

The Filson

A Publication of The Filson Historical Society, Kentucky's Oldest and Largest Independent Historical Society



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FROM THE CHAIR

These are very exciting times for The Filson Historical Society, evidenced by the recent visit of His Royal Highness, Prince Charles, the Prince of Wales. The capital campaign to raise the funds to build the addition to the Ferguson Mansion continues to make steady progress, currently attaining \$10.46 million of the \$11.75 million goal. Construction has progressed well through the winter months. We expect to “top off” the building in the next few weeks. We are on schedule and on budget. We hope to open the new facility in the spring of 2016. You will hear much more about this in the coming months.

Most importantly, The Filson continues to pursue its mission, “to collect, preserve, and tell the significant stories of Kentucky and Ohio Valley history and culture,” with excellence. Now conducting over 100 programs per year as well as its events and publications, The Filson is uniquely positioned to help the citizens of our region to connect with their past. We strongly support life-long learning and assist today’s decision-makers in understanding the important lessons of the past.

It is an honor for me to serve as the Board Chair and on behalf of the directors and staff, we sincerely appreciate your participation, your membership, and your financial support.

Sincerely,



Carl M. Thomas
Chairman of the Board

Cover Photo:

His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales visited The Filson Historical Society during an event where the City of Louisville was honored for its historic preservation work by The National Trust for Historic Preservation. Director Mark Wetherington and Immediate Past President of the Board Orme Wilson III accompanied Prince Charles into The Filson.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

On March 20th, The Filson Historical Society hosted the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s public designation of the “Heart of Louisville” as the Trusts newest “National Treasure.” The announcement came after a Trust panel discussion entitled “The National Trust for Historic Preservation Presents: Valuing the Built Environment.” His Royal Highness Prince Charles and Mayor Greg Fischer visited The Filson, where National Trust President Stephanie Meeks presented the Mayor with Louisville’s designation. As a “National Treasure,” our city will be used as an urban laboratory where preservation lessons learned in the past can help promote Louisville’s historic structures.

Prince Charles, who has long supported both historic preservation and sustainability movements, remarked on his own experiences in both Britain and in the United States. Members can listen to Prince Charles’s remarks on our Website at www.filsonshistorical.org and to the entire panel discussion, which included Gill Holland, Mark Huppert, and Jim Lindberg, and was moderated by Stephanie Meeks. Podcasts can be found under the “Read, Watch, Listen” tab on our website and require you to be signed in for access.

As a regional historical society, The Filson is the key repository for many of the tools that historic preservationists need to document their work. These include photographs of buildings, architectural plans, and correspondence of owners and designers used by the community to restore the built environment and promote sustainability. The Ferguson Mansion itself has been repurposed several times, with The Filson’s award winning adaptive reuse in 1986 being the latest, and it will continue to be the heart of our research and collections mission in the future expanded campus.



