consider my biggest success to be the fact that people take comfort from my writing and from the cards, and that my art brings joy. People so often say that the cards say just what they'd like to say and that the art makes them happy. Those are my goals." Browse through products on the website, or at Poppy in downtown Columbia and Stockton General Store in Rocheport.

AmpersandCards.com

A TOUGH NUT LEGACY

In 1946, when Ralph Hammons owned and ran a grocery store in Stockton, he began noticing how many wild eastern black walnuts were growing all around the Ozarks and decided there might be an opportunity to process and sell them. He bought a cracking machine and started a new business, Hammons Black Walnuts. It's a family-run affair, run by Ralph's son, Dwain Hammons; Ralph's grandson, Brian Hammons; Ralph's granddaughter, Lori Basecke; and Ralph's great-grandson, Jacob Basecke. "We're thankful for a solid, reliable workforce and leadership over the years with strong Missouri values," Brian says. The company, based in Stockton, offers a unique business model that allows people to sell the black walnuts they gather, primarily sourced in Missouri, to the business. The family has taken eastern black walnuts, the official tree nut of Missouri, and transformed them, creating a thriving business. The company also sells other black walnut products, including ground nutshells, chocolate covered treats, cookies, and coffee cake. Customers can shop Hammons Black Walnuts on their website.

Black-Walnuts.com

From left, Dwain, Brian, Lori, and Jacob

AMPERSAND CARDS, HAMMONS BLACK WALNUTS

CLEAN AND GREEN

Michal Antonuk started making natural soaps for her family after realizing many soaps were "packed with artificial and harmful ingredients." After creating some natural soaps, she decided to share her creations with others by opening Four Ladies & Co., which is named after her four daughters, in 2023. The business, based in Republic, offers handcrafted luxury bars of soap and nourishing face oils. "The inspiration to start the business came from the realization that buying natural soaps could get very expensive, with some companies charging $10 or more per bar," Michal says. "As a family of six, that just wasn't feasible. So, I decided to make my own soaps using only natural and organic ingredients that I could trust while also keeping it affordable for others." Her products are made from 100 percent natural and organic ingredients. "Building a loyal customer base and knowing that our soaps are making a difference in people's lives has been incredibly rewarding. We've also grown our product range and reached more people, which has been exciting and motivating," she adds. Customers can find the business's products and where they are sold on the website.

FourLadiesCo.com

IN STITCHES

Lorelai Kuecker started her business from her favorite hobby—quilting—in 2021 when she was just 12 years old. Lorelai, owner and artist of Pigs in a Blanket Quilting, based in Concordia, sells intricate quilted creations. Lorelai first learned to sew straight lines on a sewing machine at five years old; by 11, she had created her first quilt. "For as long as I can remember, I have needed to be working on a project of some sort. I always say, 'Boredom is my mortal enemy,'" Lorelai says. While attending online high school and participating in theater and band, Lorelai still makes time to juggle building her small business. "When other quilters view my work either online or in shows, they either don't realize it is made by a youth quilter or don't believe that I made the projects entirely on my own," Lorelai says. "My mission in creating a youth-owned quilt business is to introduce many young, aspiring artists to the industry so that passionate youth quilters become commonplace." See the online store to shop or learn about upcoming classes and events.

PigsInABlanketQuilting.com.

SUPPORT THE NATIVES

Fill in your flowers for the summer! Claire's Garden in Kirksville sells a vast array of native plants and wildflowers, trees, vegetables, and perennial flowers. Claire's Garden shares the same retail location with Peckosh Landscaping. Claire Peckosh owns Claire's Garden, while her son, Logan Peckosh, owns Peckosh

Landscaping. She started her plant business in 2012, and when her son's traditional and native landscaping business took off in 2014, they decided to partner. As the partnership bloomed, Claire decided to add native plants to her business in 2017. "It just seemed like the right move environmentally and aesthetically. We have such a growing problem with pollinators and also in our diversity of plant life," Claire says. "I think it is important to add natives wherever we can." Now, Claire sells many types of plants that are native to Missouri and are full of life and color in her growing garden. Visit Claire's Garden and Peckosh Landscaping at 23198 Highway H, Kirksville.

PeckoshLandscaping.wordpress.com

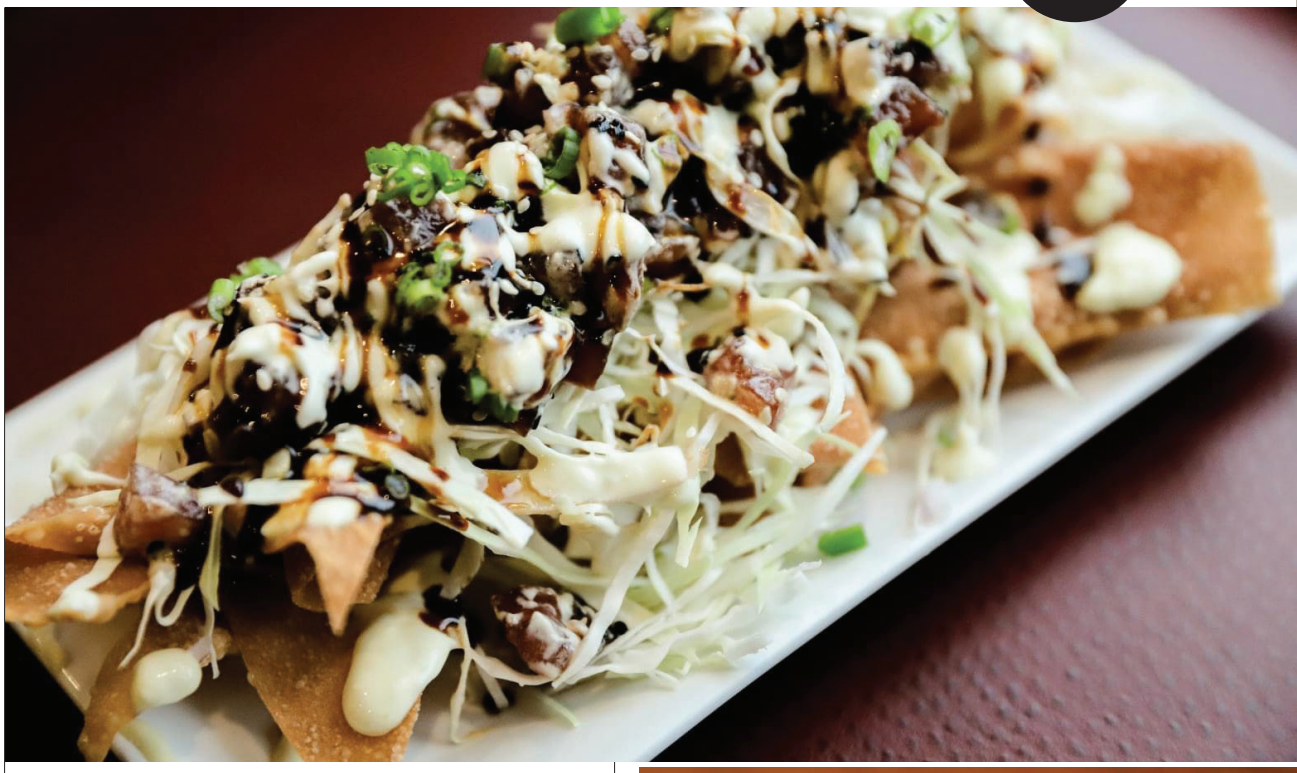
To learn more about hundreds of Buy Missouri businesses as well as the ones featured in this issue or to enroll your business, please visit buymissouri.net.

FOUR LADIES & CO., PIGS IN A BLANKET QUILTING, PECKOSH LANDSCAPING

NACL+H2O

This family-owned restaurant in Rolla serves saltwater seafood.

STORY *Chef Daniel Pliska*



Above, Matt Banholzer is the co-owner of NaCl+H2O. Top right, the Tuna Poke Nachos include marinated tuna on wonton chips with wasabi mayo and sushi sauce. Below, the hand-breaded coconut shrimp is served atop a Certified Angus Beef filet.

Honestly, when I first heard the name NaCl+H2O, I thought to myself, *What kind of name for a restaurant is that?*

Once I found out from the restaurant's owners, Sue and Matt Banholzer, the meaning of the name, which is the chemical formula for saltwater, I became more intrigued. According to Sue, they felt it was a unique way to represent the core focus of their restaurant, which is fresh seafood. The restaurant is situated close to the Missouri University of Science and Technology campus in Rolla.

The Banholzers launched their restaurant in 2017 after their children went off to college. Sue's primary career was as a flight attendant. As such, she traveled around the country and globe, often accompanied by her husband, Matt. Their travels inspired them to create dishes based on their memorable dining experiences for their planned future restaurant. Over the years, Matt has developed his own signature

From top, the shrimp and pasta carbonara is made with a bacon-mushroom sauce. From left, the Royal Vesper, made with Empress 1908 Indigo Gin, and the Lemon Drop are popular.

recipes, adding a personal twist to the recipes he has recreated. Today, he serves these same recipes with the addition of his own secret sauces, dressings, and steak seasonings to diners.

The seafood is all hand trimmed and portioned at the restaurant. Halibut filets, salmon, and mahi-mahi are three of the fin fish that are brought in fresh along with live clams and mussels, which they serve in their version of the famous San Francisco cioppino. This classic Italian dish is a popular, robust seafood stew that is typically flavored with tomato, garlic, fennel, red onions, and dry white wine and served with toasted baguette rounds.

Sue and Matt's menu features other interesting seafood options such as hand-breaded New England-style fried seafood, shrimp and grits, parmesan encrusted halibut, and blackened mahi-mahi. They have expanded their menu to include additional appetizers, hamburgers, steaks, pastas, chicken, and sandwiches.

Starters such as the Sweet and Spicy Shrimp and the Tuna Poke Nachos have become popular with their diners. From the Signature Burgers + Sandwiches menu comes their Parisian Cheeseburger, topped with melted brie cheese and peppered mayo and served with hand-cut fries.

Another interesting menu section is their Tacos + Baskets menu, where all items feature seafood, such as fried shrimp, grilled fish, and—a childhood favorite of mine—fried clams. The steaks at the restaurant are all Certified Angus Beef, including its filets and rib-eyes. The rib-eyes are dry aged in a special humidity-controlled cabinet in-house.

Along with its tasty food options, the restaurant is known for its hand-crafted cocktails, and currently, its menu is loaded with 16 specialty drinks. A few selections include the French 75, Bahama Mama, and old-time classic, Sazerac. The Sazerac is crafted with Templeton Rye, Courvoisier Cognac, simple syrup, bitters, and a lemon twist and is served in an absinthe-rinsed glass. Sue speaks proudly of their Lemon Drops and Old Fashioned cocktails as well, which are well sought after by their guests.

While traversing through Rolla, travelers can stop by the family-owned and -operated NaCl+H2O to enjoy its wide range of unique saltwater-inspired dishes and indulge in the delightful and artistic bar scene.

Peruse their menu online at NACLH2ORolla.com, and visit the restaurant at 817 North Pine Street, Rolla.

From top, much of the fish at the restaurant is hand portioned, such as the Atlantic Salmon. The restaurant is in downtown Rolla. At this restaurant, every menu item is made from scratch.

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

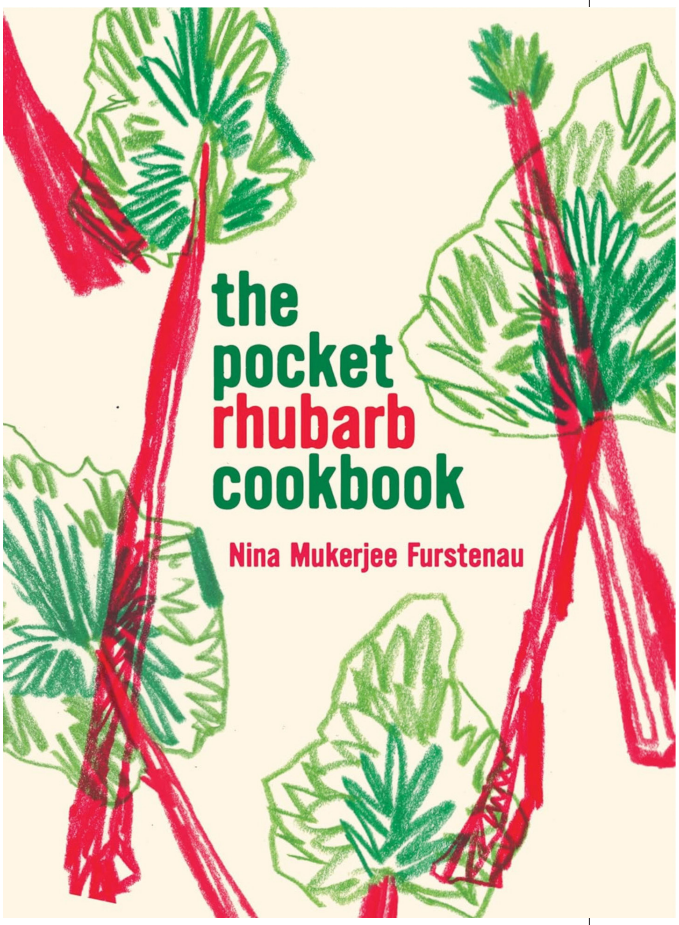
The Taste of Spring

A new book from a Missouri food writer showcases a spring staple.

REVIEW BY *Evan Allen Wood*

THE POCKET RHUBARB COOKBOOK
Nina Mukerjee Furstenau, 160 pages, cookbook, Belt Publishing, paperback, (5x7) $18.

Seasonal allergies notwithstanding, early spring must be one of the most special times of year here in Missouri. It begins with the blooming of the Bradford pear flowers. These invasive ornamental trees probably ought to be culled because of their unpleasant aroma alone, but there is something undeniably charming about the thrum of honeybees swarming in their branches on a warm afternoon in March. Shortly after come the serviceberries, magnolias, and eastern redbuds, and by the time the graceful dogwoods come into bloom, every mile of meandering backroads are a vision of technicolor green.



For author Nina Mukerjee Furstenau, the arrival of spring is best heralded by rhubarb sprouting in the garden. Her adoration of the tart red plant (and its association with springtime) is what inspired her newest book of recipes: *The Pocket Rhubarb Cookbook*. As she puts it in the book's introduction, "it tastes like spring."

This is at least in part because in Missouri the vegetable hits its peak ripeness during the spring in a fairly short window compared with other backyard garden staples such as tomatoes or sweet corn. The fleeting chance to grow and take advantage of it in cookery only adds to its appeal.

The Pocket Rhubarb Cookbook does, in fact, fit in a pocket (your mileage may vary, but if it does, consult your tailor), which also makes it a handy size for use in the kitchen as it doesn't take up too much countertop space.

As is probably expected in our corner of the world, the pies and cobblers come first here, with 12 recipes to choose from. They range from pairing the rhubarb with fruits such as strawberries and apples to a glacé that feels like it would fit in well on *The Great British Bake Off*.

Once the book leaves off from these sweeter recipes, readers will discover a myriad of new applications including stew, chutney, a ham glaze, and a number of cocktails.

This reviewer's culinary horizons were broadened significantly by the experience of exploring this collection of recipes. If you're feeling similarly inspired by the recipes included here, there is also some practical advice for planting your own crop of rhubarb. Even if you prefer to find recipes from your favorite website or cooking app, a great cookbook will challenge and inspire you with ideas, techniques, and ingredients that you wouldn't have otherwise considered. *The Pocket Rhubarb Cookbook* does that in spades.

THE PUBLISHER

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Step inside the reinvigorated Old Courthouse at Gateway Arch National Park in St. Louis, MO — the landmark home to some of America's most important civil rights cases. From Dred and Harriet Scott's fight for freedom from slavery to Virginia Minor's battle for women's right to vote, hold court with history while standing beside bravery that rose higher than the Arch itself.

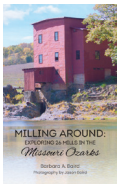
Hear their stories at
GatewayArch.com/Old-Courthouse

Mysteries and Mills in Missouri

Two Missouri-based books take readers on unforgettable journeys.

DOWN AND OUT IN THE RIVER CITY, *Wm. Stage, 272 pages, fiction, Floppinfish Pub Co., paperback (5 by 8 inches), $15.95.* The book's protagonist, Francis X. Lenihan, is a process server in St. Louis in 2017. During a routine attempt to serve a legal document, he ends up on an adventure. He sets out to find why his card was found in the pocket of a young homeless man who died in Hopeville, a tent city along the banks of the Mississippi River. Francis begins to talk with people who live in the area, while Dr. Lambert, the father of the deceased, along with his partner Cale Twohey, also set out to find answers. Along their journey, they meet a stuttering psychopath, the Soup Man, and a foot fetishist. As Lenihan dives into the mystery of a string of killings at the camp, he faces the risk of imprisonment. If twists and turns spark your fancy, this fiction book might be for you. This author grew up in Michigan and now resides in St. Louis.

