Things That Matter: New Speakers Series Starts June 22

Mary Ellen Lohmann, Director, Administration & Communications

The Boone County History & Culture Center is launching a new speaker series, Things That Matter, designed to explore real people and real stories. The free discussions will be from 1:00-2:00 p.m. once monthly on Thursdays in the History & Culture Center’s Montminy Gallery.

This unique series will utilize a conversational style. The intent is to use powerful stories to cover everything from art and literature to social issues and natural history.

“The idea is to create a space where serious, informative and educational discussions can occur,” said Chris Campbell, BCHS executive director. “Most will have something to do with the arts or humanities. But all the topics will be important community issues that deserve thoughtful consideration.”

The series won’t be limited to subject matter experts but will also invite real people to share important stories. The aim is to broaden community understanding of tough topics. “It is incredibly hard to cover some of these complex issues with a one-sided discussion like most series use; we aim to fix that,” Campbell said.

“There is just so much wisdom that can be gleaned from the give and take of inter-generational conversations about important topics.”

Mark your calendars now for the first four events.

On June 22, historian Greg Olson, will share insights from his new book, Indigenous Missourians: Ancient Societies to the Present.

Then on July 13 Col. John Clark, USAF, will share about his experience as a prisoner of war for nearly six years in North Vietnam.

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Challenge Accepted?

Generous friends of BCHS, Dr. Laurel and Howard Wilson, are offering you, loyal members, a challenge—donate a gift of $100 or more to Summer Give and it will be matched, up to a total of $10,000! See details on page 3.
Letter from the Executive Director
When Art and History Coexist, Incredible Truths Arise

Chris Campbell, Executive Director

Excited to take part in the tours of the art exhibition Work and Leisure in Mid-Century Missouri, I walked into the Montminy Gallery. Even though it is a familiar space where we have hosted countless events and exhibits during my tenure, the gallery felt transformed by the vibrant paintings on the wall. Some were large-scale scenes of urban life featuring everything from the Kansas City stockyards to Union Station in St. Louis. Yet, it was the quiet, intimate scenes from everyday life that caused me to pause. It’s been weeks and one image—and its story—stays in my mind.

At first glance “The Golden Eagle” by Fletcher Martin is just two people standing along the river watching steamboats go by. A simple glimpse into local, ordinary life in Missouri. But when you pause and add context surrounding the carefully crafted oil painting, it offers the opportunity to explore the complexities of the era. The twin pillars of smoke were painted in 1947. A time when Missouri—and the nation—was segregated and deeply divided.

Martin gives power to the Black individuals in the scene by painting them in the foreground. They are also the only people in the image. However, there is a sense of mystery as we don’t see their faces. They could have been anyone. Perhaps they worked on the Golden Eagle, as they would not have been allowed to be guests upon the elite ship at the time. Perhaps they were simply walking along the river.

Then another element of the story rises to the surface. The Golden Eagle struck an island in the Mississippi River on May 18, 1947, and sank after being left to the mercy of the muddy waters.

New questions arise: were these individuals onboard? Were they safe? Did they have to help the 91 passengers and other crew members find refuge? Perhaps we will never know.

The quiet power in this single piece helps us consider another side of the story. Incredible truths arise when we provide space for art and history to coexist. Since 1924 that has been our mission. We preserve artifacts and share stories about the triumphs, fears, successes and challenges Boone Countians have faced for generations. From settling in an unknown territory to overcoming the obstacles we’ve inherited; each can help us glean lessons that create a brighter future.

Your donations make that possible. Every dollar makes a difference in allowing us to share art and the stories each piece can tell us about our past. It gives us all an opportunity to evaluate where we have been and set a new course for the future. Thank you for helping art and history coexist with your gift.

Make a secure online donation at BooneHistory.org/Donate-Now. Or send a check payable to the Boone County Historical Society to 3801 Ponderosa Street, Columbia, MO 65201. Each dollar donated to our annual Summer Give fundraising campaign makes an incredible difference.

Thanks to our partnership with the Museum of Art and Archaeology, we were able to share unique glimpses at local life from their art collection in our Montminy Gallery this spring. Much like how new truths arise when you allow art and history to work together, wonderful stories are born out of meaningful collaborations, including this one. The Golden Eagle, at the top of the page, was created by Fletcher Martin. In the second image patrons enjoy a guided tour on April 6. The third photo is The Meeting of the Rivers Fountain, St. Louis by Lawrence Beall Smith. Both paintings are from the Museum of Art and Archaeology’s Scruggs-Vandervoort-Barney Heart of the Nation Collection.
Challenge Accepted? Maximizing Summer Give Match Critical for BCHS Budget

Chris Campbell, Executive Director

The only cultural center of its kind focused solely on Boone County, the History & Culture Center is an irreplaceable community resource. We are a volunteer-driven, community-based cultural and heritage arts institution about to celebrate its 100th anniversary in 2024 thanks to the generosity of our members and donors.