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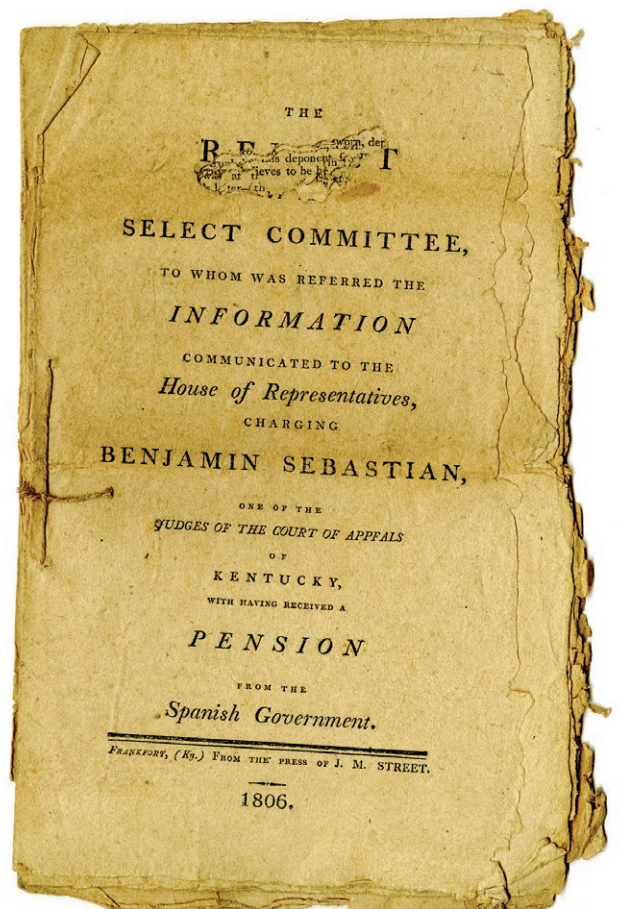
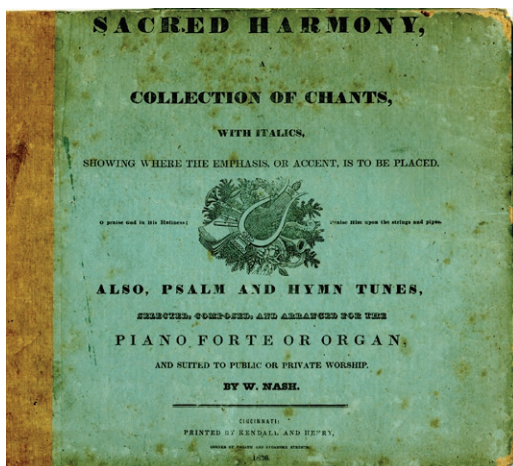
OUR MISSION:

To collect, preserve, and
tell the significant stories
of Kentucky and Ohio
Valley history and culture.

Recent Acquisitions



Among printed material recently added to the collection through the Historical Acquisition Fund were a number of rare imprints. Copies of the *Western Farmer's Almanac* printed by Morton & Griswold in Louisville for the years 1847 and 1853; the report of the committee investigating Benjamin Sebastian's ties to the Spanish government, printed by J. M. Street in Frankfort in 1806; and *Sacred Harmony*, a collection of religious music by W. Nash, published by Kendall and Henry in Cincinnati in 1836. Contrasting the early Kentucky and Ohio imprints are three paintings by G. Caliman Coxe, the dean of Louisville's African American painters in the mid-20th century. Donated by Kay Oliver, these are not only the first Coxe paintings in The Filson's collection but our first abstract works of art. Pictured here is "Signals."