MILLING AROUND: EXPLORING 26 MILLS IN THE MISSOURI OZARKS, *Barbara Baird, 159 pages, historical nonfiction, DISA, paperback (6 by 9 inches), $24.99.* This book explores 26 different mills in Missouri. Two of the mills are powered by steam, and the other 24 are powered by water. The book includes information about the mills' historical significance, how they work, activities for visitors, maps of the areas, and photos taken by Jason Baird. The author is from the Missouri Ozarks and has used her experience visiting each of the mills as well as extensive research to create a guide to the mills of Missouri like no other. Included are Bollinger Mill in Cape Girardeau County, Reed Spring Mill in Reynolds County, and Klepzig Mill in Shannon County. The author uses rich descriptions to invite readers to journey alongside her to explore these stunning Missouri wonders.



THE PUBLISHERS

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Mass Schedule: Monday - Saturday at 12:10 p.m. Sunday at 11:00 a.m.
Gift Shop Hours: Open Daily: 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

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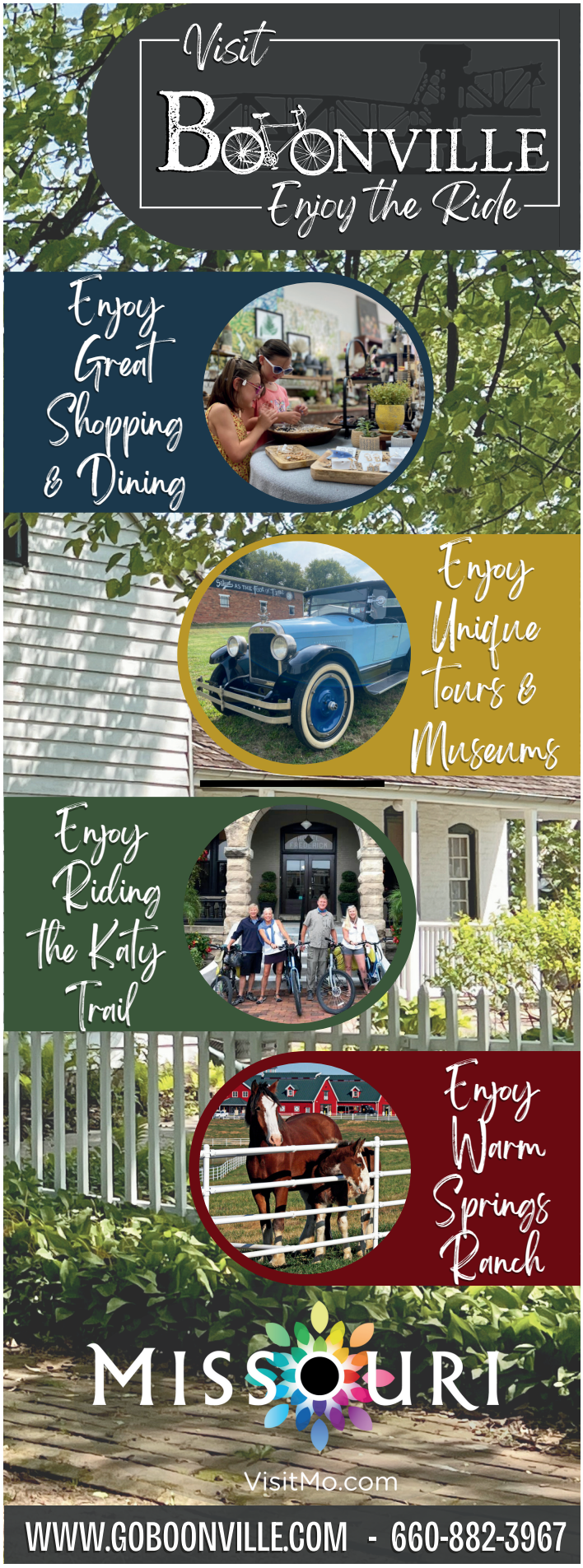
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The Stampede show features Dolly's song, "Color Me America."

5 Shows *in* 5 Nights *in* Branson

STORY *Sydney Jones*

EXPLORE BRANSON THROUGH ITS ICONIC SHOW SCENE.

Growing up in my family meant driving to Branson a few times a year with our pop-up camper in tow to explore the Ozark Mountains. For us, a Branson trip included time around the campfire, a trip to Dick's 5 & 10, and Silver Dollar City. The one thing that it rarely ever included? Branson theater shows.

The rarity of getting to see a show in Branson made the challenge I gave myself to see five shows in five nights even more exciting. I had not seen any of these shows prior to my trip in the spring. To challenge myself even further, I went into each show without any preconceived ideas—not allowing myself to watch previews, read reviews, or view social media pages beforehand. Each experience harnessed raw reactions in real time.

During this quest to explore performances around Branson, I found myself enchanted by its shows. I'm not sure exactly what I expected, perhaps flashing lights, cheesy tricks, or bad jokes. But I know what I experienced: family stories that span several generations, passionate performers running stages and captivating audiences, and entertaining experiences that, for a short time, took me to another world. Because Branson has been my family's tradition, I brought my family along on this trip. Attending some of the shows with me were my dad, Scott, my mom, Krista, and my sister, Sarai.

DOLLY PARTON'S STAMPEDE DINNER ATTRACTION

Day One / *Journal*

The Ozarker Lodge

My first stop on my Branson adventure was checking in to our hotel for the week: The Ozarker Lodge. The Ozarker became one of my favorite Branson destinations the moment I walked through its doors. Not only is it aesthetically pleasing with wall-to-wall wood paneling, comfortable couches, and a glamorous mid-century modern bar lined with crystal chandeliers, but the staff were also extremely welcoming and attentive to guests. With a continental breakfast each morning, a coffee bar with freshly brewed espresso drinks, and a wood-burning stone fireplace, the lobby is a place visitors won't want to leave.

Our room was spacious with two queen-sized beds, a bathroom, a vanity area, and an entertainment center. A few of my favorite perks were the heavy-weighted yet soft blankets on each of our beds, the warm-glowing wall sconces that lit our room, and a vintage-style Bluetooth speaker in the room. My family had a few full-fledged dance parties, compliments of the speaker system.

The Ozarker's lobby

The lodge's outdoor space beckons visitors as well, offering large wooden soaking tubs, a heated pool and cabana, rentable fire pits and s'more kits, a natural outdoor playground, complete with a tunnel built into a hill and a balance beam carved from a large tree log, and a bubbling limestone creek with waterfalls to explore.

The Ozarker Lodge also welcomed my French bulldog, Boone, with open arms. The pet-friendly lodge allows well-behaved pooches in the main lobby area to rest and relax alongside their owners. Boone and I started each morning with a rejuvenating walk along the creek, followed by sipping an iced espresso drink while sitting by the fireplace.

»» Show One / ***DOLLY PARTON'S STAMPEDE***

Dolly Parton's Stampede includes singing, dancing, and circus tricks, such as fire breathing.

Up first was *Dolly Parton's Stampede*, a Branson tradition since 1995. After we parked, my sister Sarai and I made our way to the ticket booths. Along the route, we found the show horses in stables that lined the building. Each stall had a metal nameplate. Many of the horses stuck their heads out of the stalls as if to say, "Hey there! Welcome to the show!" I guessed these beautiful creatures love to perform as much as their humans do.

One advantage to *Dolly Parton's Stampede* is that it's a dinner show. And not just any dinner show—while being entertained by talented performers, there is a four-course meal, including a savory and creamy vegetable soup, an entire rotisserie chicken, hickory-smoked pork, mashed potatoes, corn on the cob, and more. While our server poured a bowl of creamy, steaming soup and we sipped iced tea, the lights dimmed, and the show began.

The first big surprise of the show was five buffalo running into the arena, herded by a cowboy with a lasso. These beasts were majestic up close, and my jaw dropped when they came running out. The buffalo were followed by several cowgirls and cowboys riding horses and performing tricks, such as jumping through a hoop lit with fire. An aerial silks artist in a bedazzled costume swung from the ceiling onto a horse below, and the host came center stage to introduce the show.

Dolly Parton's Stampede is set in the Wild West, a time when many Americans were feuding over land. In that spirit, the host split the arena in half, with one side of the arena "fighting" for land for the North and the other side "fighting" for land for the South. As someone who is always up for a little friendly competition, I was in.

Each side was given a designated color: red for the South and blue for the North.

SYDNEY JONES, DOLLY PARTON'S STAMPEDE DINNER ATTRACTION

The rest of the evening was filled with friendly competition as riders competed in games like barrel racing, relay races, and fence jumping. The riders wore corresponding colors of red or blue, so we always knew who was on our team. One of my favorite moments of the show was when the cowboys brought out piglets in red and blue garb. The pudgy piglets raced around the arena with a chorus of laughter and applause from both sides of the audience. Though our side (the South) was losing almost every competition that night, we couldn't help but support our team by loudly cheering our side on, adding to the general excitement of the show.

Toward the end of the show, Dolly's voice rang out in the arena, explaining that chasing butterflies through the forests and meadows of the Smoky Mountains remains one of her favorite childhood memories. To bring this joy to the audience, Dolly recently added a new Butterfly Dreams segment to the Stampede show. The lights dimmed as the audience sat forward in their seats, ready to see what was next.

Suddenly, horses entered the arena, glowing from ears to tail. They were adorned with three-foot-tall butterfly wings in neon pinks, greens, and blues. A set piece filled with glowing neon flowers that resembled an enchanted forest slowly lowered from the ceiling of the arena, creating a center stage, which performers rode around and danced on.

After dessert—a warm apple turnover drizzled with frosting—was served and the show came to a close, I left feeling cheerful and very full. The Stampede experience is an iconic show and perfect for all ages, and I would especially recommend it for families with children. Some of my favorite moments included looking around at the audience during the show and seeing how much the kids loved the buffalo, the horses jumping through hoops of fire, the butterfly-horses, and the aerial silks artist.

››› Show Two / ***A MODERN TRIBUTE TO ABBA***

The ABBA Tribute show includes trivia about the band.

MARSHAL MEADOWS

A Modern Tribute to ABBA was the smallest show that we attended. While I thrived on the high-energy, thrilling nature of the other shows, there was something about simply sitting and listening to good music that refreshed me more than I was expecting.

Before the show began, my sister and I arrived early to grab our go-to show concessions: buttered popcorn and cherry ICEEs. We walked to our seats as a video began to play, explaining the story of ABBA—including who was in the original ABBA band and how it formed—with real footage of the band traveling and performing. I loved that the show began with the history of ABBA, because although the band's music (including songs like "Dancing Queen," "Waterloo," "Mama Mia," and "Chiquitita") continues to be popular, their story is not as well known. ABBA was originally formed in Sweden in 1969 and was composed of four talented band members—Agnetha Fältskog, Björn

MARSHAL MEADOWS, SYDNEY JONES, BRANSON/LAKES AREA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

Ulvaeus, Benny Andersson, and Anni-Frid Lyngstad. Their first hit, "Waterloo," was an international favorite in 1974. The band continued to release hits and sold millions of records worldwide, continuing to grow in popularity until their separation in 1982. In 2016, the band came back together and created another album, *Voyage*. Though their music production may have slowed down, their fan base's love for the band did not. The album (their first released album in over 40 years) has sold over 2.5 million copies, and their *Voyage* tour sold over three million tickets.

As the video played explaining this history, my sister and I heard a quiet, "Excuse me?" behind us. We turned around and saw a couple, probably in their 50s, smiling at us. "How old are you girls? Do you know ABBA?" We smiled at their apparent surprise that a 19- and 23-year-old were attending a '70s tribute band concert. My sister and I explained that when we were young, we grew up listening to ABBA. I think we made that man's life complete, just hearing that ABBA's music was appreciated by newer generations.

ABBA Tribute band member Chelsie Odom sings "The Winner Takes it All."

After our brief introduction to the original band, the curtain came open and we were introduced to the tribute band in all of their glitz, go-go boots, and glamour. During the first few songs, including "Waterloo," "SOS," and "Take a Chance on Me," the four vocalists harmonized beautifully and kept the energy alive on the stage as they danced, sang, and interacted with the crowd and each other. These four singers have built an impressive act together and seemed proud to perform the music.

As the show went on and Sarai and I sang along to each of the songs, we also enjoyed all of the quick costume changes that the performers made. While one or two singers completed a song on stage, the other performers were backstage changing into purple leather suits, hot pink sequined dresses, or crystal-studded jumpsuits. I performed in a show choir in high school, and I recall how difficult it was to complete one or two outfit changes, remember each step to a 30-minute show, and stay in performance-mode the entire time. These performers changed costumes, remarkably, at least five times during the two-hour show. They also sang and danced in a dynamic performance for over two hours with only a 15-minute intermission. What a workout!

Although it's difficult to pinpoint my favorite part of the show, one of my top moments was when one of the female singers performed "The Winner Takes it All." She performed this power ballad as a solo act and made this song seem easy to sing—which I know it's not. At the climax of the song, while her voice rang out, holding a strong, heartfelt note, I leaned over to my sister and whispered, "Wow. This is definitely her song!" I loved seeing a performer put so much effort into a show that they perform daily for visitors. I could tell that each of the four singers love what they do and live for performing and working a stage.

Day Two / *Journal*

The jalapeño popper hot dog and fried portobello mushrooms

Magnolia Bistro

Magnolia Bistro was our lunch stop. Known within my family for being the best place to stop for dessert on Branson Landing, Magnolia Bistro offers smooth scoops of authentic Italian ice in flavors like sour green apple, watermelon, mango, blue raspberry, and lemon. Their menu includes appetizers, sandwiches, wings, and more. My sister Sarai and I shared the fried portobello mushrooms with house-made ranch, the french fries, and the jalapeño popper hot dog (a quarter-pound Nathan's Hot Dog cut in half and grilled to perfection, topped with house-made cream cheese, loads of jalapeños, and cheese). Everything we tried was superb.

The Branson Landing's Fountains

The Branson Landing

The Branson Landing might be a more well-known spot to visit, but it offers more than meets the eye! Visitors could plan to spend an entire day shopping, eating, zip-lining, and exploring there. We shopped at Boot Barn, a western apparel store, and stopped by the Branson Landing's Fountains, a series of fountains that line the boardwalk for Lake Taneycomo. At certain times of day, the fountains perform a show, including synchronized 120-foot-tall geysers, fire, light, and music.

Show Three / ***ESCAPE REALITY***

The audience participant stares in awe at his taffy necklace.

My third show, dubbed *Escape Reality*, was in a small, intimate theater. My dad and I sat with popcorn and candy at-the-ready in the front row. As the show began, I fully expected to be met with cheesy jokes, smoke, and lights. Instead, Garry and Janine Carson met the audience with enthusiasm, wit, and straightforward yet enthralling illusions.

After a terrible sledding accident at 10 years old that almost took his life, Garry spent an entire year in the hospital struggling to recover. During his recovery process, his mom bought a magic kit to entertain him, and it changed his life. Garry fell in love with magic tricks and illusions, leading him to one day perform on cruise lines, at military base camps, and in Las Vegas, where he met his wife, Janine. After having their daughter, Sophia, the couple decided to end their travels and move to Branson in the Ozark Mountains for a slower pace of life.

One of the first tricks included the participation of two audience volunteers. Garry selected my dad and one other man to join him on stage. Garry began by having Janine sit down on a table with her legs straight out. He then asked the other volunteer to lock Janine's ankles down, while my dad locked her neck in place. After she was secured to the table, Garry covered her with a wooden box and locked the box to the table. He then asked my dad and the other volunteer to grab onto ropes bolted to each side of the wooden box. My dad pulled his side, the volunteer pulled his side, and the box came apart in two pieces. Janine was nowhere to be found. After a gasp from the audience, Garry pushed the two sections of the box back together. He reached inside and grabbed the hand of none other than Janine, who hopped out joyfully as if she had not just been pulled in two and then put back together before our eyes. I was only 10 feet from the action, and I am still at a loss for how he did this trick.

Another one of my favorite segments was when Garry asked a young boy to come up on stage. Janine brought out a clear box filled with saltwater taffy, and Garry asked the volunteer to take some as a thank you for helping him out on stage. One at a time, the little boy took around 10 pieces and placed them in a clear plastic bowl that Garry had provided. "I've done a few tricks tonight," Garry said. "But this one will make you known as the world's greatest magician." The little boy smiled and listened attentively. "Here's what I want you to do," Garry continued. "On the count of three, say 'Abracadabra' and blow on the taffy, okay?" The boy nodded. On the count of three, the little boy's voice rang out "Abracadabra!" and he blew hard on the candy in the bowl. "Go on and pick a piece up!" said Garry. The boy's hand reached into the bowl and pulled out a candy. What was individual candies just seconds ago was now a stringed taffy necklace. The audience laughed and clapped as the little boy stood in awe and took a bow with Garry.