But like so many others, every aspect of our budget is seeing the impact of inflation, decreased grant funding and fewer donations. A willingness to shave budgets where possible, to try new things and a team of very dedicated volunteers have kept this organization going through the last few years—truly a rollercoaster experience!

To help with our current shortfall, our friends Dr. Laurel and Howard Wilson are offering you, loyal members, a challenge—donate $10,000. They are willing to match an accumulative total of $10,000. But, to be matched gifts must be of $100 or more and must be made to the Summer Give campaign. Gifts must also be made to the “area of most need.” Your help making the most of these matching funds goes a long way to ensuring we keep serving this community in vibrant ways.

“It is hard to decide where to put time and money when so many organizations have needs. We have chosen to support the Boone County History & Culture Center as our main focus because once the artifacts and documents left behind are lost, so is the record of the culture that they represent,” Laurel said.

“We want the artifacts held by the Society to be preserved in the best way possible so that people in the future can better understand how people lived, learned and played in the past. It is our hope that the materials on display in the history galleries and the art gallery are not just objects of curiosity but raise questions about how we live in the present and what will life be like in the future.”

Not sure there is room in your monthly budget to give? Your IRA is a great option, and a contribution from your IRA still provides all the tax benefits of making a gift to an approved 501(c)(3) organization.

You can also name the Boone County Historical Society as a beneficiary in your estate plans. Contact your provider for details and let us know of your generous decision. We would be honored to help harbor your legacy.

All of you make this organization what it is. I thank you for your effort and enthusiasm. All of us working together make a difference. We make this place and its mission possible. So, while your support has already made a difference inside our doors, I ask you humbly...please consider honoring this organization with a monetary contribution to Summer Give. Thank you.

All Donations Make a Difference

See what your gift can do in key areas of need. Local students need tours of the Maplewood House and the Village at Boone Junction as well as hands-on experiences more than ever. Help children explore the past by seeing it for themselves.

$40 gift outfits one school field trip with shoe covers to better protect Maplewood’s historic hardwood floors and carpets.

Help local children thrive with hands-on experiences. During our free events, families engage with history in new ways. They deliver mail via the Pony Express, experiment with origami, make maps for Lewis and Clark and learn about the different mid-Missouri trails.

$300 donation supports the cost of one family event to ensure they remain freely available to attendees. (Currently, averaging 50 per event!)

Our free online digital archive is something to celebrate as Boone County is one of only a few communities its size—in the nation—to possess an online archive exclusively chronicling its history. Today it boasts 25,000+ photos and records.

$100 contribution pays for one week of the key-word searchable platform for the digital archives on BooneHistory.org.

Double Your Impact! A gift of $100 or more to Summer Give will be matched by Dr. Laurel and Howard Wilson, up to a total of $10,000! To qualify, the gift must be made to the “area of most need.” Make an online donation at BooneHistory.org/Donate-Now. Or send a check payable to the Boone County Historical Society at 3801 Ponderosa Street, Columbia, MO 65201.
CoMo 365 is a bold project written by BCHS historian Matt Fetterly as part of a collaboration between the Boone County Historical Society and CoMo Preservation. To commemorate Pride Month enjoy this excerpt about little known local history and see the full story at BooneHistoryCoMo365.org.

CoMo 365: Frederick Apartments, a Future Mayor, and MU’s Gay Purge

Matt Fetterly, BCHS Historian, Founder, CoMo 365 Blog

On January 7, 1949, the Associated Press reported that four Columbia men had been sentenced by the Boone County Circuit Court for “homosexual activities.”

A fifth man, Emery Kennedy Johnston, had already been sentenced. E.K. Johnston, a professor who had been acting dean of the Missouri School of Journalism, was charged with being the leader of a “homosexual ring” based out of his home in the Frederick Apartments on University Avenue.

Howard B. Lang Jr., the Boone County Prosecuting Attorney, began investigating suspected homosexuals in 1947. Lang told newspapers that “mad homosexual parties” had taken place at Johnston’s apartment. E.K. Johnston was fired before the trial, found guilty and moved to Kansas City.