Browsing in Our Archives

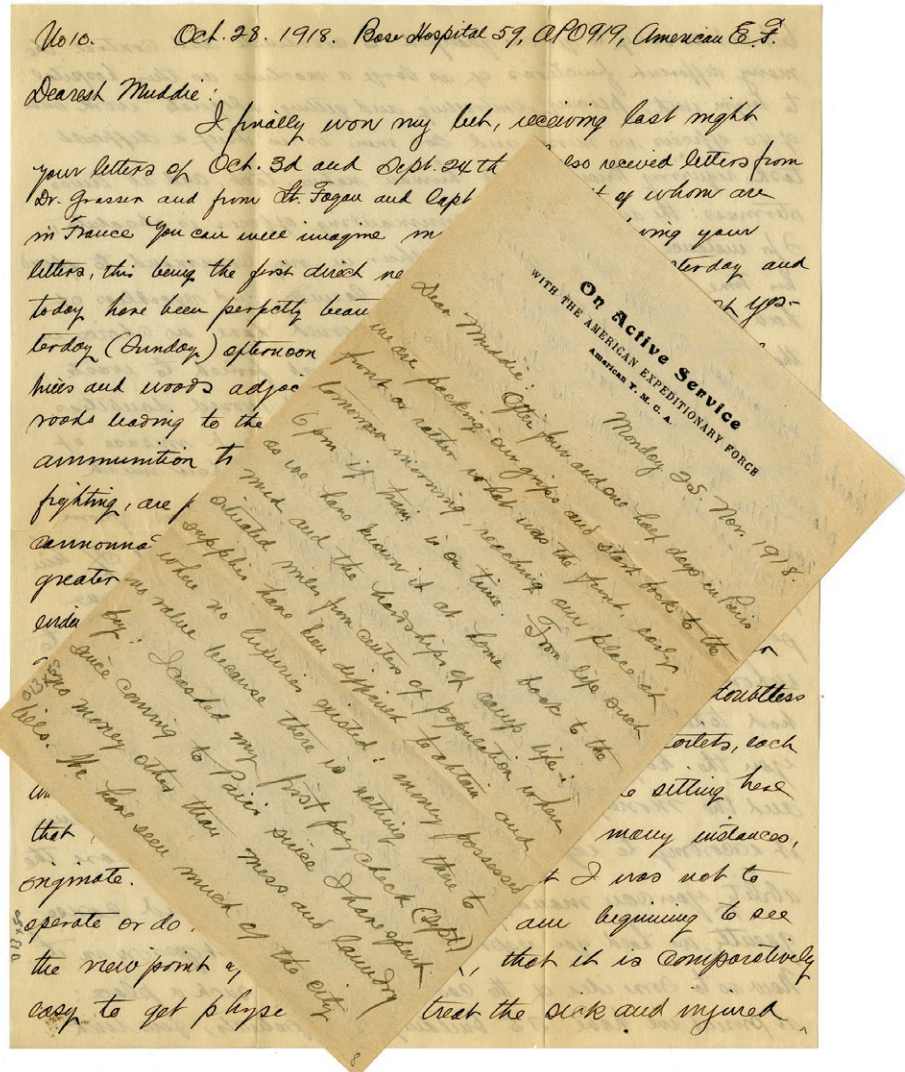
A Louisville Surgeon Goes to War

BY LAURENCE CARR | VOLUNTEER

The Filson recently acquired a collection of letters written by a prominent Louisville surgeon/educator who commanded a base hospital in France in the waning months of World War I. Irvin Abell was born in Lebanon, Kentucky, in 1876. He completed his medical studies at the Louisville Medical College in 1897. After further study in Germany, he joined the faculty of the Louisville Medical College in 1900 and continued at the school following its incorporation into the University of Louisville in 1908. He married Caroline Harting in 1907 and together they had four sons. Caroline, who he affectionately addressed as “Muddie,” and the boys, ages 4 to 10 in 1918, are the main recipients of over 100 letters that he wrote while in army training and serving as the hospital commander between April 1918 and February 1919.