An hour and a half of illusions and magic tricks ensued, including folding Janine into a 12-by-12-inch box and spearing it with a flaming sword before unfolding the box and Janine rising out of it; Garry levitating Sophia, his daughter, on a table; and Garry surviving—without a scratch on him—being speared by 24 spikes while locked in a box. I used to think magic was tacky, but Garry and Janine proved me wrong and showed me a new side to magic and illusion performance. It was family friendly, funny, and engaging. I enjoyed every minute and left feeling amazed, not only at Garry and Janine's professionalism but also at their unabashed love for making people smile and helping the audience escape reality, even if for only a few hours.

Day Three / *Journal*

Aisles of oddities at Dick's 5 & 10

Dick's 5 & 10

Dick's 5 & 10 has been a cornerstone of Branson since it first opened in the 1960s. This old-fashioned general store sells everything from vintage candy and soda, children's toys, apparel for all ages, crafts, gag gifts, and home goods to Branson souvenirs. My family makes a stop here every time we visit Branson because we can always find something to make us laugh or satisfy a sweet tooth. When visiting this time, my sister Sarai and I taste-tested sour-candy-flavored dill pickles and sour-cola-flavored Swedish candy.

Food choices at the Grand Country Buffet

The Grand Country Buffet

A personal favorite, the Grand Country Buffet, located inside of the Grand Country Inn, is not a typical buffet. The restaurant describes itself as "an experience reminiscent of dinner at Grandma's house," and for me, it feels like it (probably because I have been eating at the Grand Country Buffet for over 20 years). Those dining can enjoy anything from made-to-order omelets to fresh-cut, slow-roasted prime rib, depending on the time of day. Serving three meals a day, the friendly wait staff and plethora of choices make this a dining destination anyone can enjoy. By this time, my older sister, Kassidy, my brother-in-law, Kevin, and my eight-month-old niece, Eden, had joined the rest of the family. Eden enthusiastically enjoyed her first-ever mashed potatoes at Grand Country. Her delight implies that she recommends them!

MARSHAL MEADOWS, SYDNEY JONES, BRANSON LAKES AREA CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

The exterior of Fig Tree Books and More

Fig Tree Books and More

Fig Tree Books and More is a family-owned Christian-based book store in Branson. The store opened in October of 2023 and sells Bibles, devotionals, jewelry, apparel, children's toys, home decor, artwork, and more. Fig Tree Books and More also hosts book author signings and children's story times in their whimsical and cozy space. While visiting, I picked up an artistically painted hardcover study Bible and an adorable pair of bamboo-woven pajamas for Eden.

Sugar Leaf Bakery's dining space

Sugar Leaf Bakery and Coffee Shop

Sugar Leaf Bakery is a family favorite for a homemade breakfast. The bakery offers fresh cinnamon rolls, quiches made daily, in-house baked bread, and more. For lunch, the menu includes hearty salads stacked high with toppings, warm grilled sandwiches, and delicious soups. The espresso bar is one of my favorite stops and wins over a chain coffee shop anytime. I made my way over to Sugar Leaf Bakery a couple of times during the trip and enjoyed the Cajun turkey wrap one day and a delicious iced latte the other.

››› Show Four / *DAVID*, SIGHT AND SOUND THEATER

Snow falls from the ceiling of the theater and onto the audience as David prays at the end of the show.

I was in awe, driving up to the Sight and Sound Theatre. My mom and I were amazed at the architecture and lawn. The building was designed with Baroque Revival style architecture—a style known for its extravagance and attention to detail that is often used for designs in palaces or places of worship. It was easy to stand and stare at the towering columns, domes, and soaring arches framing the entrance. The interior was no different, and we stopped periodically—after buying a sleeve of the Sight and Sound Theatre's acclaimed house-made, warm, spiced almonds—to gawk at the beauty of the space.

We eventually found our way to our seats and settled in for the show, *DAVID*, the story of a shepherd boy in Israel who was anointed as king and ruled from 1090–970 BC. David is most famously known for killing Goliath, a 12-foot-tall Philistine soldier, with nothing but a slingshot. Soon enough, the lights dimmed and the theater's massive red velvet curtains opened, revealing a Middle Eastern town set in biblical times. Houses that were multiple stories tall towered 20 feet into the air, surrounded by trees and pools of water. Actors came riding onto the stage from the aisles on live horses, and shepherds walked onto the stage followed by herds of live sheep. In just a few seconds, I was viscerally transported from the theater to a town and time long before I existed. David, a young 10-year-old boy at the start of the show, walked onto the stage singing and playing the lyre (an ancient harp-like instrument). The young actor's voice was incredible, as were all the voices I would hear that day from the cast.

DAVID threw me around on an emotional roller coaster, and I loved every moment of it. I found myself either belly laughing and smiling, or gripping the arm rests of my seat and then breathing sighs of relief. I was completely immersed the entire time in the intriguing story line, marvelous acting, and phenomenal set design. One of the best moments was when David took down Goliath. Somehow, the Sight and Sound Theatre figured out how to engineer a 12-foot-tall animatronic giant that could walk and talk. It was freakishly realistic. David flung a single stone out of his sling, and it moved in slow motion, the music slowing along with the movement of the slingshot. A deep bass note shook my seat, and with a single crack, the 12-foot Goliath fell to his knees and was conquered. The audience cheered.

SIGHT & SOUND THEATRES, SYDNEY JONES, FIG TREE BOOKS AND MORE

The part of the show that will stick with me forever, though, was the very end.

King David had been through a lot during his life, including slaying giants, back stabbing father-in-laws, losing loved ones, and even becoming prideful to the point of turning against those he loved most. At the end of the story, once he had reached the end of his own strength, David got down on his knees and asked for God to restore his faith and his worn-down heart. As the Spirit of God descended upon David, providing him peace, David arose in strength, singing praises to God through the words of Psalm 23: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Angels dressed in bright white robes lined with gold appeared in the aisles, swaying and singing one word—hallelujah—in six-part harmonies.

While the performers sang in crescendo in angelic harmony and belted out an enveloping melody with seamless key changes, the audience was silent, frozen in awe. I began tearing up as David sang about being "washed white as snow." Fake snow rained down from the ceiling, and white light surrounded the cast down below as their voices rang out. Much like David, I also felt a sense of peace and relief wash over me as he was reconciled with God at the end of this story.

Wiping tears from my face, I looked around, trying to take everything in. To my right, one attendee slowly raised her hands in worship. To my left, a woman's face glistened with tears, her eyes transfixed on the stage in front of her. I'm not sure any of us wanted to leave the theater—let alone our seats—after the finale, but we did after a well-deserved standing ovation.

My mom and I didn't stop talking about the performance for the rest of the evening, highly recommending it to the rest of our family when we rejoined them at The Ozarker. My only stipulation to them was that they invite me to see *DAVID* again if they go.

››› Show Five / ***THE HAYGOODS***

Catherine Haygood plays "Let It Go" from *Frozen* on the harp.

SYDNEY JONES

Many have heard the term "musical artist," but I never understood it until I sat in the Clay Cooper Theater and experienced The Haygoods perform. This group of five brothers and one sister (Timothy, Patrick, Dominic, Michael, Matthew, and Catherine) gave me a new perspective on musicianship.

I came into the often sold-out show unsure of what to expect. All I knew was that I had repeatedly been told I should go see it. My first observation was that the crowd was incredibly diverse in age. There were toddlers, elementary-aged children, groups of teenagers, young couples, and seniors all mixed together. The crowd was buzzing—readying their phone cameras and chittering with excitement. *What is about to happen?* I thought. I could never have guessed.

With a loud percussional beat and a deep base line, the red curtains opened and the stage came to life with laser beams, smoke, and neon lights. Lionel Richie's "Dancing on the Ceiling" came to life through the voices of The Haygoods with Dominic and Catherine singing lead vocals, Matthew on bass guitar, Patrick on piano, Timothy on electric guitar, and Michael—well, Michael was nowhere to be seen. That was until he came zip-lining down from the balcony playing the electric guitar upside down. That was the moment when I knew that the show wasn't going to be a typical music concert.

One of my favorite acts began with The Haygoods describing their childhood, growing up in the Ozarks with the Mark Twain National Forest in their backyard. Much like my childhood, their nights were filled with camping, jam sessions by the fire, and enjoying time together as siblings. The lights dimmed as their storytelling ended, and the stage transformed into a sea of blue and green lights with thousands of tiny stars filling the room. Vintage-looking oil lanterns dropped down from the ceiling and cast a warm glow. Somehow, each of the instruments (a bass cello, two acoustic guitars, a piano, and a banjo) were individually lit up with scenes of rural Missouri, such as sunsets and tree

lines. The siblings then sang many of the songs that they used to sing together as children, including Simon & Garfunkel's "The Sound of Silence," Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah," and my personal favorite, Charlie Daniels Band's "The Devil Went Down to Georgia," with Catherine starring on the fiddle. I can't count how many times I audibly said "Wow" in amazement at the talent of this group.

Their tap dancing segment also stood out. Before performing, they explained that as rambunctious young children, their mother decided to put them into tap dancing classes. At the time, their mother couldn't afford multiple pairs of tap shoes though, so the siblings made their own: they screwed metal plates onto the bottom of military boots and practiced by dancing on a piece of plywood in their yard. They still perform today using metal-plated military boots, using them to create beats as they sing. At one point in the show, the siblings even tap dance while hanging upside down as flames shoot out of the stage around them.

I was sad to see the show come to a close after enjoying a "battle of the banjo" between brothers Timothy and Patrick, Catherine's majestic harp playing, Timothy playing the banjo while using a jet pack to levitate, and a musically synchronized indoor drone show.

I was also delighted by the opportunity to meet the group after the show's end. Getting to talk to the siblings individually was a highlight of the evening, and they were all very welcoming.

Five shows in five nights in Branson was an undertaking that I thoroughly enjoyed. The wide range of shows available was surprising, and I just scratched the surface.

Now I pose a big question: Would I recommend seeing five shows in five nights? If you're an avid showgoer, I would say "Go for it." If not, consider selecting two or three shows to attend during your stay instead of one every night, as I did. Whether someone is seeing one show per trip or one show per night, it's clear that you don't have to hop on a plane to New York or Chicago to experience a fantastic show scene. Branson has all of the singing, dancing, magic, and wonderment that visitors could ask for.

The Haygood siblings harmonize while singing their favorite songs from childhood.

SYDNEY JONES

Day Five / *Journal*

The entrance to the award-winning Time Traveler ride

Silver Dollar City

A trip to Branson just isn't complete without a visit to Silver Dollar City. This 1800s-themed park was voted the number one theme park in America by *USA Today* and proves its rank through award-winning roller coasters like Outlaw Run and delicious eateries such as Lumbercamp Falls Skillet, which serves skillet meals piled high with fresh sweet corn, smoked sausage, and grilled vegetables, and Silver Dollar City's iconic iced cinnamon bread. Silver Dollar City also offers terrific shows within the park from musical performances to magic to Broadway-style productions.

My family spent the day on rides, like the new and improved Fire in the Hole, the Time Traveler, and jumping on coasters in The Grand Exposition area of the park. We also spent time shopping inside the White River Bath & Body store, which sells candles, soaps, room sprays and more, and viewing the live glass-blowing demonstrations at Hazel's Cut Glass. One of my favorite parts of the day was hearing the Homestead Pickers sing and play in the early morning on the porch of the McHaffies Homestead near the entrance of the park. The band interacted with many of the audience members in between the songs on their set. Whether you're looking for a place to relax, catch some serious G-force from thrilling roller coasters, grab a delicious bite to eat, or shop unique artisan-made goods, Silver Dollar City is the ultimate place to spend a day in Branson.

Traveling to the Treetops

EXPLORE LUXURY TREEHOUSES AROUND THE STATE.

STORY *Sydney Jones*

Treehouses and Missouri go together like cake and ice cream. Between towering limestone bluffs and forests filled with old-growth trees, our state is optimal for building a scenic treetop escape. After the show *Treehouse Masters* first aired on Animal Planet in 2013, it inspired people to want to stay in a luxury treehouse. For me, that desire never went away! One question still had me hooked: What is so special about staying in a treehouse? I decided to venture out and discover what staying in a treehouse was like, both to quench my curiosity and to add to yours.

FREEPIK

Touring The Cottage's three treehouses

Driving up to The Cottage treehouses, a luxury treehouse site in Hermann, my shoulders relaxed, and I took a long deep breath. I was already immersed under a canopy of trees and thoroughly enjoying it. Keely Pettijohn, co-owner of The Cottage treehouses, was in the parking area greeting me with a smile and a wave. Keely's cat, Maple Bacon, who lives on site, also came to greet me. Keely was kind enough to meet me at the treehouses and give me a full tour of the property before I settled in.

Nestled in the 11-acre property, the first of three treehouses that she showed me was the Moonlight treehouse, the largest structure that owners Keely and Lee Pettijohn designed and constructed. Along the trail to Moonlight, I could discern its unique structure; it was not what many would consider a typical treehouse. While the back section of Moonlight is supported by trees, the entrance begins at the edge of a gravel pathway and extends—with the help of a beautiful wide wooden bridge—right to the door of the treehouse. Instead of a ladder or stairs spiraling upward into a structure in the trees, Keely and Lee built this treehouse off the side of a limestone bluff. The front of the structure is completely flush and level to the ground, allowing visitors in wheelchairs to also stay in the trees.

We continued along the path, next reaching the Sunrise treehouse. This structure is more of a traditional treehouse, enveloped by the tree canopy. Several flights of stairs led us to its front door. Upon opening the door, I was welcomed into a cozy, warm, and multilayered space. In front of me was a cushioned nook, perfect for reading or having a good conversation over a cup of coffee. To the right was a full bathroom, a breakfast alcove with a Keurig coffee machine, and a sturdy wooden ladder leading to the bedroom upstairs. I felt like a little kid again, excitedly discovering each corner of the space.

We then adventured to the Sunset treehouse—the first treehouse that the Pettijohn family built on the property. The layout of Sunset is the same as the Sunrise treehouse, both having enough space to host two visitors. Each of the cabins has a microwave, a minifridge, a coffee machine, a porch with a million-dollar view, and plush beds topped with soft duvets (essential for a good night's rest after adventuring all day).

Top, the Moonlight treehouse is wheelchair friendly with no stairs, steps, or ladders leading to the front door. A flat wooden bridge leads visitors to this natural paradise. Inside the Moonlight treehouse are three queen-sized beds—allowing for up to six visitors—and two full-sized bathrooms.

Soaking in the sunset and sunrise in the treehouses

After unlocking each of the three treehouses, which were left open for me to explore, Keely led me back to the Moonlight treehouse, where my sister Sarai and I would be staying. After Keely dropped off freshly baked scones, blueberry muffins, omelets, and juice for breakfast, she waved goodbye and let me settle in.

Although The Cottage's amenities are plentiful, one of my favorite parts of the treehouses was actually a missing

SYDNEY JONES

From left, the Moonlight treehouse offers plenty of places for visitors to sit and relax, including the bartop table which overlooks some of Hermann's countryside. The Sunrise treehouse boasts a tranquil and scenic breakfast nook.

amenity: TVs. None of The Cottage treehouses have TVs in them, quietly suggesting that perhaps the outdoors provides a better view than a screen does. I took advantage of the peaceful surroundings and stepped out onto the treehouse's porch.

Though many vacation stays include a porch where travelers can relax and enjoy the outdoors, a porch in the treetops takes this concept to a whole new level. Suspended over 40 feet in the air, the sky seemed to set and fall asleep at eye level. Birds fluttered around me and squirrels skittered along branches just a few feet in front of me while I cracked open a book and greeted Maple Bacon. I enjoyed some quiet relaxation with the cat curled up by my feet while waiting for my sister Sarai to arrive. Once she had arrived, Sarai and I spent the evening walking the scenic grounds and chatting and fell asleep early, hoping to catch the sunrise the next morning.

At 6:30 AM, Sarai and I reluctantly rolled off of our oh-so-comfortable mattresses. A warm glow surrounded the wooden walls of the treehouse as I flipped on the kitchen sconces. After making a cup of steaming hot coffee, I began the short hike up the hill to the Sunrise treehouse. Approaching the towering treehouse in the blue hour light of the early morning, I could see twinkle lights sparkling in the kitchen above me. I do have to admit though that the most magical part about reaching the Sunrise treehouse after our chilly, early morning hike was simply cracking open the front door to reveal a cozy, heated living room. After warming up from the hike, I sat in the breakfast nook taking in the quiet and awaiting the sunrise. To my dismay, the Missouri weather threw me for a loop and the cloud cover was too thick that day to see the sun come up. Regardless, I had to take advantage of having three entire treehouses to enjoy during our stay, so I spent some time reading and relaxing with a book at Sunrise before returning to Moonlight to get ready to explore Hermann for the day.

