Missouri State University-West Plains
Ozarks Studies Committee
presents

The Seventeenth Annual Ozarks Studies Symposium

"The Political Economy of the Ozarks"

September 19-21, 2024

Missouri State University is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action/Minority/Female/Veterans/Disabilities Employer and Institution.

The Ozarks Studies Committee is sponsoring this program in partnership with Missouri State University-West Plains, the Ozarks Heritage Research Center, and The West Plains Council on the Arts

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The Ozarks Studies Committee Wishes to Recognize the Following Major Supporters of Past Symposiums:

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Community Foundation of the Ozarks

Cover image: Fruitville Farms Company promotional pamphlet, 1910, Ozarks Heritage Research Center, Missouri State University-West Plains

Thursday, September 19, On the Mezzanine, West Plains Civic Center

5:30-7:00 West Plains Council on the Arts
Gallery at the Center – on the mezzanine at the West Plains Civic Center

Ozarks Buildings: Cultural Heritage and Containers of Spirit
Barbara Williams, Mixed Media Artist

This exhibit highlights the work of Ozarks people responding to a need. They picked up rocks to clear the land; the rock was free and was useful in making homes, barns, schools, churches and business buildings. Many were built between the 1920s-1940s, with sensitivity to the selection of rocks and placement, often adding interesting embellishments. These buildings held mothers and babies, grandpas and grandmas, through good times and bad times.

Recently the term "giraffe rock" has become popular, referring to a particular style of rock building. These are multicolored earth-toned field stone or slab rock, separated by raised beaded mortar which is sometimes painted white resembling the pattern seen on a giraffe. This is the Ozarks' unique contribution to American architecture.

During the 1930s President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Works Progress Administration meant to put people to work and used local rock for public projects. The WPA created jobs in the Ozarks, but the agency could also be controversial among Ozarkers.

Examples of WPA built rock schools in this exhibit are scattered throughout the seven-county area of this research project. Included here are examples of one-room, two-room and two-story structures: Lost Pond, Oregon County; Wilderness, Oregon County; Blackjack, Douglas County; Boatman's, Howell County; Couch, Oregon County.

Reflection on buildings as containers of spirit came after a recent trip to Turkey to see Hagia Sophia, a 1500-year-old structure built in the 6th century. It continues to emanate a powerful and peaceful spirit. Buildings have the potential to retain the spirit of those that built and/or occupied them.

Barbara Williams *was born and raised in the Missouri Ozarks and earned art degrees from Southwest Missouri State University and Southern Illinois University, graduating with an MFA. After graduation she spent one year traveling and working in Europe, visiting countries of her favorite artists. In 1997 she returned to Europe, taking a class in monotype printmaking in Florence, Italy.*

Her work has been included in international juried printmaking exhibitions in England, Italy, Poland, Yugoslavia, and numerous juried national and regional shows in the U.S., including one held at the Smithsonian Institution, which was also included in a year-long traveling exhibit. Williams's prints and mixed media collage paintings are included in permanent collections in Little Rock, AR (Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts); Boulder, CO; Swannanoa, NC (Swannanoa College) and in private collections in the U.S. and Italy. In addition, her work has been featured in four Watercolor USA (Springfield, MO) exhibits. Influenced by impressions from an Ozarks 1940s-50s childhood, the prints and mixed media paintings are personal expressions and help preserve the history of that time and place.

Williams served as adjunct art faculty for 30 years at Missouri State University-West Plains.

Refreshments will be served, and the artist will be available to discuss her work.