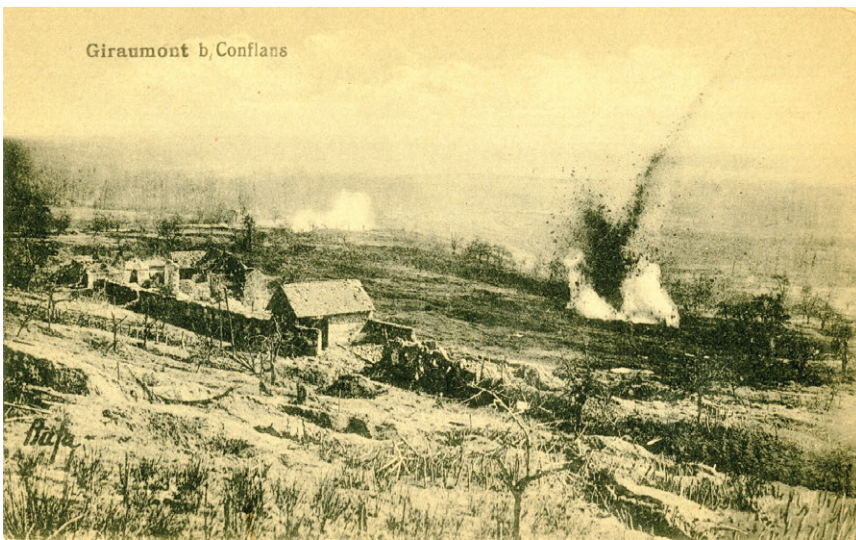


It is quite evident in these letters that Abell was very concerned about his family's well-being during his year-long absence from home. He frequently encourages his sons to keep up with their school work and inquires about what they are reading. He asks his oldest son, Irvin Jr., to take his place at home and assist his mother any way he can. If keeping the house proves to be difficult without additional help, he suggests she close or sell the house and move into an apartment. He suspects that several merchants in Louisville are profiteering because of war shortages and frequently urges her to avail herself of the goods stocked at the quartermaster's depot at Camp Taylor. He anticipates a shortage of coal in the coming winter (1918-1919) and advises her to order a supply early (June). Although he suspects that their chauffeur may be taking advantage of



her financially, he thinks she should have him exempted if he is drafted, as she is dependent on his services. He frequently advises her on investing in Liberty bonds for her financial security. He also took out a life/disability insurance policy from the War Risk Insurance Bureau to provide additional protection for his family.

Abell's preparation before leaving for France in September 1918 included a brief stay at the Rockefeller Institute in New York. Base Hospital 59 was mobilized at Camp Shelby, near Hattiesburg,



The camera has caught the explosion of a big shell: this leaves a hole varying in size according to power of shell: I have seen them in which you could hide our Packard car with winter body on: this particular one on road near Chépey.

Verlag Killy Kehler, Metz. Originalaufnahme vom westlichen Kriegsschauplatz Karte No. 40

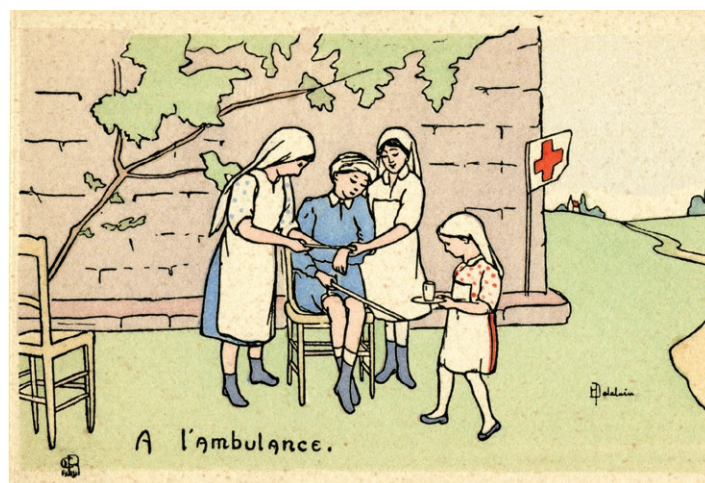
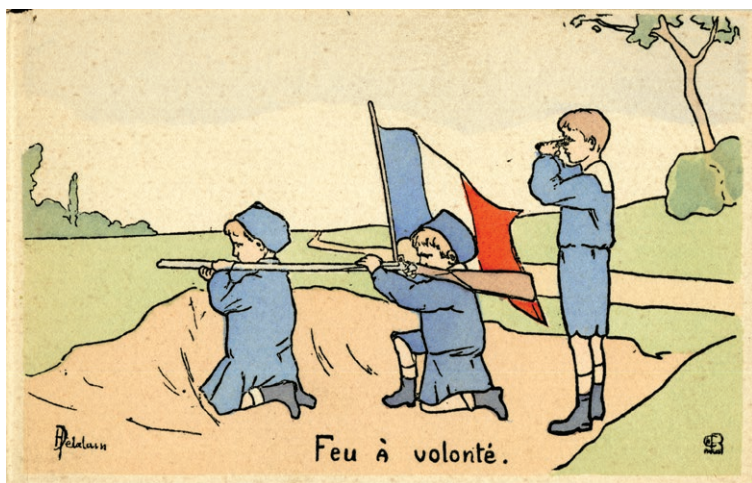
He [Abell] often sent postcards home to Muddie and the boys [...] These cards had been printed in Germany and were used as propaganda, “depicting to their home people the accuracy and destructiveness of their artillery fire.”