Though it might be an unpopular stance for people visiting Missouri's wine country, my sister and I are more "antique shopping girls" than we are "winery girls." Luckily, Hermann has great antique shopping. Our favorite antique stores were Antiques Unlimited I, II, and III—three separate antique stores strewn around the town that all have the same owner. Though tempted to leave with a hand-carved walnut dining table and a matching set of reupholstered chairs and buffet, I knew there was no way on earth I could jigsaw that into my Chevy Traverse. Finding ourselves hungry along our adventurous route, we also stopped into Espresso Laine, a local coffee shop, and Willie's Philly's, a new and upcoming Philly cheesesteak joint downtown. Both were wonderful stops with friendly small-town hospitality.

Upon returning to the treehouses that evening, I found myself wanting to spend time on the porch again. I suppose that it's not every day you get to spend time suspended in the trees off the side of a 40-foot limestone bluff, and I was determined to enjoy the view for as long as possible. The sun was quickly setting, and so I made my way outside. Though I may have missed the

SYDNEY JONES

From left, the Sunset treehouse is as comfortable inside as it is outside with its large deck and picnic areas. Although Antiques Unlimited I, II, and III are all under the same ownership, they each offer a unique selection of antiques, like wooden furniture, books, and decorative items. The Sunrise and Sunset treehouses have a breakfast nook where visitors can enjoy views of the forest.

sunrise, I enjoyed a beautiful coral and pink sunset that evening. Embracing the nature around me and the quiet simplicity of a treehouse stay, I kept my use of technology at bay and, instead, tried my hand at a few crossword puzzles and word searches to end the night.

Saying "so long" to The Cottage treehouses

After being up in the treetops and enjoying the serenity of the space, I found it diffuclt to leave our treetop haven. Whether I was watching streetlights cast a glow on the steady-flowing Missouri River, walking the historic streets of Hermann with a coffee in hand, or bird-watching from the treehouse porch, I was invited to reflect. Staying in the treetops reminded me of the glorious beauty of nature and left me feeling refreshed, relaxed, and ready to adventure there again soon.

Book a reservation at HermannCottage.com and stay at The Cottage at 1185 Highway H, Hermann.

SYDNEY JONES

See more Missouri treetop stays on the next page. ➜

Other treetop stays in the state

After visiting The Cottage treehouses, we learned that they are being sold. Because the future of The Cottage treehouses is a little "up in the air," here are several additional treetop stays in Missouri to choose from.

The Redbud treehouse at River of Life Farm

RIVER OF LIFE FARM *(Dora)*

The River of Life Farm is a treehouse-lovers delight, nestled into the Ozark Mountains. Anne McKee, co-owner of the farm alongside husband Myron McKee, says that the dream for the business started over 30 years ago with a single cabin alongside the North Fork of the White River. The business has now expanded to 12 treehouses and nine cabins that guests can choose from. The treehouses are situated on over 500 acres of land, making for a spacious and private stay for each visitor. "They come and they say, 'There's no way you could have that many people here!' The treehouses are pretty spread out, so people don't feel crowded. That's a real draw for people," Anne says. In addition to the treehouses, the River of Life Farm is also known for its world-class trout fishing, guided float trips, on-site hiking trails, bird-watching, and more. To book one of their treehouses, visit *RiverOfLifeFarm.com.*

ENCHANTED FOREST TREEHOUSE *(Marthasville)*

The Enchanted Forest Treehouse in Union was created to help people get away from the stresses of life and connect with nature. This mission first started with co-owners Marsha Conley and Darryl Moses brainstorming fun ideas while planning their retirement. "I had been in the medical field as a surgical assistant for 40-plus years, and it was time for a change of quality of life, honestly, to get out of all that stress and craziness," Marsha says. Marsha designed and decorated the treehouse. Darryl, with the help of contracted workers, built it, situating the treehouse on large oak trees on the property. "We respected the trees throughout the build, and we have an arborist that gives them a 'spa day' every six months," Marsha says. Spa days for the trees include pruning, deep-root feeding, a new layer of protective mulch, and treating the trees to remove harmful bugs. Darryl and Marsha made a point to repurpose any wood that was taken down while building the treehouse and turned it into furniture that can be found inside the structure. In addition to custom-built wood furniture, the treehouse is also home to other artisan creations such as wrought-iron rails handcrafted by Pat McCarty, a blacksmith in Silver Dollar City, locally made blown-glass fixtures and stained-glass windows, a painted mural of mermaids in the bathroom, and hand-thrown pottery by artist Cindy Frick. "We're kind of starting to become just a bit of an interactive art display," Marsha jokes. A stay at this whimsical, art-filled treehouse can be booked at *EnchantedForestTreeHouse.com.*

RIVER OF LIFE FARM

Tree Hugger Hideaway

Enchanted Forest Treehouse

ENCHANTED FOREST TREEHOUSE, TREE HUGGER HIDEAWAY

TREE HUGGER HIDEAWAY *(Branson)*

Emily and Hunter Carr began building their treehouse hideaway in 2022. While Emily worked on the design of the home, including color palettes and layout, Hunter designed the structure itself. "The design is just my husband's brainchild," Emily says. "A lot of it was based on terrain. We wanted as few walls as possible, like a real treehouse would be. We wanted it to feel super open, have as many windows as possible, and we wanted the outside of it to blend with the landscape," Emily says. Hunter's experience working in the construction industry and Emily's talent for design made them a dream team for building a home up in the trees. With air conditioning and heat, two bathrooms, a kitchen, a luggage lift to the upstairs loft, and free WiFi, a stay in the trees at Tree Hugger Hideaway boasts comfort and tranquility. This treehouse is a short drive from both the Branson Landing and Silver Dollar City while still being far enough away from the city to truly unwind. To book a stay at this treehouse, visit *TreeHuggerHideaway.com.*

ALMOST HEAVEN TREEHOUSE **(Bunker)**

This treehouse is fitted with a swinging bridge, a fire pit, and several board games. It is located on the banks of the Big Creek in the Ozarks and within 10 miles of Echo Bluff State Park.

COZY RIVERSIDE TREEHOUSE **(*Hillsboro*)**

A great getaway for two, the Cozy Riverside Treehouse includes a full kitchen and on-site laundry for guests. Snuggle up indoors for a movie on the Smart TV or explore the Big River right outside the door.

PET FRIENDLY TREEHOUSE **(Dittmer)**

One of few pet-friendly treehouses in the state, this treehouse offers a place for your furry best friend, along with a kitchenette, hot tub, and space to sleep five guests.

SUNRISE TREEHOUSE **(*Jonesburg*)**

The Sunrise Treehouse is a modern build overlooking a private forest with a fully equipped kitchen space and a Keurig coffee station.

THE CHATEAU **(Potosi)**

This custom-built treehouse has a hot tub, fireplace, fully equipped kitchen, and a massive wooden deck with a view of Sayersbrook Lake.

THE GLADE TOP FIRE TOWER **(*Bradleyville*)**

Though not built using a tree for support, this "treehouse" stands almost 40 feet high and is surrounded by a forest of tall trees, an outdoor shower, and a natural-rock hot tub.

THE TREEHOUSE **(Grubville)**

This treehouse boasts a firepit with hammocks and swinging chairs both inside and out, complimentary s'mores, hiking trails, and a creek with a waterfall, all on site.

TRANQUIL TREEHOUSE ON TABLEROCK LAKE **(Eagle Rock)**

The Tranquil Treehouse is fitted with a red tin roof, a 16-foot-high front deck to sit and relax on, free internet, a record player, a cozy electric fireplace, and antique fixtures, such as a 130-year-old door.

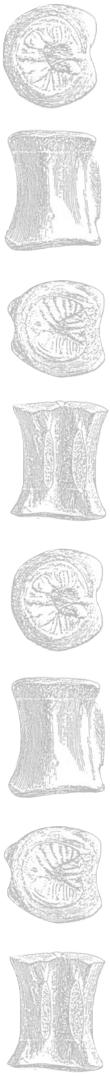
TREELOFT AT BASECAMP **(Perryville)**

This wheelchair-friendly treehouse is equipped with a gas fireplace and a hot tub. It is surrounded by towering eastern red cedars.

Dino-Mo

THE UNLIKELY STORY OF HOW THE MISSOURI STATE DINOSAUR CAME TO BE.

STORY *Andrea Kaneko*



"Let me tell you a story of a dinosaur, who lived long ago, along an ancient shore. Then one day, he up and passed away, got washed into the water, and was buried in some clay," paleontologist Michael Fix sings.

Michael is hunched over a lab table singing the song he wrote to the tune of *The Beverly Hillbillies* theme song. With magnifying goggles strapped around his head, he starts assembling his tools that look like a comb with a sharpened end, tooth flosser, old paintbrush, and plastic spoon.

With his bare hands, he begins to use each tool to gradually remove the dry clay attached to a gray object. The room, with three walls out of four made of glass, gets thick with dust and fills with the sound of gentle scraping. Michael is relaxed but completely absorbed in his task.

To an untrained eye, he looks to be holding an oddly shaped rock. But as Michael continues to hum his song and flick tiny clay chunks into a black plastic bowl, the true identity of the gray object is revealed: a dinosaur bone. More specifically, a bone from the Missouri state dinosaur. Only found in Missouri, this species of dinosaur has a rich history that includes many twists and turns, including its purely coincidental discovery and ongoing series of reclassifications.

HOW WAS THE DINO DISCOVERED?

When Dan R. Stewart saw a curious young boy peek over a valley creek bank in Bollinger County in 1942, he didn't know it would lead to a discovery that would alter Missouri's history.

Dan was a Missouri Geologic Survey geologist from Rolla. He was exploring clay deposits in a watershed of Crooked Creek. The clay deposits were known to be

SYDNEY JONES, MICHAEL FIX

Michael Fix prepares the *Parrosaurus missouriensis* at the Ste. Geneieve Museum Learning Center.

This lifelike model of the *Parrosaurus missouriensis*, made by Shane Foulkes, was commissioned by Guy Darrough.

part of the Cretaceous period, which was nearly 80 million years ago. As Dan searched, a young boy named Ole Chronister approached him and asked what he was doing.

After Ole heard about Dan's clay pursuits, Ole invited him to look at a similar type of clay on his parent's property in Glen Allen. When Dan arrived, Lula Chronister, Ole's mother, called his attention to the unique bones she had discovered after digging her eight-foot well. The bones were found "embedded in a black plastic clay," according to a 1945 article written by Dan and Charles W. Gilmore and published in the *Journal of Paleontology*.

Dan took some of the bones back to Rolla and had them examined by Henry A. "Chief" Buehler, the state geologist at the time. Henry simply remarked, "Why, those are only old cow bones." But Dan wasn't convinced and had one bone looked over by another expert: Charles Gilmore at the US National Museum in Washington, DC.

Charles confirmed it to be an elusive dinosaur bone. Dan had succeeded in what many people may only dream about doing: He had found the bone of a beast older than humanity.

Dan Stewart

Bruce Stinchcomb

After Charles confirmed the bone was a dinosaur vertebra, Dan sent Charles the remaining bones found on Lula's property—aside from one that she had given to a relative.

The bones consisted of 13 caudal (tail) vertebrae and two other bone fragments. The 14th vertebra given to Lula's relative was never seen again.

Despite the fact that this was the first time dinosaur bones were found in Missouri, Lula was awarded only $50 for the bones, which she used to purchase a cow.

WHAT IS THIS THING?

It was determined that the dinosaur was a plant-eating sauropod (think of the Longnecks in *The Land Before Time*). Sauropoda were known to be part of the Jurassic period, which was about 175 million years ago, yet Dan and Charles assumed this dinosaur was still part of the upper Cretaceous period, like the surrounding clay deposits it was found within. After some discussion, it was settled that it would be named *Parrosaurus missouriensis*.

The Chronister site is covered by a greenhouse, which protects it from the weather.

Further research in the 1970s found that the two bone fragments found alongside the vertebrae were skull bones. These fragments helped determine that the dinosaur was a hadrosaur, or a duck-billed dinosaur, which has more than 1,000 teeth. This type of dinosaur is known to stand on two legs to reach vegetation while also being able to walk on all fours. Therefore, this predominantly herbivorous dinosaur that was found in Missouri, whose species lived about 70 million years ago, was renamed from *Parrosaurus missouriensis* to *Hypsibema missouriense*. Yet, there was still more to be discovered about this mysterious dinosaur.

After years of no progress on the site where the bones were found on Lula's property, Bruce Stinchcomb, a Missouri paleontologist and geology professor for

Guy Darrough uses a sieve to pick out microfossils that have been separated from the clay.

Florissant Valley Community College, purchased the site in the 1970s from her son, Ole Chronister. Bruce, in conjunction with a team from the New Jersey State Museum, found an additional 31 fossils at the site, including four more *Hypsibema missouriense* caudal vertebrae.

Two team members who aided Bruce on the site were the up-and-coming paleontologists Guy Darrough and Michael Fix.

As a young teen, Guy met Bruce at a rock and mineral show and then "traveled everywhere" with him learning about fossils alongside him. "I was never home for Christmas. I was somewhere with Bruce digging," Guy explains. "Fossils took priority over everything for me."

Bruce's former student, Michael, also grew to have a passion for paleontology under his tutelage.

"Bruce is one of these people who if you showed an interest, he would work very hard to encourage that interest and mentor you," Michael says. "He took me on fossil collecting trips, and he gave me fossils. I got bit by the fossil bug, thanks to Bruce."

Bruce's mentees then became the masters. Guy and Michael began to excavate the Chronister site in 1990.

WHO IS THIS GUY?

Instead of poring through books in college, Guy Darrough spent his young adult years with one hand gripping the wheel of his 1967 Volkswagen bus and the other resting on his German shepherd. He was from north St. Louis and a self-described hippie that never finished high school. This was juxtaposed with his lifelong love for science and fossils. With a long ponytail, he

MISSOURI GEOLOGIC SURVEY, MICHAEL FIX, PETE MAKOVICKY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

would travel across Missouri and other states in search of roadcuts and outcrops that contained fossils.

He would keep his favorite fossils and sell the rest to museums or geological companies. Guy used the profit to fund his adventures to hunt for more fossils.

"I remember a teacher telling my dad, 'This kid just doesn't pay attention. He's not going to make it.'" Guy explains. "And then I ended up finding all these discoveries."

The more he learned about fossils as a young entrepreneur, the more connected he got with people in the paleontology community, including Bruce Stinchcomb.

"I got in with a lot of paleontologists and scientists that took a liking to me because whenever I found something valuable, I would give it to them," Guy says. "Because if it's something new, I wanted to be recognized. I didn't sell them. So because I did that, they allowed me to go with them all over and learn right on the spot. I was just watching them, and they were teaching me. I didn't even know they were. I was just picking up on stuff."

As time went on, instead of giving away his fossils, Guy began stockpiling them in hopes of having a museum someday. "I would say—this was just ridiculous but—'I want to find one of every geological period in each formation.' And I set out to do it." Yet as a self-made man, he needed a new way of earning income and more ways to build relationships with other fossil lovers.

To fill this need, he began creating, then renting out life-sized dinosaur models to botanical gardens. Ancient, menacing eyes and jaws full of blade-like teeth towered over him in his studio.

As his new business, Lost World Studios, grew, the gates to the world of paleontology opened wider.

HOW DID IT BECOME THE STATE DINO?

Guy and Michael worked together side by side at the Chronister site for almost 20 years. Michael was known to be meticulous and patient and Guy was eager and expeditious—together a perfect recipe for a paleontological partnership.

"We wanted to do everything as precisely as possible because we weren't professionally published paleontologists, and we knew that people were going to be really scrutinizing what we were doing," Michael says. "Turns out, our mapping was much more precise than what is typically done."

From 1990 to 2009, they found about 170 fossils and dinosaur bone pieces, including a partial skeleton of an approximately 20-foot long juvenile *Hypsibema missouriense*; a tooth from a tyrannosaurid, a relative of the T. rex; and a tooth from a raptor. Altogether, the juvenile skeleton, its plaster jacket (a man-made plaster casing that protects the bones and surrounding clay), and the pallet that it was all placed upon weighed about 900 pounds.

"When you see a fossil, there is a kind of sense of exhilaration because you are the first person to ever see that. So it has something in common with treasure hunting, where you suddenly uncover something special," Michael says.