Friday, September 20, Magnolia Room, West Plains Civic Center

8:00-9:00 Refreshments

9:00 Welcome Address: Dr. Dennis Lancaster, Chancellor, Missouri State University-West Plains

9:15-10:45 Panel 1: *Re-energizing the Past and Remembrance in the Ozarks*

- Leslie Reed, Instructor of English, Arkansas State University
  - *Big History in a Small Town: The Challenges of the Present in Attempts to Saving the Past*
- Jared Phillips, Teaching Associate Professor of History, University of Arkansas
  - *The Unified Approach: Rebuilding Ozark Small Farms via OOGA, OSFVP, and FORGE, 1980-2000*
- Robert McCormick, Author
  - *Abandoned Ozarks*

11:00-12:30 Panel 2: *Ozarks Literary Criticism*

- Craig Albin, Professor of English, Missouri State University-West Plains
  - *What "The Money Proves": Commodified Bodies in* Tomato Red
- Joseph A. Farmer, Associate Professor of English, Northeastern State University (Tahlequah, Oklahoma)
  - *Outhouses and Others: The Ozark Tacky Novels of Donald Harington*
- John J. Han, Professor of English and Creative Writing, Missouri Baptist University
  - *Rural Poverty in Harold Bell Wright's Ozarks Novels*

2:00-3:45 Panel 3: *Ozarks Waters*

- Vincent Anderson, Baxter County Library
  - *Fishing Tourism in the Ozarks: The Legacy of the Twin Lakes Region*
- Brooks Blevins, Noel Boyd Professor of Ozarks Studies, Missouri State University
  - *Grappling for the Gasconade: Property Rights and Changing Streams in Missouri*
- Myleea Hill, Professor of Communication, Arkansas State University, and Catherine Bahn, Falling Spring Publishing
  - *A Visual Study of Economic and Cultural Change along the Eleven Point National Wild and Scenic River*
- Bob Kipfer, Missouri Master Naturalists
  - *Saving Bull Creek: A Trip Through Time*

4:00-5:00 Panel 4: *Poetry: Readings and Criticism*

- James Fowler, Professor of English (retired), University of Central Arkansas
  - *Off the Farm: The Wages of Displacement in Phillip Howerton's Ozarks*
- Dave Malone, Multi-Hyphenate Creative, West Plains, Missouri
  - *Deer Hunting to Dawt Mill: A Poetic Perspective on the Modern Political Economy of the Ozarks*

5:30pm

Keynote Presentation
Magnolia Room, West Plains Civic Center

Kimberly Harper

The State Historical Society of Missouri

Robert Boatright, the Buckfoot Gang, and the Fleecing of Middle America

Swindler. Murderer. Scoundrel. Robert Boatright was one of Middle America's greatest confidence men. Although little remembered today, his story provides a rare glimpse into Middle America's criminal past. Working in concert with a local bank and an influential Democratic boss in Jasper County, Missouri, 'this dean of modern confidence men' and his colorful confederacy of con men known as the Buckfoot Gang seemed untouchable. A series of missteps, however, led to a string of court cases across the country that brought Boatright's own criminal enterprise to an end. And yet, the con continued: Boatright's successor, John C. Mabray, and his cronies, many of whom had been in the Buckfoot Gang, preyed upon victims across North America in one of the largest midwestern criminal syndicates in history before they were brought to heel. Like the works of Sinclair Lewis, Boatright's story exposes a rift in the wholesome midwestern stereotype and furthers our understanding of nineteenth- and twentieth-century American society.

A native of McDonald County, Missouri, Kimberly Harper earned degrees in history from Crowder College, Missouri Southern State University, and the University of Arkansas. In 2011 she received the Missouri Humanities Council's Distinguished Achievement in Literature (Non-Fiction) Award for her book *White Man's Heaven: The Lynching and Expulsion of Blacks in the Southern Ozarks, 1894–1909,* which was published by the University of Arkansas Press. The keynote is based on her most recent book, *Men of No Reputation: Robert Boatright, the Buckfoot Gang, and the Fleecing of Middle America* (University of Arkansas Press, 2024).

7:30-10:00 **Social Hour at Wages Brewing Company (1382 Bill Virdon Blvd., in the East Towne Village Center, West Plains, www.wagesbrewco.com)**

Please join us for drinks, food, and trivia at West Plains's finest microbrewery. Wages Brewing serves both alcoholic and nonalcoholic drinks. All are invited!