Mississippi, and he spent the summer of 1918 there as chief of surgery. Following his promotion to Lt. Col., Medical Corps National Army, Base Hospital 59 was transported to Camp Stuart, Newport News, Virginia, for embarkation to France. In early September 1918 they boarded the troop transport *Madawaska*, a converted German passenger liner seized by the U.S. in April 1917. The day before the ship arrived in Brest, France, the convoy was attacked by a German submarine. Due to wartime censorship, Abell was not permitted to describe this attack to “Muddie” until three weeks after the armistice. He was an eyewitness to the attack, describing how the sub emerged in the middle of the convoy alongside his ship. Six U.S. destroyers attacked and one of them “blew [the sub] to smithereens.” Upon arrival in Brest, the staff of Hospital 59 recuperated from the voyage for a week at a French camp dating back to the Napoleonic Era. He mentions that the commanding general of the camp is George Harris, president of Louisville Gas & Electric Co. The staff was then transported with their supplies by rail to the front near Rimaucourt, Department Haute Marne, approximately 140 miles east of Paris. The hospital buildings had been prefabricated in Switzerland, transported to France, and bolted together on site. Tent sections were later added

to the hospital providing a total capacity for 2,500 patients. He describes the wards as being much more comfortable than he anticipated. Being close to the front, he could hear the big guns booming every night. Trains with a capacity of up to 360 stretchers and a larger number of ambulatory patients carried sick, gassed, and wounded American soldiers to the hospital, sometimes as many as six trains per day. Those soldiers able to be moved were sent by other trains to hospitals farther back from the front. He frequently mentions the flu epidemic ravaging the countryside. They sometimes had as many as 1,600 patients at one time. He describes in some detail the triage method for handling soldiers entering the hospital.

He often sent postcards home to Muddie and the boys. Many of them are photographs of scenes of destruction of towns and villages by German artillery. These cards had been printed in Germany and were used as propaganda, “depicting to their home people the accuracy and destructiveness of their artillery fire.”

Abell’s letters exhibit his profound sense of duty and patriotism to his country. He sometimes complained that many of his fellow physicians and surgeons in Louisville were shirking their responsibility in not having volunteered their services earlier to the

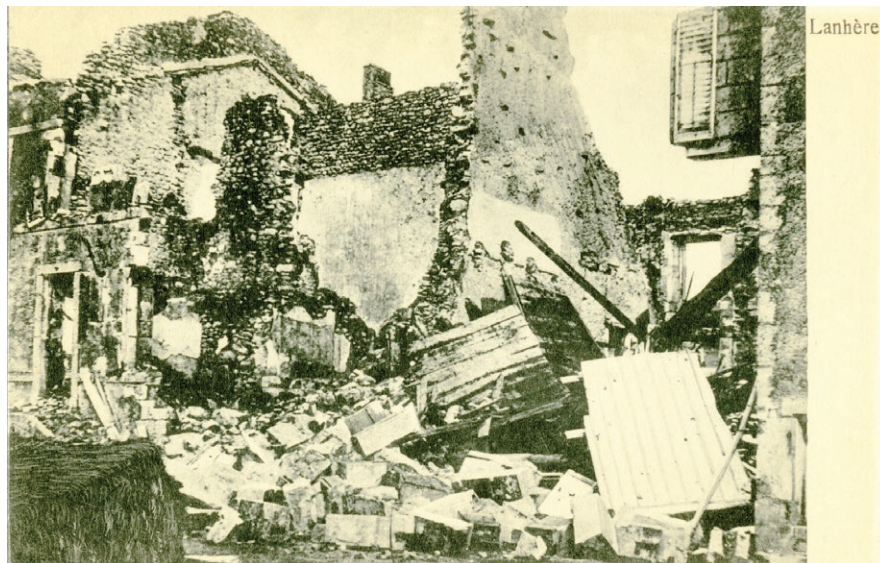


armed forces. In one letter written in late November 1918, he remarks that “several Louisville doctors have entered the service under the pressure of the draft. I am surprised at the rank given some of them. This will probably cause some dissatisfaction with the men who have been here for several months, unhesitatingly accepting any rank offered them. Some have received no promotions. They resent the fact that many doctors held out until they got a higher rank or were forced into the army.”