Guy made a similar comparison saying, "It's like finding King Tut tomb in Missouri. There's nothing close to it."

During the years of backbreaking work of finding and excavating the juvenile bones, Guy decided that it was time to make it official. Guy helped get legislation introduced to make *Hypsibema missouriense* the Missouri state dinosaur.

The juvenile *Parrosaurus missouriensis* is protected by a plaster jacket while it is being excavated at the Ste. Genevieve Museum Learning Center. The plaster jacket contains layers of tinfoil, burlap fabric, and plaster.

SYDNEY JONES, ANDREA KANEKO

With overwhelming bipartisan support, in 2004, the state dinosaur made its debut.

"It was all kind of an official, kind of a scary thing, but they asked me to tell my little episode, and I did," Guy says. "It must have worked out because it's the official state dinosaur. It's really our official state dinosaur because it has to be. There's nothing else. I mean, it just has to be."

Michael Fix holds a neck vertebra of the Missouri state dinosaur.

WHAT NOW?

In 2016, Guy invited Peter Makovicky, a professor of earth and environmental sciences at the University of Minnesota, and a team from the Field Museum in Chicago, Illinois, to take over the dig at the Chronister site.

"I said, 'Pete, you got to come on down.' And he comes down. He goes, 'Wow, you guys got dinosaurs in Missouri?' And I said, 'Yeah, they're only a few hours from Chicago, so you don't got to drive out west. It's miraculous,'" Guy says.

Guy is still the director of the Chronister site; however, the site is now owned by the nonprofit Missouri Ozark Dinosaur Project.

"Guy has been a fantastic and tireless collaborator from the get-go," Peter says. "Simply put, he is the main motivator behind the project and has a real passion for the discoveries at the site."

Peter and his team have collected over 150 fossils and Missouri dinosaur bones—at least four different duck-billed dinosaur skeletons, about a dozen complete or nearly complete turtle shells, and two fish skeletons.

This is a map of a *Parrosaurus missouriensis* bone bed. A portable grid system forms paleontological maps by creating a connect-the-dots drawing. The *Parrosaurus missouriensis* has a thumb spike similar to that of an iguanodon.

SYDNEY JONES, MICHAEL FIX, ANDREA KANEKO

More specifically, they discovered bones from both a 30- and 40-foot long adult *Hypsibema missouriense*. The 40-foot dinosaur is often referred to as "The Beast."

If the sheer length of these dinosaurs doesn't seem impressive, their thumbs just might be.

They found four-inch thumb spikes on the 30-foot skeleton and an eight-inch thumb spike with the 40-foot skeleton.

These spikes are a known characteristic of an iguanodon, and it is thought that they were used as a form of defense. This means the *Hypsibema missouriense* actually is a mixture of both a hadrosaur and an iguanodon, also known as a plant-eating hadrosaurid.

The dinosaur bones from the Chronister site are the only remains of this species ever found, according to Michael.

"Now, because of that bone [the thumb spike], it [the *Hypsibema missouriense*] has been reclassified, but this happens in paleontology all the time because you very seldom find all the bones all at once," Michael says. "They show that in movies all the time, but that is rare. Most dinosaur species are based on very fragmental remains and very incomplete skeletons."

Because of the new discoveries, the age of the *Hypsibema missouriense* is now estimated to be 95 million years old.

Following this, the dinosaur was renamed yet again, reverting back to *Parrosaurus missouriensis*—its originally coined name from the 1940s. The site is still being excavated, so who knows what the name of the Missouri state dinosaur might evolve into one day?

WHERE CAN I SEE THE DINO?

In the almost all glass room at the Ste. Genevieve Museum Learning Center, Michael points at paper labels that mark bones, peeking out from the clay. A shoulder here. A vertebra there. Some bones are more exposed than others. Some bones are in shattered pieces.

Michael volunteers at the museum, letting visitors watch him excavate real juvenile bones from the *Parrosaurus missouriensis*.

Guy is the curator of the museum, which has made it its mission to honor the Missouri state dinosaur through a unique experience: a gallery dedicated to information about the dinosaur and lifelike models of the dinosaur made by Guy's Lost World Studios.

Other Missouri state dinosaur bones are being studied at the Field Museum in Chicago and the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History in Washington, DC.

Besides Missouri state dinosaur memorabilia, the Ste. Genevieve Museum Learning Center also has a "Hall of Giants" area that has eight life-size floor-to-ceiling Lost World Studio models of other dinosaurs, such as the T-rex.

In addition, the museum has thousands of ancient artifacts and fossils, most of which are loaned to the museum from Guy's private collection. The artifacts include everything from Viking tools to a Mayan mask to Native American jewelry.

The museum also hosts fossils like the crinoid, which is the Missouri state fossil. A goal of the museum is to engage children, so many of the exhibits have replicas that visitors can touch and play with.

Guy has flooded the museum with found items from across the world, and he highlights the story of the Missouri state dinosaur and how a curious boy led to the discovery of a lifetime. "There is no discovery that you could mention to me that's more rare and more important than the Missouri dinosaur," Guy says.

The Ste. Genevieve Museum Learning Center, which displays bones from the Missouri state dinosaur, is open from 10 AM–5 PM, seven days a week.

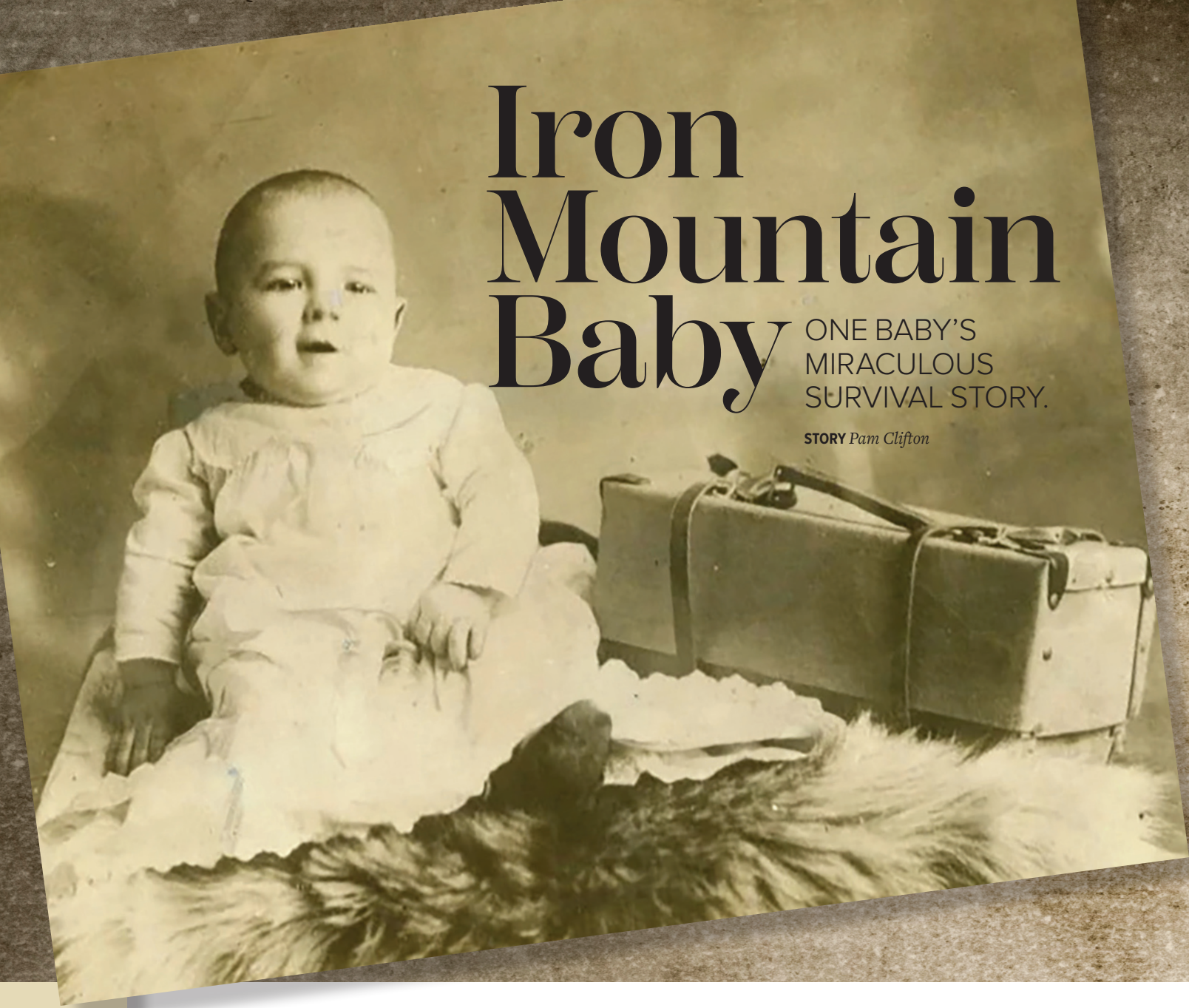
From top, a portion of the lower left jaw of the juvenile *Parrosaurus missouriensis* is shown here. The juvenile Missouri state dinosaur preparation room overlooks the "Hall of Giants" at the Ste. Genevieve Museum Learning Center.

SYDNEY JONES, MICHAEL FIX

Iron Mountain Baby

ONE BABY'S MIRACULOUS SURVIVAL STORY.

STORY *Pam Clifton*



The Missouri legend of the Iron Mountain Baby began in 1902 just outside of Irondale—a tiny town in Washington County—on a hot and humid Thursday in August. It was almost 5 PM.

The St. Louis, Iron Mountain and Southern Railway northbound No. 4 had just stopped in Bismarck to board passengers and was now traveling through Irondale.

William "Bill" Helms was building a shed on his farm and needed one more board. He went to fetch a discarded plank near the railroad bridge over the Big River in Washington County, according to a 1902 article written by the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*.

The Iron Mountain Railroad's passenger train rumbled over the bridge, bound for St. Louis, 65 miles to the north.

William was walking the track through a rock cut, or a man-made cut through a rock formation, when he heard a strange squeak, like that of a field mouse.

A SHOCKING DISCOVERY

Bill climbed down the steep riverbank and found a small, abandoned telescope valise, also known as a suitcase. It seems someone had thrown the valise from the passing train and intended for it to land in the Big River. It had been damaged as it careened off the rocky sides of the hill and fell about 50 feet.

The Civil War veteran and farmer hurried back up the steep hill, suitcase in hand. When he got to the top and opened the valise, he was shocked to discover a newborn baby.

A black spool of thread was inside the case, which likely had been used to embroider the 10 tiny black pyramids on the skirt of the baby. The baby had a lace cap over his black hair. A long skirt had been folded over the baby's head, and a knit shirt was wrapped securely around his face.

He was stuffed tightly in the case, which was only 14 inches in length, six inches wide, and four inches deep. As a result of the garments around the baby's face, he was having

RUTH HUMPHREY

From top, this rock cut is near where a farmer found the baby who had been tossed from a train. That baby grew up, and this is William Helms at 21 years old.

great difficulty breathing. His skin was already turning dark from the lack of oxygen.

Bill immediately hurried home to his wife Sarah Jane Helms, who worked to revive the baby. When the garments were fully removed from around the baby, Sarah saw that the baby's head was swollen and had a large dent. He didn't cry but only whimpered.

At that moment, Bill decided that if the baby survived, he would raise the infant as his own.

Word spread of the newly discovered newborn, and neighbors arrived to help care for him. No one expected the baby to live. His right arm had been sprained. His left leg and left hand were also injured. By Saturday, many curious people had arrived to see the baby.

Miraculously, the Helms family nursed the baby back to health from the injuries he sustained from the fall. He was given an especially meaningful name: William Moses Gould Helms (William after the man who rescued him, Moses as a biblical reference for being found near the river, and Gould as the railroad's owner).

A LIFE IN THE SPOTLIGHT

The story about the baby—nicknamed the Iron Mountain Baby or Mountain Babe by the trainmen—became a nationwide sensation.

Visitors from all over came to see the child. Millionaires sent letters and asked to adopt him. Women showed up and claimed they were William's mother. One mysterious woman dressed in black and wearing a veil came to see the baby but left without saying anything. She left $10 for him.

When Bill found the baby, he was already 72 years old and had previously raised a family with his first wife, who died. Bill then married his second wife Sara and raised a second family of six children with her. The couple decided to adopt William when he was six years old.

When Bill died in 1917, Sarah moved with William to Salem, where he graduated from high school. Sarah died in 1925 and was buried next to Bill in Hopewell Cemetery at Mineral Point. The railroad paid for William to attend college. He worked at newspapers in Fredericktown, West Plains, and Fair Grove, near Springfield.

William hated the notoriety that seemed to follow him everywhere, so he abruptly left Fair Grove in 1928 during the night after living in the town for a year and a half. He had resigned as owner and editor of the paper.

William relocated to St. Louis, where he married his wife Sallie in 1933 before they moved to Texas. The couple had one son, William Moses Helms Jr.

The man who was the Iron Mountain Baby died from a heart attack in Texas on January 31, 1953. He was buried at Hopewell Union Church's cemetery alongside the parents who had rescued and raised him.

In 1962 at age 21 in Houston, Texas, his son William Jr. died at age 21. It is believed he never knew his father was the Iron Mountain Baby.

Records indicate that Sallie (William's wife and Jr.'s mother) died in 1987 at Racine, Wisconsin. She was not buried alongside William, but her name is on his tombstone.

A SONG, STAGE, AND STORY

The Iron Mountain Baby was the muse of many writers and performers. John Barton, a local minister living in Iron County, wrote the folk song "The Ballad of the Iron Mountain Baby" in late 1902. In the 1940s, Farmington resident and country music recording star Johnny Rion was an on-air personality for local radio stations when he sang "The Ballad of the Iron Mountain Baby" live on the air. After receiving numerous requests to sing the song again, he recorded it for New Life Records. The recording is now located in the State Historical Society of Missouri archives in Columbia.

The Missouri mystery is subject of another song: "Sarah Jane and the Iron Mountain Baby" from Steve Martin and

ST. LOUIS REPUBLIC, ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH.

From left, William Helms was only five days old when he was tossed from a train. William attended school in the one-room schoolhouse in Hopewell. *The Iron Mountain Baby* is a fictional novel that paints a story as if William had searched for his mother as an adult.

Edie Brickell's 2013 album *Love Has Come for You*. The following year, the events also inspired Steve and Edie to write and compose the bluegrass musical *Bright Star*. From 2014–2018, the musical was performed in various places, including New York, California, Washington, DC, and California.

The unknown identities of William's birth parents are the basis for Texas writer Evault Boswell's historical fiction novel *The Iron Mountain Baby*.

In the preface of his book, Evault included an interview with William's school friend James Dodson, who said William was a quiet young man who "did not participate in sports but loved the outdoors and would sometimes walk for hours in the Ozark woods that he loved." He described William as "a brilliant conversationalist in many subjects and was constantly seeking knowledge."

A LOCAL LEGEND

Despite the events occurring over 120 years ago, many residents have memories of hearing the story of the Iron Mountain Baby and still pass it along today.

Ninety-six-year-old Hopewell resident Ruth Humphrey remembers her father, Guy Nixon, detailing the days he had attended school with William.

"The first day of school, they brought him to school and asked my dad to show him around," she says. "So, he took him by the hand and led him around. My dad was about a year older than William."

Ruth doesn't know how many years William went to the one-room schoolhouse before moving to Salem, but the boys remained friends all of their lives. Ruth explains how William never wanted to be known as the Iron Mountain Baby.

"His headstone in the cemetery at Hopewell Union Church was a plain stone until a few years ago. One of his great nephews or someone had the 'Iron Mountain Baby' added to it."

St. Louis resident Leanna Rigdon, 77, was born in Desloge. She and her family moved to Davis Crossing, near Irondale, when she was young. Her grandmother, Carrie Ann Helms, was the sister of Bill, who found and later adopted William.

"Bill was coming home from work and heard something crying, like a cat," Leanna says, recalling the story that was passed down through her family.

Golda, Leanna's mother, told her stories about when her own mother, Carrie, was younger and played with William when they visited.

"Mom said he limped, and they thought it was because he was thrown off the train," she says.

Desloge resident Cheryl Gilliam remembers her mother, Mary Helms Gilliam, telling the Iron Mountain Baby story to her and her siblings, Tammy, Chuck, and Trish.

"My mom would sing the song to us," Cheryl says. "My mom learned the song from her mom, my grandmother Iva Helms, or from my grandpa, Charlie Helms." Cheryl was about six years old when she first heard the song.

Irondale resident Joanie Barton's mom, Hallie Waller, maintained a scrapbook of local history, which includes many newspaper clippings about the Iron Mountain Baby's story.