Lang was elected mayor of Columbia in 1953, became president of MFA Insurance Companies (now Shelter Insurance Companies) and had a long and very well-respected volunteer career of public service.

In the early 1900s Columbia had a reputation as a safe haven for gay men, aware of this, MU administrators, under intense pressure from the state legislature’s reaction to Lang’s investigation, expelled and fired those suspected to be homosexual.

So began a decades-long purge of suspected homosexuals from the University of Missouri that resulted in the documented suicides and homicides of some expelled students.


In a review for the Lambda Literary Foundation, journalist Victoria A. Brownworth said the work is, “unquestionably, a landmark book and will likely be the template by which subsequent scholarship on our collective lesbian and gay history will be judged.”

The Washington Post said, “This is the history of the gay and lesbian movement that we’ve been waiting for.” Faderman begins the book with a story set in Columbia, but largely unknown to its residents.

Read the full story in the CoMo365 blog post at BooneHistoryCoMo365.org.
Volunteer Spotlight: Karen Potter

The work of the Boone County History & Culture Center simply would not be possible without incredible volunteers. This special section highlights an individual who goes above and beyond to serve our community and help ensure the future of this organization.

Pre-Covid, I began volunteering for Boone County History & Culture Center during the Heritage Festival. That’s when I began my love affair with the Maplewood House. I later started volunteering at the front desk in the Center and during special events such as evening concerts. When Covid was over and field trips to the Maplewood House became possible, I was happy to volunteer as a docent.

My husband and I are transplants to Boone County, arriving in 1996. At first, we had little time to learn much about the history of our adopted community. In retirement, by volunteering at the History & Culture Center, I have learned a great deal about Boone County history, culture and the residents. I now have an appreciation for the people who were instrumental in creating Boone County history as well as those currently working to preserve it.

While working in the Center, I have spoken with many people, both local and from out of town. Without exception, they all were amazed that such a place exists and tells Boone County History so well. The Montminy Art Gallery is an added bonus… and admission is free! Many of the visitors were eager to share their personal history and ties to Boone County.

Volunteers are always needed. Anyone interested in sharing their time for the preservation of Boone history should check in with the staff at the Center to see how their talents can be used. The staff and volunteers I have met are always respectful and appreciative of the volunteers.

Join Karen! There is currently a great need for volunteers to serve the Boone County History & Culture Center at the front desk and in the Waters Digital Imaging Lab. All training is provided. To get started, fill out the form online at BooneHistory.org/Volunteer or contact the Center at 573-443-8936 or Info@BooneHistory.org.

Maplewood House, History in Historic Nifong Park

Listed on the National Historic Register, Maplewood House was built in 1877 by Slater Ensor Lenoir and his wife Margaret Bradford Lenoir, both of whom were members of Boone County pioneer families.

The farmstead was called Maplewood because it was located in a grove of large sugar maple trees. Only four people lived in the home; the Lenoirs, their daughter Lavinia, and later Lavinia’s husband, Dr. Frank G. Nifong.

The main house is a wood and brick structure. During the construction, the bricks were fired on site, while some of the trees from the farm were used for lumber. It shows the influence of the Italianate architectural style, featuring decorative corbels supporting the eave of the roof; and a balustraded front balcony. The arched, oriole and bay windows are also key characteristics. Tours are available by appointment April to October. The cost is $6 per adult. Learn more at BooneHistory.org/Historic-Maplewood-House.
The History & Culture Center recently received a stunning portrait of Felix Grundy Bass, painted by James F. Wilkins in 1863. The generous donor is J. Woodbridge “Wood” Wornall of Weston, Missouri, who is a direct descendant of Eli E. Bass. Felix was born in 1845, the son of Eli E. Bass and Margaret Johnston Bass of Boone County, who were early arrivals to the Ashland area in 1819. Felix was only 18 years old when the portrait was painted, shortly before his life ended tragically on March 19, 1863.

Felix had been sent to a school in St. Louis to be away from the temptations of war, but he left to join Major-General Sterling Price and was captured near Carthage, Missouri, by the Union troops. He was shot and killed after pleading for his life, even offering his gold watch.

The artist, James F. Wilkins, was widely known for his portrait and panorama paintings. He was born in London, England in 1808, and studied at the Royal Academy before coming to the United States in the 1830s. He lived in St. Louis as early as 1844. In 1849, he joined a wagon train to California and created 200 sketches of the Overland Trail during the short time he was there. He produced a large panorama, which was shown in the Midwest from 1850 to 1851. Some of his portraits are at the Missouri Historical Society and the National Portrait Gallery.