Saturday, September 21, Magnolia Room, West Plains Civic Center

8:30-10:15 Panel 5: *Storytelling and Imagining the Ozarks*

- Kim McCully-Mobley, Storyteller/Historian/Freelance Writer/Educator, and Co-Director of the Aurora Houn' Dawg Alumni and Outreach Center
  - *Storytelling and Sense of Place: All Roads Lead Home*
- Jo Van Arkel, Professor of English, Drury University
  - *Fairly Tales, Folklore, and Politics*
- Danette House, Traditional Ozarks Storyteller
  - *Prosperity to Ruin: My Family's Journey from Their Ozarks' Settlement to the post-Civil War Period*
- Joseph Hutchinson, Graduate Student, University of Missouri
  - *From Mountaineers to Hillbillies: Crafting the Image of the Mountain South*

10:15-11:15 Panel 6: *Ozarks Entertainment and Art*

- Dawn Larsen, Professor of Theatre, Francis Marion University
  - *Hills a Poppin': Shad Heller's Corn Crib Theatre*
- Jimmy Huff, Michael Brasier, and Emily Lord, *Skipjack Review*
  - *Eat the Rich: On Taste and the Fate of Art in Today's Political Economy*

11:30-12:30 Panel 7: *Reshaping Nature in the Ozarks*

- Denise Henderson Vaughn, Independent Science Writer
  - *Fire in the Ozarks: Burning by Humans has Shaped the Landscape*
- Steve Wiegenstein, Author
  - *The Great Tornado of 1925*

2:00-3:00 Panel 8: *Impactful Ozarkers: Their Life and Work*

- Timothy G. Nutt, Director, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences
  - *Miss Vada and Her One-on-One Way: Vada Webb Sheid's Impact on the Ozarks and the Arkansas General Assembly*
- Mike O'Brien, Journalist
  - *The Life of Gerald L.K. Smith*

3:30-4:30 Panel 9: *Ozarks Fiction and Song*

- Steve Yates, Author
  - *Reading from* The Lakes of Southern Hollow
- Dawn Larsen, Professor of Theatre, Francis Marion University
  - *Performance of Songs from* Hillbillyland

Eighteenth Annual Ozarks Studies Symposium, 2025

Call for Proposals

The Ozarks Studies Committee of Missouri State University-West Plains seeks proposals for its 18th annual symposium to be held at the West Plains Civic Center on September 18-20, 2025.

The theme of the 2025 symposium is **"Conflict and Consensus in the Ozarks."** This broad theme is intended to accommodate consideration of a wide variety of topics. The committee is also happy to consider a variety of supplemental topics or approaches related to the Ozarks.

For purposes of this symposium, the Ozarks is defined broadly to encompass much of southern Missouri and northern Arkansas and adjacent portions of Oklahoma, Kansas, and Illinois.

Community members, historians, oral historians, folklorists, artists, writers, scholars, or students representing any discipline or field are invited to propose presentations consistent with this theme. Each presenter will be allotted 30 minutes; presenters will be asked to limit their prepared presentations to approximately 20 to 25 minutes to allow time for questions and discussion. Presentations may take the form of conventional conference papers or any other form suitable for such a symposium.

Proposals should be approximately 200 to 300 words in length and should include a preliminary summary of the content of the proposed presentation and a list of any audio-visual or other technological requirements. They should also include the submitter's name, institutional affiliation and/or professional title, and complete contact information.

Student Sessions: The Ozarks Studies Symposium encourages students of all levels to contribute proposals, including poster session proposals related to the theme.

Email proposals to Dr. Jason McCollom, Associate Professor of History at Missouri State University-West Plains, at jasonmccollom@missouristate.edu.To be given first consideration, proposals must be received by July 1, 2025.