Hallie, who passed away when she was 90, lived in Hopewell and went to school with William. "Mom got acquainted with him as a kid because they were about the same age," says Joanie. "I think they played together."

Hallie retold William's story to Joanie by saying he "was wrapped up in a cloth in a suitcase, and they threw him off the train. Mom said some people said the Iron Mountain Baby was a scam and that he wasn't thrown from the train.

PAM CLIFTON, RUTH HUMPHREY, JOANIE BARTON

It's an interesting story. It is local history."

As the legend has been passed down through word of mouth, books, music, and other productions, it has cemented itself in people's memories.

A FINAL RIDE

William hated how his past had continuously interrupted his future. After Johnny Rion's recording of "The Ballad of the Iron Mountain Baby" in the 1940s, William disappeared from the limelight, and he stayed out of it until the day he died.

Ironically, William's life centered around a train, yet he was only aboard a train twice: when he was thrown from the train as a baby and when his body was returned to Missouri from Texas a half century later on the same Iron Mountain Railway from which he had been thrown.

His funeral was unpublicized and held for his immediate family, which included Sallie and their son William, who was 11 at the time. There was no mention of the Iron Mountain Baby.

William never learned the identities of his birth parents, and he is buried beside his adoptive parents. Their graves are in the Hopewell Cemetery, a peaceful graveyard next to a small white country church on a beautiful hill overlooking the spot where baby William was first found.

Apparently, William had often commented that when he died, he would prefer to be buried by his parents where his story first began.

On William's gray granite tombstone are the words of 2 Timothy 2:15, a bible verse that urges people to accurately and earnestly display the truth. It says, "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

RUTH HUMPHREY

BALLAD OF THE IRON MOUNTAIN BABY

by John Barton

Reprinted in the *Farmington Evening Press*, August 2, 1979

I have a song I would like to sing
It's awful, and it's true,
About a babe thrown from a train,
By a mother, I know not who.

This little babe, but a few days old,
Was in a satchel lain;
Its little clothes around it folded
And thrown out from the train.

The train was running at full speed,
The northbound number four;
And as they crossed Big River bridge,
She cast it from the door.

A father unkind, a mother untrue,
But this I am bound to say:
It must have pierced a mother's heart
To cast her child away.

The valise was fourteen inches long
In which the child was found;
Six inches wide, five inches deep
And very closely bound.

They bruised its head, and hurt its arm,
The fall upon the ground.
A dear old man lived on a farm
This poor little baby found.

It was Bill Helms who found this child;
He heard its helpless cry,
And took it to his loving wife,
Who would not let it die.

They washed and bathed its little head
And soon she hushed its cry.
May God protect them, while they live,
God help them when they die.

This little baby, bless its heart,
I cannot tell its name;
It has a mother to take its part,
A father just the same.

They call him William Moses Gould
Because he has no name;
And if he lives to be a man
He'll wear it just the same.

Come one, come all, attention give
This lesson is for you;
Teach your children how to live,
And tell them what to do.

This wicked world is full of sin
God help us all to pray,
And be prepared to enter in,
The fold at judgement day.

Ozark Water Holes

OUR STATE'S NATURAL SWIMMING SPOTS.

STORY *Leslie Chastain and Sydney Jones*

Visitors climb on rock formations at Johnson's Shut-Ins.

Cooling off at Johnson's Shut-Ins

MISSOURI DIVISION OF TOURISM

There's a kind of magic in a swimming hole, the kind that lingers long after summer fades. A good swimming hole beckons us to return to the simplistic beauty of childhood: how the first plunge into cool water steals a swimmer's breath, how the sound of laughter echoes off rocky cliffs, and how homemade sandwiches and fresh-cut watermelon taste while sitting on a warm, sandy bank beside the water.

The Missouri Ozarks are home to some of the most breathtaking swimming holes in the country—cool, refreshing waters tucked away next to rugged limestone bluffs, shaded by ancient trees, and fed by fresh streams. These natural wonders are so much more than places to take a dip; they are part of the state's soul.

Johnson's Shut-Ins

Widely considered the best swimming spot in Missouri, Johnson's Shut-Ins is also among the finest in the country. The Johnson's Shut-Ins were formed as a result of erosion and the Black River slowly carving out the rock and smoothing its surface, making it a perfect spot for swimming and zipping down natural water slides.

The Johnson's Shut-Ins State Park, which is located on the East Fork Black River in Reynolds County, also offers camping, hiking, picnic areas, two camp stores, and a visitors' center.

Josh and Jen Nelson are full-time RVers who run a travel website and blog where they detail their adventures across the country. Jen says of the Shut-Ins, "Johnson's Shut-Ins has been on my bucket list for years ever since I first saw a picture online. It's one of those places that immediately grabs your attention, and when I finally got to visit, it definitely lived up to the hype. This spot is like a natural water park, and honestly, it's unlike anything I've seen before." Jen adds, "One thing we didn't realize until we got there, though, was that it's about a 10 minute walk to the first access point for the Shut-Ins. It's not a long trek, but if you're planning to spend a lot of time in the water, it's worth knowing so you can plan ahead."

If visitors are interested in hiking a longer route, Johnson's Shut-Ins offers multiple hiking trails, wheelchair accessible look-outs, and stairways that lead to breathtaking views of the shut-ins and the mountains surrounding them.

While some areas of the river are shallow, some have more powerful currents, and visitors are advised to wear sturdy shoes and life vests.

If swimmers are looking for a more calm place to float, a still swimming hole can be found downriver.

The Grand Falls in Joplin

Grand Falls

Grand Falls in Joplin holds the title of "the largest continuously flowing natural waterfall in Missouri," according to the Joplin Convention and Visitors' Bureau. This gem along Shoal Creek is just downstream from McClelland Park. The solid chert formation stretching across the creek that creates the falls have earned it the nickname "Little Niagara."

Grand Falls plummets in a 12-foot cascade over a 163-foot-wide chert ledge, sending white water onto the rocks below. Above this natural wonder is a man-made dam, which fills a reservoir that provides water to Joplin's residents.

At Grand Falls, adventurers can splash and soak up the sun. The designated swimming area is just below the falls, so there's no danger of falling over the edge. Though there are no public facilities at Grand Falls, nearby McClelland Park is a seven-minute drive from the falls and offers public restrooms and picnic areas.

Castor River Shut-Ins

One of the oldest mountain ranges in America, the St. Francois Mountains, envelop the Castor River Shut-Ins, located just east of Fredericktown.

The Castor River Shut-Ins were formed over thousands of years as the Castor River cut into Missouri pink granite. As the highly porous pink granite absorbs water, it can deepen in color and appearance, so travelers may find that the rocks are new and different shades of pink each time they go.

The journey to Castor River Shut-Ins begins with the relatively flat one-mile Cedar Glade Trail. Visitors do have to walk this trail to get to the water, but the shut-ins are worth the short journey. At the end of the trail, the path reveals natural water slides, waterfalls, and several pools that visitors can explore and swim in to cool off. Beyond swimming, there are large boulders and rocks to hop around on and explore.

Bring a set of goggles because the clear water is home to lots of colorful fish, such as sunfish, minnow, bleeding shiners, rainbow darters, smallmouth bass, and striped fantail darters.

Another surprise found in the Castor River waters are spothanded crayfish and golden crayfish—two species that cannot be found anywhere else in the world. If visitors want to stay overnight, primitive camping is available.

Castor River Shut-Ins

SARA LESIRE/ @MIDWESTNOMADFAMILY

Rocky Falls

Nestled in Winona is Rocky Falls—a formation carved out of ancient rock, flowing with clear, spring-fed waters. This water hole is an offshoot of the Current River in Mark Twain National Forest.

Formed 1.5 billion years ago when molten rock emerged from the earth's depths and hardened into reddish-brown rhyolite porphyry, Rocky Falls stands as a testament to time.

Part of the Ozark National Scenic Riverways, Rocky Falls is a great destination for nature lovers. The area boasts historic sites such as Alley Spring, which features a historic 100-year-old grist mill, and Story's Creek one-room schoolhouse. There are also many caves, freshwater streams, and scenic trails for visitors to explore. The climbable 40-foot falls feed into a natural swimming hole. Rocky Falls offers public bathrooms, picnic tables, and grills so visitors can comfortably spend the day enjoying the water.

Jump On In

From rugged shut-ins with natural water slides to still and peaceful swimming spots, these water holes nestled into the Missouri Ozarks remind us to slow down, seek new discoveries, and embrace the simple joys of nature. Whether you're after heart-pounding adventure, quiet moments of solitude, or the simple joy of floating beneath a wide summer sky, these beloved spots offer an escape that is as refreshing as they are unforgettable.

What is a shut-in?

Shut-ins are found only in the Ozarks. These special formations are created when water flows through valleys with sedimentary rock and then "hits the more resistant igneous rock and the valley becomes narrow and steep-sided or 'shut in,'" according to the Missouri Department of Conservation.

Igneous rocks are formed from cooling molten lava, while sedimentary rocks form from the settling of sediment, such as minerals and silt. Igneous rock is much harder for water to break down than sedimentary rock. While sedimentary rocks erode into canyons, the hardier igneous rock erodes at a much slower pace, carving out the small, smooth "shut-ins" that can be seen today in the Ozarks.

ISTOCK, GREEN HERON PHOTOGRAPHY

Rocky Falls

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Explore the 'Burg

Downtown Warrensburg, Missouri, offers visitors the quintessential small Midwest town experience with a beautiful, historic downtown area complete with a courthouse square.

Most of the downtown shops date back to the 1800s and house unique boutiques, restaurants, drinking establishments, spas, a tea room, our Magnolia Mercantile, an ice cream shop and more.

If you are planning a road trip or friends' getaway, downtown Warrensburg checks all your boxes. With an Amtrak station right here in downtown, I-70 just to the north, with State Routes 50 and 13 going right through town and the Katy Trail just miles to the south, The Burg is conveniently located to all travelers.

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You're Not Getting Older. You're Getting Better.

WELL, THAT COMMERCIAL TAGLINE SOUNDED GOOD back in the '70s (trust me, kids), though no one believed it. Getting older makes things worse. As a bona fide older person, I concur. One quick look around you, and you'll probably agree as well: things are not getting better.

But this is a column about wine, and if wine has a unique proposition among other foods and drinks, it's that it can get better as it gets older. That's why many people think the metric that determines wine excellence is how well it ages, even though no one ages wine anymore. All but a slim minority of bottles are consumed right after purchase.

Bordeaux, France, is famed for wine, because it has demonstrated its ability to age wine for centuries. California, as well as every other wine-producing place in the world—even those without Bordeaux's centuries-long history—maintains that it can produce fantastic aged wine as well. But Bordeaux had a head start: The region has been making wine at scale for six or seven centuries. The Romans even made some wine there.

America's viticulture was challenged by pests and diseases, so we got a late start. These challenges meant that we weren't able to grow, at least for a time, the grapes that made Europe famous, the Chardonnays, Cabernets, Merlots, and such. California got started aging wine in the early 19th century, and not long thereafter, Missouri began doing the same.

Yet we've focused upon other lesser-known grapes—grapes that thrive in our difficult climate. Let's be candid—these grapes have not proven themselves to age well in the same way that Cabernet and the like have.

Well, Missouri has an ace up its sleeve yet: the Norton. The official state grape, also called Cynthiana by some, is unusual in many aspects, but perhaps most importantly, it can age in surprising ways.

When quality Nortons are bottled, they can get a little weird; that's true of most wines right after bottling. Most wines straighten right out in a few months. Some Nortons do, some don't. Moreover, all wines develop like a series of hills rather than a steady arc when it comes to aging. Sure, wines taste fine until they reach their peak maturity, whether that takes one or 20 years, at which time they begin to fade. But there are rather unpredictable dips when the wines aren't as impressive and, similarly, moments when they seem brighter. Though all wines undergo these small changes, Norton's hills and valleys seem more dramatic. The same Norton wine I love at 18 months, I'm sometimes less pleased with a year later. A year after that, it seems pleasing again.

Most significantly, the Norton can show the same tasty character at 10 or 20 years of age. So far, the same cannot be said of the rest of the red grapes grown here in Missouri. If you happen to run across an old bottle of Norton, pop it open and give it a try. No matter the age, you might be surprised to find the taste is just right.

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.

NOTABLE NORTONS

Augusta Winery Norton
Blumenhof Vineyards and Winery Le Vin in Cyn
Defiance Ridge Vineyards Norton Reserve
Noboleis Vineyards Norton
Stone Hill Winery Cross J Norton
TerraVox Norton

FREEPIK, D. BISHOP

Babies and Beer Gardens

According to my daughters, that fair baby show judging will haunt them for life. That's why I'm telling you this story; with summer fairs coming, there will be a determined search for baby show judges. Don't even think about it.

BY LORRY MYERS
BABY FEVER
Lorry@MissouriLife.com

WHEN MY PHONE RANG, I braced myself. My adult daughters were on a joint road trip to northern Missouri to visit my oldest daughter's former college roommate who was working a booth at a community fair that weekend. Hilary and Mariah were going to the fair to keep her company. It just so happened that the fair also included a beer garden—the only garden my daughters enjoy cultivating.

"Mom!" Hilary screeched as soon as I answered. "We are in big trouble." After the fair's baby show judges didn't show up, the girls were asked to take their places.

"Don't even think about it!" I shouted. "I was a baby judge once, and it was brutal!"

"Too late," Hilary said, with impending doom in her voice. "We just couldn't say no."

I have heard that excuse before.

Minutes later, my younger daughter called. "Mom," Mariah whispered. "Where did all these babies come from? What are we going to do?"

I've learned that baby show winners are based on preferences. Some judges like bald babies, and some prefer babies with hair, so the winners are chosen accordingly. Babies don't care who wins, but their mothers sure do. That's where the brutal part comes in.

"Try this," I said. "Weed out the crying babies, sleeping babies, and babies on the verge of either one. Focus on happy faces, and each time you choose, pretend like it is the hardest decision of your life."

"I don't have to pretend," Mariah sighed, before hanging up.

Twenty minutes later, the phone rang again.

"Mom!" Mariah wailed. "Your plan didn't work. There were no crying or sleeping babies in the first category. Hilary and I can't do this. We are thinking about slipping out and not coming back. How bad would that be?"

That would be bad.

That's when, once again, I started reciting my best motivational speech, the one that applies to most any situation. "You are not a quitter. You can't just walk away, so throw your shoulders back and get to it. Stay focused, do your best, and move on. Until then, put your keys in your pocket, keep your head up, and know exactly where the exit is.

"You will be fine."

When the baby show was over, my daughters called again. The girls were hiding in the car, and I could tell by their voices that they were not fine.

"Mom," Hilary said on the verge of tears. "That was the most horrific thing I've ever done. All those babies were cute. I mean, come on, they are babies, and why are we judging them anyway? I swear we are now on every grandma's hit list."

"Mom," Mariah whimpered, joining in the hushed conversation. "I am never going to do that again. I'm not sure, but I think we might need a police escort out of town."

That's when I gave them another of my inspirational speeches, one I have used more times than I can count.

"Snap out of it!" I admonished them. "Life is full of hard things, so stop being such babies."

That last part got their attention.

According to my daughters, that fair baby show judging will haunt them for life. That's why I'm telling you this story; with summer fairs coming, there will be a determined search for baby show judges.

Don't even think about it.

Later, when I called to check on the baby show judges, these two were living their best lives, happily burying their trauma in the fair's beer garden.

No babies allowed.

MERIT MYERS

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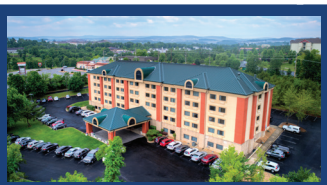

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Learning to Drive on the Back Roads

I PICKED THE FIRST ROAD CAREFULLY. I wanted no stoplights, no tailgaters, nobody pulling out in front of us. Greens Bottom Road in St. Charles checked all of those boxes. It runs perfectly straight—no houses to hit or ditches to run into—with margin for error on the left and right.

It was perfect for my 16-year-old daughter as she drove on an actual street for the first time. She eased our car out onto the road, pushed on the gas, and just like that, she graduated from parking lots to the open road.

At that point I would not and could not take my eyes off the road, but if I could have, I would have seen farmland to my right receding to the Missouri River. To my left, a steep embankment rose until the trees scratched the clouds. I saw none of that; instead, I concentrated intently on the road ... and wore out my right leg pushing an imaginary brake.

This continued for weeks. "I can see the stoplight; you don't need to tell me what color it is," she told me.

Eventually, I realized she was doing fine, and I stopped trying to control the car with my mind and just watched the world as we went by it. That time gave me a new appreciation for Missouri's beauty.