Thanks to Wornall's generous donation, the Boone County Historical Society is honored to add this this wonderful portrait to our collections.

In May the History & Culture Center was busy with students. Between three field trips we hosted 155 young Missourians in just a week! On May 3, second grade students from North Shelby Elementary (over an hour and a half away!) toured the Village at Boone Junction while they were in town to visit the Columbia Public Schools (CPS) Planetarium.

Fifth graders from CPS’ Cedar Ridge Elementary and West Blvd Elementary joined us on May 5 and May 12 respectively. The older students enjoyed an extended tour of the village as well as inside the newly re-opened Maplewood House.

We need your help to host Southern Boone Elementary summer school students in June, and a number of CPS field trips in the fall.

According to BCHS volunteer Julie Kalaitzandonakes, there are several reasons to volunteer. One is that history and education are important for our youth to learn in a fun, hands-on environment, and that excitement is contagious. “We need you and it is so fun!! I’ve always felt welcome, well trained and supported by the other volunteers and History & Culture Center employees,” Kalaitzandonakes said.

Longtime BCHS volunteer Carolyn Doyle agreed. “It’s interesting, you learn a lot, it’s not an arduous task, you meet a variety of people, and you do a valuable service in helping keep our history alive.”

It also helps guide the next generation of Boone Countians, wherever they go. “We need to know where we came from in order to know where we’re going,” Doyle said. “Boone County’s history is Missouri’s history is the history of our country.”

For more information, fill out the form at BooneHistory.org/Volunteer or call the Center at 573-443-8936.

Top Karen Potter and Lynnanne Baumgardner start a tour of Maplewood on the front porch.
Above Ann Baker shares about the evolution of food preparation in the Maplewood kitchen.

J. Woodbridge “Wood” Wornall, a direct descendant of Eli E. Bass, donated this 1863 portrait of Felix G. Bass, painted by James F. Wilkins. Felix was killed by Union Troops the same year the painting was created. He is buried alongside family in the New Salem Baptist Church Cemetery in Ashland.
Things That Matter—continued from page 1

Matt Fetterly, local historian and founder of the CoMo365 blog, will highlight Columbia’s mostly unknown LGBTQIA+ history on August 10.

On September 14, Sandra Schiess will share the unique challenges she faced as Columbia’s first female firefighter in 1978 and her trailblazing career afterward.

“Most importantly we wish to be inclusive of all voices and create a safe space for all to feel heard,” Campbell said.

The series was conceived by Campbell and BCHS board director Dr. Victoria Hubbell. Campbell has 30 years’ experience telling important, entertaining stories starting in live theater and has spent the last nine years building the historical society into the vibrant arts center it is today. An author and historian, Hubbell is a retired professor from Stephens College.

Learn more about this exciting new series at BooneHistory.org.
Montminy Gallery: *TAUT/TAUGHT* Features Vibrant, Varied Fibers

Visit before July 15 to view the Montminy Gallery's exhibition *TAUT/TAUGHT: MU School of Visual Studies Fibers Past & Present*.

The vibrant show features works from current and former students in the MU School of Visual Studies fiber program who have been mentored by professor emerita Jo Stealey or professor C. Pazia Mannella.

*TAUT/TAUGHT* offers a rich, varied display of works, including many textiles and pieces created through mixed media processes. It also covers a range of conceptual issues—sense of place, the natural environment, physical and psychological states, storytelling, insights into aspects of American culture, personal identity, memory and more.

As they create, the artists reflect their personal views of the world we live in and are portraying a very personal form of visual poetry that their mentors helped them hone.

*TAUT/TAUGHT* showcases the works of Mannella as well as Annie Helmericks, Betsy Knabe Roe, Cynthia Evans, Sophie Pickering, Marina Cano, Farēna Saburi, Breana Mitchell and Kailyn Hill.

Learn more and enjoy a small sample of works in the virtual gallery at TheMontminyGallery.org.

This exhibition was made possible with funding from the Missouri Arts Council, Columbia’s Office of Cultural Affairs, Commerce Bank and BCHS members and donors like you.

(Clockwise from top left) Details of works by Annie Helmericks, Cynthia Evans, C. Pazia Mannella, Breanna Mitchell and two pieces by Farēna Saburi.

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**Help Make History. Volunteer. Donate.**