I gaped as we sliced through forests, fields, and neighborhoods. I delighted in the details (curved rows in cornfields, rocks peeking out of rivers, the arc of an eagle's flight) that I never notice when I'm driving.

The state requires teens to drive a total of 40 hours before getting their license. We filled that time with conversations big and small, about safety and speed, grades and gravel, boys and brakes.

Even when we drove in silence, which was often, the daddy-daughter time was great because we didn't fill that silence with phones or other distractions.

We focused instead on our shared road and where it was taking us. Sometimes that road was purely functional—she took us to her school, her shift at Chick-fil-A, or our church. Sometimes, that road engulfed us in memories that will last a lifetime.

She drove us across the state so she could attend the Taylor Swift concert in Kansas City. On the way, she visited a makeup store to buy glue-on fingernails to complete her Eras tour outfit (if you know, you know). She asked my opinion on which to buy, and I mumbled an answer as I tried not to faint dead away.

As she drove on I-70, I DJ'd her requests for Swift's greatest hits, deep cuts, and everything in between. In my #GirlDadLife, that day ranks near the top.

Swift, school, work, church—those trips had a purpose; however, I enjoyed the trips that didn't even more. I try not to live in a constant rush as the world demands of us. So, some days we drove just to log hours.

I learned, as a captive to my daughter's driving, that I have room to improve. Who has time to drive to nowhere and back? Much to my surprise, I do, and I highly recommend it.

With nowhere to go and no time to be there, she piloted us on the most scenic routes we could find. We hurtled past subdivisions and soccer fields, farms and fast-food joints, rivers and rec-plexes. We wound up in Troy, Washington, Winfield, and more. If there happened to be an ice cream shop along the way, all the better.

Too soon, she passed her driving test, and I mourned what I lost by her not needing me anymore.

Thankfully, she has a younger sister.

With nowhere to go and no time to be there, she piloted us on the most scenic routes we could find. We hurtled past subdivisions and soccer fields, farms and fast-food joints, rivers and rec-plexes.

BY MATT CROSSMAN

FREEPIK

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All Around Missouri

Our Top Picks from Around the State

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

CENTRAL

Jubilee Days
JUNE 5–7, WARSAW
Carnival, live music, crafts, parade, car show, and contests. Drake Harbor. *VisitBentonCoMo.com*

Frank's Swap
JUNE 5–8, VERSAILLES
New and used items, plus small animals for sale. *JacobsCave.com*

First Friday
JUNE 6, LEBANON
Shopping, local art, and music. *DowntownLebanonMo.com*

Rodeo
JUNE 6–7, JEFFERSON CITY
Triple H Arena. *VisitJeffersonCity.com*

Vintage & Handmade Market
JUNE 6–7, JEFFERSON CITY
Cole County Fairgrounds. *VisitJeffersonCity.com*

Car Cruise and Taste Tour
JUNE 7, COLE CAMP
Car show and wine, spirits, and beer tastings. Downtown. *ColeCampMo.com*

Route 66 Festival
JUNE 7, LEBANON
Classic car parade and show. Boswell Park. *VisitLebanonMo.org*

Benton County ArtsFest
JUNE 7, WARSAW
Artisan marketplace, Kids' Art Village, and art competition. Downtown. *VisitBentonCoMo.com*

Art in the Park
JUNE 7–8, COLUMBIA
Artists from around the United States, hands-on activities, Kids' Art Spot, and entertainment. Stephens Lake Park. *ColumbiaArtLeague.org*

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland
JUNE 7–8, COLUMBIA
Mareck Dance Co. Missouri Theatre. *ConcertSeries.Missouri.edu*

Bittersweet Garden Tour
JUNE 8, JEFFERSON CITY
Tour one public and five private gardens, plus plant sale. *BittersweetGardenClub.com*

Pulaski County Regional Fair
JUNE 11–14, SAINT ROBERT
Livestock exhibits, carnival, dog show, and lawn and garden tractor pull. Community Center. *PulaskiCountyRegionalFair.com*

Runge in Your Backyard
JUNE 12, JEFFERSON CITY
See amphibians and learn about Missouri wildlife at an event hosted by Runge Nature Center. Community Park. *VisitJeffersonCity.com*

The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee
JUNE 12–21, JEFFERSON CITY
Musical comedy. Show and dinner option available. Capital City Productions. *CCPJC.org*

Last Summer on Earth Tour
JUNE 13, CAMDENTON
Barenaked Ladies concert. *OzarksAmphitheater.com*

Cruise In
JUNE 13, LEBANON
Vintage cars, food, and music. *DowntownLebanonMo.com*

Bags 'N Wags Festival
JUNE 14, COLUMBIA
Pet adoption, vendors, pet show, costume contest, and outdoor movie. Cherry Hill Square. *VisitColumbiaMo.com*

Juneteenth Heritage Festival
JUNE 14, JEFFERSON CITY
Live music, car show, magician, vendors, and parade. Downtown. *JuneteenthJCMo.org*

Second Saturdays
JUNE 14, ROCHEPORT
Music, food, and vendors. *Rocheport-Mo.com*

Jammin' in June
JUNE 18, WARRENSBURG
Live music and art walk. Downtown. *VisitWarrensburg.com*

Juneteenth Jamboree
JUNE 19, COLUMBIA
Music, dance, and arts. Douglass Park. *CoMo.gov*

ALAN COMBS

Fulton Street Fair
JUNE 21–22, FULTON
Carnival, Fulton Flash Kids' Mile & 5K, live music on multiple stages, karaoke contest, local food vendors, handmade crafts, and car show. The Kiddie Corral, featuring face painting, bounce house, and big trucks will be at Memorial Park. The Brick District. *FultonStreetFair.com*

The Shark is Broken
JUNE 19–29, COLUMBIA
Comedy about the making of the movie *Jaws*. *MaplewoodBarn.org*

Summer Market
JUNE 20, COLUMBIA
More than 50 local makers, food vendors, and activities for kids. *CityOfRefugeColumbia.org*

Cedar Creek
JUNE 20, SEDALIA
Country music. Outdoors on the Lot. *LibertyCenterSedalia.com*

Backyard Concert Series
JUNE 21, JEFFERSON CITY
Concert that celebrates past and present Missouri music. Lohman Lawn. *VisitJeffersonCity.com*

The Rocheport Stroll
JUNE 21, ROCHEPORT
Sample Missouri wine, spirits, and beer, plus live music. Throughout town. *Rocheport-Mo.com*

Tri-County Fair
JUNE 25–28, RICHLAND
Vendors, demolition derby, livestock shows, and carnival. Shady Dell Park. *Find on Facebook.*

ARRIVAL from Sweden
JUNE 27, JEFFERSON CITY
The music of ABBA. *CRMUAmphitheater.com*

Show-Me Gourd Festival
JUNE 27–29, LEBANON
Workshops, competitions, auctions, and gourd art vendors. *ShowMeGourdSociety.org*

Once Upon a Mattress
JUNE 27–29, SEDALIA
Musical comedy. *LibertyCenterSedalia.com*

The Ozark Mountain Daredevils
JUNE 28, CAMDENTON
With The Kentucky Headhunters. *OzarksAmp.com*

Children's Bike Parade
JUNE 28, WARRENSBURG
Decorate your bike, trike, or pet in red, white, and blue. Downtown. *WarrensburgMainStreet.org*

Heritage Days
JUNE 28–29, BOONVILLE
Carnival, parade, food vendors, arts, crafts, car show, beer and wine garden, and quilt show. Downtown. *GoBoonville.com*

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SOUTHWEST

Sweet Potato Savvy
JUNE 1, DIAMOND
Lab demonstration of recipes using sweet potato flour and starch. George Washington Carver National Monument. *NPS.gov*

World Street Painting Festival
JUNE 4–7, JOPLIN
Artists from around the world create 3D art. Schifferdecker Park. *VisitJoplinMo.com*

First Thursday Art Walk
JUNE 5, JOPLIN
Local artists and musicians. Downtown. *VisitJoplinMo.com*

Glenn Miller Orchestra
JUNE 5, SPRINGFIELD
Big band performs swing music. *GilliozTheatre.com*

Summer Soiree
JUNE 5, SPRINGFIELD
Fundraiser features five-course dinner, wine pairings, music, and live auction of once-in-a-lifetime experiences. White River Conference Center. *CPOzarks.org*

Yacht Rock the Dock
JUNE 6, BRANSON
Ambrosia and special guests perform their Billboard Top 40 Hits. *TheMansionTheatre.com*

Stampede Rodeo
JUNE 6–7, CARTHAGE
Saddle Club Arena. *ExperienceCarthageMo.com*

Rock and Gem Fair
JUNE 6–7, SPRINGFIELD
Minerals, gemstones, and fossils, plus vendors. Prince of Peace Lutheran Church. *SpringfieldMo.org*

Art on Tap
JUNE 7, JOPLIN
Craft beers, wine, appetizers, entertainment, and games. *SpivaArts.org*

Summer Fest
JUNE 7, KIMBERLING CITY
Vendors, food trucks, music, and dog parade. City Hall. *CKCMo.com*

Music Festival and Cookout
JUNE 7, REEDS SPRING
Concerts and barbecue. *RockHouseCenterForTheArts.org*

Butterfly Festival
JUNE 14, SPRINGFIELD
Celebrate pollinators at this annual festival for all ages. Food, art, garden vendors, live music, dozens of community partners, and hands-on activities, including the Caterpillar Petting Zoo and nature crafts. Springfield Botanical Gardens. *FriendsOfTheGarden.org*

Brotherhood of Rock Tour
JUNE 7, RIDGEDALE
Styz performs with a member of REO Speedwagon and the Eagles' former guitarist. Thunder Ridge Nature Arena. *BigCedar.com*

Pickwick Street Fair
JUNE 7, SPRINGFIELD
Artisans, art demonstrations, live music, and food. Pickwick Avenue and Cherry Street. *PickwickStreetFair417.com*

National Dance Finals
JUNE 10–14, BRANSON
Scholarships and trophies awarded. Convention Center. *StageOneDance.com*

Bushwhacker Days
JUNE 12–14, NEVADA
Carnival, crafts, live entertainment, car show, and parade. Downtown Square. *Nevada-Mo.com*

Serenade: Summer Nights of Swing & Song
JUNE 12–21, SPRINGFIELD
17-piece Missouri State Jazz Ensemble and vocalists. John Goodman Amphitheatre. *TentTheatre.MissouriState.edu*

Scavenger Hunt
JUNE 13–15, DADEVILLE
Follow clues hidden throughout the park and win prizes. Stockton State Park. *MoStateParks.com*

Prairie Walkabout and Plant ID
JUNE 14, DIAMOND
Guided tour with Dennis Evans of the Missouri Prairie Foundation. George Washington Carver National Monument. *NPS.gov*

Night Saunter
JUNE 14, MINDENMINES
One-mile guided hike as the sun sets. Prairie State Park. *MoStateParks.com*

Ozarks Pridefest: Homecoming
JUNE 14, SPRINGFIELD
Parade, live music, and vendors. Downtown. *OzarksPridefest.com*

White Hart Renaissance Faire
JUNE 14–29, HARTVILLE
Medieval games, activities for kids, food, artisan crafts, combat reenactments, performances, and vendors. White Hart Fairgrounds. *WhiteHartFaire.com*

Sertoma Duck Race
JUNE 20–21, OZARK
Craft fair, hot air balloon glow, fireworks, pie-eating contest, concerts, and 10,000 rubber ducks. Finley River Park. *4CSertoma.com*

The Cherry & James Band
JUNE 21, BRANSON
Rock concert, plus beer garden. *BransonLanding.com*

Juneteenth Celebration
JUNE 21, JOPLIN
Cultural performances, speakers, live music, and vendors. Hope Park. *EastTownDreamsDistrict.org*

Dandelion Heart
JUNE 21, NEOSHO
Americana/indie rock band. Big Spring Park. *NeoshoCC.com*

Pops in the Park
JUNE 21, SPRINGFIELD
Symphonic concert featuring the music of Billy Joel and Elton John. Phelps Grove Park. *SgfMuseum.org*

Taste of SoMo
JUNE 21, SPRINGFIELD
Samples from restaurants in southwest Missouri, plus regional beers, music, and vendors. Mother's Brewing. *SpringfieldMo.org*

A Couple of Blaguards
JUNE 21–22 & 27–29, CARTHAGE
Story of immigration, triumph over hardship, and love. *StonesThrowDinnerTheatre.com*

Rap Rewind
JUNE 27, LAMPE
Performers celebrate hip-hop. *BlackOakAmp.com*

Vintage Hitchcock
JUNE 27–JULY 2, SPRINGFIELD
Live radio play. John Goodman Amphitheatre. *TentTheatre.MissouriState.edu*

Brits at the Post
JUNE 28, SPRINGFIELD
British car and cycle show with awards. American Legion Post 639. *GOBMCCarShow.com*

Outlaw Music Festival
JUNE 29, RIDGEDALE
Willie Nelson & Family, Bob Dylan, and more. Thunder Ridge Nature Arena. *BigCedar.com*

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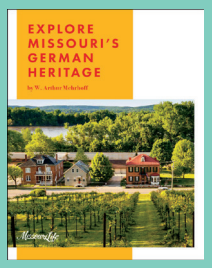

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NORTHWEST & KANSAS CITY

Hot Air Affair
MAY 30–JUNE 1, CAMERON
Balloon glow, tethered balloon rides, craft vendors, concert, and activities for kids. Memorial Airport. *VisitClintonCoMo.com*

Union Hill Garden Tour
JUNE 1, KANSAS CITY
Tour private gardens, plus music and vendors. *UnionHillKC.com*

Summit Art Plein Air Festival
JUNE 1, LEE'S SUMMIT
Live painting competition, wine tasting, music, and art show and sale. Stonehaus Farms, Powell Gardens, Lake Jacomo, and Legacy Park. *KCStudio.org*

Jazzoo
JUNE 6, KANSAS CITY
Safari soiree fundraiser. Dress in black tie with a twist inspired by the animal kingdom and enjoy food and drinks. *KansasCityZoo.org*

Master Gardeners' Garden Tour
JUNE 6, LEE'S SUMMIT
Self-guided tour of seven gardens. *MGGKC.org*

Slavic Festival
JUNE 6–7, SUGAR CREEK
Traditional music, food, dance, Pivo Pong, and folk art. Mike Onka Memorial Park. *SlavicFest.com*

Bold and Gold: KC Pridefest
JUNE 6–8, KANSAS CITY
Celebrate 50 years of Pridefest with a parade, family-friendly activities, vendors, and entertainment. Theis Park. *KCPride.org*

Downtown Days
JUNE 6–8, LEE'S SUMMIT
Live entertainment, carnival rides, sports zone, handcrafted goods, and craft beer tents. *LeesSummitDowntownDays.com*

Disney's Frozen
JUNE 6–15, ARROW ROCK
The Broadway musical. *LyceumTheatre.org*

Sliced Bread Day
JUNE 7, CHILLICOTHE
Mural project, activities for kids, bread-baking contest, and art demonstrations. Throughout town. *TheHomeOfSlicedBread.com*

Juneteenth Celebration
JUNE 18–22, FAYETTE
Iron Riders presentation, banquet, kids' market, gospel concert, parade, trivia, games, crafts, bingo, poster contest, live auction, car show, entertainment, fireworks show, community worship service, and barbeque cook-off competition. Throughout town. *Find on Facebook.*

Wine Festival
JUNE 7, EXCELSIOR SPRINGS
Sample more than 85 wines from 20 Missouri wineries, plus craft beers and live music. Downtown. *VisitExcelsior.com*

Strawberry Festival
JUNE 7, INDEPENDENCE
More than 80 vendors, strawberry treats, and entertainment. *VaileMansion.org*

African Market and Celebration
JUNE 7, KANSAS CITY
Handcrafted goods, cultural items, and food. Performances and Afro-inspired fashion show. Unity Temple. *AfroKC.com*

Takin' Care of Biscuits
JUNE 7, KANSAS CITY
Fortune Feimster performs a comedy show. *MidlandKC.com*

Art on the Side
JUNE 7, LIBERTY
Fine art, artisans, performances, concerts, plus face painting and chalk art for kids. Historic Downtown. *LibertyArtOnTheSide.com*

Quilt Walk
JUNE 7, LIBERTY
Historic Downtown. *QuiltingIsMyTherapy.com*

Ales West
JUNE 7, ST. JOSEPH
Craft beers from home-brewers and local and regional breweries. Coleman Hawkins Park. *AlesWest.com*

Art Fair
JUNE 7, ST. JOSEPH
Fine art by regional artists, music, food, and cash bar. *Albrecht-Kemper.org*

Second Sundays
JUNE 8, LEXINGTON
Trolley rides and vendors' market. Downtown. *HistoricLexington.com*

Juneteenth Celebration
JUNE 12, KANSAS CITY
Music, dancing, storytelling, and educational experiences. *Nelson-Atkins.org*

Juneteenth Celebration
JUNE 13–22, ST. JOSEPH
Gala, vendor fair, parade, fashion show, family festival, and picnic. Barlett Center. *StJosephMuseum.org*

Boulevardia
JUNE 14, KANSAS CITY
Beer, food, and music festival. Grand Boulevard at Crown Center Square. *Boulevardia.com*

Sawdust Fest
JUNE 14, KING CITY
Demonstrations, belt sander races, old-time photos, sawmill demonstrations, and beard contest. Millers Rustic Sawmill. *SawdustFest.com*

Concert in the Park
JUNE 14, MARYVILLE
Donaldson Westside Park. *MaryvilleChamber.com*

Raytown Live!
JUNE 14, RAYTOWN
Concert by Supermatics. Greenspace in Town Center. *Raytown.Live*

Fun on the Bluff
JUNE 14, SIBLEY
Experience frontier life in the early 1800s with food, music, games, and crafts. Fort Osage National Historic Landmark. *MakeYourDayHere.com*

Hawkfest
JUNE 14, ST. JOSEPH
Jazz and blues festival. Coleman Hawkins Park. *StJoMo.com*

Juneteenth Heritage Jubilee
JUNE 14, WESTON
Storytellers, African drummers and dancers, barbecue, and vendors. Weston Red Barn Farm. *BAACWeston.org*

Summerfest
JUNE 21, BROOKFIELD
Three bands perform. Downtown. *BrookfieldMoChamber.com*

Dragon Boat Festival
JUNE 21, KANSAS CITY
Music, martial arts, crafts, and dragon boat races. Brush Creek. *KCParks.org*

Tour de Lakes
JUNE 21, LEE'S SUMMIT
Four different rides around five lakes. Starts at the Longview Community Center. *CityOfLS.net*

Waterfest
JUNE 27–28, EXCELSIOR SPRINGS
Live music, parade, hot air balloon rides, beer garden, and bike show. Downtown. *ExcelsiorChamber.com*

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NORTHEAST & ST. LOUIS

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

Pagan Picnic: Harness the Fire
MAY 31–JUNE 1, ST. LOUIS
Workshops, open rituals, food, vendors, and KidZone. Tower Grove Park. *PaganPicnic.org*

Twilight Tuesdays
JUNE 3 AND 17, COTTLEVILLE
Different concert each week. Legacy Park. *CityofCottleville.com*

Jammin' Concert Series
JUNE 3–24 (TUES.), O'FALLON
Different band each week. Civic Park Bandstand. *OFallonMo.gov*

Petroglyph Tour
JUNE 6, KIRKSVILLE
Explore the rock carvings with park staff. Thousand Hills State Park. *MoStateParks.com*

Raptor Awareness
JUNE 6, MOBERLY
See live eagles and learn about raptor habitats. Rothwell Park Amphitheater. *Moberly.com*

Dinner and a Poe
JUNE 6, ST. CHARLES
Edgar Allen Poe during a catered dinner. Grand Opera House Banquet. *EA-Poe.com*

Summer Bash
JUNE 6–7, BRASHEAR
Vendors, lawn games, music, silent auction, and homemade ice cream. City Park. *VisitKirksville.com*

Paranormal Investigation
JUNE 6–7, WASHINGTON
Guided investigation at the 143-year-old Missouri Meerschaum Corn Cob Pipe Factory. *WashMoChamber.org*

Wine & Jazz Festival
JUNE 6–8, AUGUSTA
St. Louis jazz and local wine. Area wineries and Augusta Harmonie Verein. *TheHarmonie.org*

Webster Art Fair
JUNE 6–8, WEBSTER GROVES
Juried artists, Youth Makers' Market, and music. Campus of Eden Seminary. *WebsterArtsFair.com*

Block Party
JUNE 14, ST. CHARLES
Over-the-top printmaking using a steamroller. Artists create large-scale images on woodblocks, cover them with ink and a canvas, then a steamroller drives over them to squish the ink on to the canvas. Plus heavy machinery and vehicle display and live music. *FoundryArtCentre.org*

Tip & Toast
JUNE 7, KIRKSVILLE
Wine, whiskey, and beer tastings, live music, and vendors. White Oaks Barn. *VisitKirksville.com*

Route 66 Festival
JUNE 7, KIRKWOOD
Six bands perform, vintage car show, beer wagon, and vendors. *DowntownKirkwood.com*

Bourbon & Brews Festival
JUNE 7, ST. CHARLES
Sip on more than 400 craft beers, bourbons, and whiskeys, plus music. Frankie Martin's Garden. *BourbonAndBrewsStLouis.com*

Garden Tour
JUNE 7–8, HERMANN
Self-guided walking and driving tour of private gardens. *VisitHermann.com*

Strawberry Festival
JUNE 7–8, KIMMSWICK
125 food and craft vendors, strawberry treats, music, and pony rides, plus strawberry preserves for sale. *GoKimmswick.com*

Garrison Keillor Tonight
JUNE 11, ST. LOUIS
News from Lake Wobegon, storytelling, and song. *CityWinery.com*

Miss Missouri Pageant
JUNE 11–14, MEXICO
Missouri Military Academy campus. *MissMissouri.org*

Sunset on the Rails
JUNE 13, PACIFIC
Concert and vendors. Pacific Station Plaza. *PacificMo.org*

American Natya Festival
JUNE 13–15, ST. LOUIS
Classical dance, music, and theater from India. Clayton High School Auditorium. *Natya.org*

Hot Summer Nights
JUNE 14, ST. CHARLES
Jazz concert. Historic Frenchtown. *DiscoverStCharles.com*

Cocktail Party
JUNE 14, ST. LOUIS
Cocktail contest, concerts, fire dancers, and aerial performance. Central West End. *CWEScene.com*

Taj Mahal
JUNE 18, ST. LOUIS
Legendary blues musician. *ThePageant.com*

Rock of Ages
JUNE 18–JULY 13, MACON
Musical featuring rock songs from the 1980s. *MaplesRep.com*

Down by the River Concert
JUNE 20, HANNIBAL
Outdoor concert at the riverfront. Y-Men's Pavilion. *VisitHannibal.com*

Music in the Park
JUNE 20, MOBERLY
Rothwell Park. *Moberly.com*

Pond-O-Rama
JUNE 21–22, ST. LOUIS
Self-guided tour of private water gardens and ponds and visit with the owners. Throughout metro area. *SLWGS.org*

Summer Concert Series
JUNE 25, MAPLEWOOD
Concert by Fanfare. Ryan Hummert Park. *MidCountyChamber.org*

Sunset on the Riverfront
JUNE 26, WASHINGTON
Local band, food, beer, wine, and activities for children. Riverfront Park. *WashMoChamber.org*

Come From Away
JUNE 26–JULY 2, ST. LOUIS
Musical based on the true story of the residents of Gander, Newfoundland, who took in people from flights diverted because of the attack on 9/11. *Muny.org*

Cardboard Boat Races
JUNE 28, HANNIBAL
Competition with homemade boats. Aquatic Center. *VisitHannibal.com*

Country Music Concert
JUNE 28, HANNIBAL
Bryan Martin and Chase Beckham perform. Jaycees Tanyard Gardens. *HannibalJaycees.org*

Outlaw Music
JUNE 28, MARYLAND HEIGHTS
Willie Nelson, Bob Dylan, Nathaniel Rateliff, and more. Hollywood Casino Amphitheater. *Concerts.LiveNation.com*

45 Years of Pride: Pride Fest
JUNE 28–29 ST. LOUIS
Parade, entertainment, nonprofit village, activities for children, and vendors. Downtown. *PrideStL.org*

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SAT, JUNE 15 12:30-2:30PM Father's Day event
THURS, JUNE 19 7:00-8:30PM Trivia
SUN, JUNE 22 12:00-2:30PM Bubbles & Brunch event
SAT, JUNE 28 4:30-7:30PM Live Music w/ Andrew & Isaac
SAT, JULY 12 4:30-7:30PM Live Music w/ Derrick Enyard
SUN, JULY 19 12:00-2:30PM Bubbles & Brunch event
THURS, JULY 24 7:00-8:30PM Trivia
SAT, JULY 26 4:30-7:30PM Live Music w/ Meredith Shaw
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SOUTHEAST

Heartland Gaming Convention
MAY 31–JUNE 1, CAPE GIRARDEAU
Board game tournament, vendors, and play-to-win games. A.C. Brase Arena. *HeartlandGamingCon.com*

Quilt Extravaganza
JUNE 2–25, CAPE GIRARDEAU
More than 200 quilts on display. Crisp Museum. *VisitCape.com*

Heart of the Ozarks Fair
JUNE 3–7, WEST PLAINS
Carnival, food, truck pull, and grandstand entertainment. *HeartOfTheOzarksFair.net*

Spring Bluegrass Festival
JUNE 5–7, WEST PLAINS
Multiple bands perform and jam sessions, plus camping. Heart of the Ozarks Bluegrass Park. *HOBABluegrass.wixsite.com/mysite*

Folk Fest
JUNE 6–7, CAPE GIRARDEAU
Talks on the history of folk music and live acoustic music. Downtown. *VisitCape.com*

Tunes at Twilight
JUNE 6 AND 13, CAPE GIRARDEAU
Different concert each weekend. Ivers Square. *VisitCape.com*

Diverse Art of David Ottinger
JUNE 6–JULY 6, POPLAR BLUFF
Figurative paintings and drawings. Margaret Harwell Art Museum. *MHAM.org*

Summer Fun Day
JUNE 7, BURFORDVILLE
Self-guided mill tours, games, and music. Bollinger Mill State Historic Site. *MoStateParks.com*

Birds and Blossom Festival
JUNE 7, EMINENCE
Live bird program, art and craft activities, and games. Echo Bluff State Park. *MoStateParks.com*

Burgers, Brews, & Cruise
JUNE 7, PERRYVILLE
Sliders, beer, and classic cars. Downtown. *VisitPerryCounty.com*

French Heritage Festival
JUNE 8–9, STE. GENEVIEVE
Living history, live traditional music, folk dancing, and historic home tours. Downtown. *VisitSteGen.com*

Route 66 Summerfest
JUNE 6–7, ROLLA
Classic car cruise, dog show, *Super Mario Bros!* movie and costume party, street dance, drummers competition, crafts, food, activities for kids, bicycle and tricycle races, motorcycle poker run, hillbilly drag racing, and concert under the stars. Downtown. *Route66Summerfest.com*

Railroad Days
JUNE 13–14, NEWBURG
Fish fry, parade, music, activities for kids, car show, and art show. Throughout town. *VisitRolla.com*

Moses Austin Heritage Festival
JUNE 13–14, POTOSI
Car show, parade, and crafts. Downtown. *Find on Facebook.*

Freedom Fest
JUNE 14, CAPE GIRARDEAU
Music, vendors, and Kids' Zone. Century Casino. *VisitCape.com*

Cruisin' Uptown
JUNE 14, JACKSON
Car cruise and show, plus live music. Uptown. *JacksonMo.org*

Father's Day Crawfish Boil
JUNE 14, PERRYVILLE
Plus a concert by Broseph Tucker Band. *TheWarehousePerryville.com*

Celebrate St. James
JUNE 14, ST. JAMES
Craft cocktails, wine, beer, artisan street cuisine, and live music. *LeatherwoodStJames.com*

Rock Swap
JUNE 14–15, PARK HILLS
Minerals, fossils, jewelry, and rock art, plus guided tours. Missouri Mines State Historic Site. *MoStateParks.com*

Food Truck Thursday
JUNE 19, WEST PLAINS
Wide variety of food trucks. Civic Center parking lot. *WestPlains.gov*

Juneteenth Celebration
JUNE 19, WEST PLAINS
Live music performance and see murals by Dr. Bolaji Ogunwo. *WestPlainsDowntown.com*

Spamalot
JUNE 19–29, ROLLA
Monty Python's comedy. Cedar Street Playhouse. *OzarkActorsTheatre.org*

Hot Air Balloon Festival
JUNE 20–22, SIKESTON
Balloon glow, music, activities for kids, live entertainment, vendors, tethered balloon rides, and food trucks. Jaycee Rodeo Grounds. *Sikeston.net*

The Prince of Egypt
JUNE 20–29, WEST PLAINS
Musical by Dreamworks. *TheAvenueTheatre.org*

Taste of Caledonia
JUNE 21, CALEDONIA
Samples to taste from every shop in town. *CaledoniaMo.org*

Juneteenth Celebration
JUNE 21, CAPE GIRARDEAU
Live entertainment, presentations, artisan crafts, social services organizations, and activities for kids. Ivers Square. *VisitCape.com*

Blues, Brews, and BBQ
JUNE 21, ST. JAMES
Live music, samples from distilleries, and pulled pork. *PublicHouseBrewery.com*

Music in the Park
JUNE 21, ST. JAMES
Performance by the Mighty Pines. *MaramecSpringPark.com*

Moth Market: Camp Chrysalis
JUNE 21–22, WEST PLAINS
One-of-a-kind oddity and vendor show. Civic Center. *417MothMarket.com*

Movie Night in the Gardens
JUNE 26, ST. JAMES
The Wizard of Oz shown outdoors. *StJamesWinery.com*

Sweet Corn Festival
JUNE 26–29, EAST PRAIRIE
Live music, vendors, fireworks show, Tour de Corn bike ride, street dance, and corn-eating contest. Downtown. *EPSweetCorn.com*

The Inspirations
JUNE 27, STEELVILLE
Traditional gospel music concert. *MeramecMusicTheatre.com*

Summer Concert
JUNE 28, EMINENCE
Lone Pine Band performs. Echo Bluff State Park. *MoStateParks.com*

Starry Sky Nights
JUNE 28, LEASBURG
Astronomy experts demonstrate using telescopes and identifying stars and planet. Onondaga Cave State Park. *MoStateParks.com*

Roots & Branches
JUNE 28, WEST PLAINS
Pride event with vendors and entertainment. Civic Center East Lawn. *Find on Facebook.*

ROUTE 66 SUMMERFEST/ RH PHOTOGRAPHY

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Lighting Up Memories

A Wentzville entrepreneur transforms antiques into lamps.

INTERVIEW *Jim Winnerman*

Joe Yuede from Wentzville has always enjoyed collecting old things and taking them apart. If something can be upcycled and made useful again, he wants to fix it and put it back together, making it even better than it was.

When reproductions of Edison-style filament light bulbs were introduced in 2014, Joe had the idea to combine a few antiques with one of the bulbs to create a lamp. The base was from a vintage floor lamp, and the neck was an old steam-pressure gauge. The green metal lampshade had an antique finial (an ornament placed at its top).

A friend of his liked it so much, Joe gave it to him. Then Joe made more lamps and gave those away. Eventually, he started to sell his retro-futuristic lamps. In 2019, he started his business, Steampunk Sammie Designs, and this work became his profession.

Q| How do you decide what an antique will look like as a lamp?
A| After 10 years of creating, I can almost immediately visualize how to turn something into a lamp as soon as I see it. The challenge is to be sure it will be safe and functional, but I never give up. It has taken years of trial and error to get where I am today. Early on, some lamps took 20 tries before I was happy with the final product.

Q| What do you enjoy about making these unique lamps?
A| Vintage antiques remind me of time spent with my grandparents. It makes me very sentimental. Also, when someone gives me a family heirloom to make into a lamp, I realize they have put their trust in me to make something that will have a special place in their home. It is rarely just something that is old, but it has memories associated with it. I take that responsibility very seriously and enjoy the fact it will be cherished and enjoyed for a long time.

Q| What is the most unusual lamp you have made?
A| Someone wanted a pair of old metal roller skates combined with a vintage Singer sewing machine. I mounted the skates to the bottom of the sewing machine and welded the wheels so the lamp would not roll off the table. I have also made lamps out of old fishing poles with a light at the end of the fishing line and vintage electric fans where the blades are light bulbs.

Q| How did you decide on the name Steampunk Sammie?
A| Sammie is my son who is now 19. He started going to flea markets with me to buy antiques as soon as he was able to walk. As he got older, we would build lamps together. Now, he is in the Air Force and stationed in England. He is buying antiques there for me that will be much older than anything else I have worked on. I get goosebumps just thinking about what he will bring back! Steampunk is a style of design inspired by science fiction that combines historical items with technological features.

Q| What does your family think about what you do?
A| My wife is my biggest fan and supporter. My grandparents admire what I do because they have always collected antiques, but they always worked for a company. They think I am a little goofy working on my own.

Visit the website SteampunkSammieDesigns.com, or visit in person at the Lake St. Louis Farmers Market.

JOE YUEDE

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