He visited Paris in late November 1918 to attend a medical conference and wrote an interesting and humorous letter on his observations of the city and its inhabitants. He mentions that the city had taken measures to protect its museums and art collections. Fortunately, Paris had experienced very little damage. He was astonished that the hotel in which he was staying (“the Seelbach of Paris”) was populated by women openly soliciting their services with the sanction of the hotel authorities.

By January 1919 many of the hospital officers had been transferred to Germany to serve in the army of occupation. In one of his last letters written in Europe, Abell mentions that he is leaving for a tour of Italy before returning to the U.S. in April.

Upon his return to the U.S., Abell resumed his duties as clinical professor of surgery at the University of Louisville where he was appointed to the Board of Trustees in 1935. In 1938 he chaired a committee that advised President Roosevelt’s committee studying a proposed national health care program. In 1940 President Roosevelt named him chairman of a national committee to co-operate with the Defense Commission on Public Health. During his career, Abell led several medical organizations including the Southeastern Medical Society, the American Gastroenterology Association, the American Medical Association, and the American College of Surgeons. While on a fishing vacation in Ontario, Canada, he died suddenly of a heart attack on August 29, 1949, at the age of 72. He was buried at Calvary Cemetery in Louisville.



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Dr. Irvin Abell, Sr., in his later years, ca. 1940s.

Letters from Dr. Abell to his wife “Muddie” in late 1918.

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German postcard showing artillery bombardment of the French town of Giraumont.

Page 3 - Bottom

Dr. Abell’s note on the back of the Giraumont postcard providing a context for those back home for the scale of damage done by the artillery shells.

Page 4 - Top

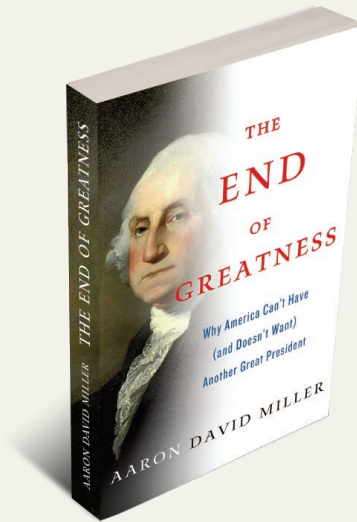
French postcards of children simulating war activities

Page 4 - Bottom

Postcard collected by Dr. Abell depicting the heavily damaged French town of Lanhères.

The End of Greatness: Why America Can't Have (and Doesn't Want) Another Great President

by Aaron David Miller



“Why has America gone some 70 years—the longest time ever—without a president in the league of Washington, Lincoln and FDR? Aaron David Miller dissects our political history with a finely sharpened scalpel, coming up with penetrating answers. More provocatively, he argues we may be better off not to have another “great president.” I doubt many readers will agree with all of his arguments—I don’t—but they certainly deserve our serious attention. And they are a pleasure to read!”
– David Gergen,

*Professor & Co-Director,
Center for Public Leadership,
Harvard Kennedy School, and
Former White House Adviser
to Four Presidents*

The presidency has always been an implausible—some might even say an impossible—job. Part of the problem is that the challenges of the presidency and the expectations Americans have for their presidents have skyrocketed, while the president’s capacity and power to deliver on what ails the nation has diminished. Indeed, as citizens we continue to aspire and hope for greatness in our only nationally elected office. The problem of course is that the demand for great presidents has always exceeded the supply. As a result, Americans are adrift in a kind of Presidential Bermuda Triangle suspended between the great presidents we want and the ones we can no longer have.

The End of Greatness explores the concept of greatness in the presidency and the ways in which it has become both essential and detrimental to America and the nation’s politics. Miller argues that greatness in presidents is a much overrated virtue. Indeed, greatness is too rare to be relevant in our current politics, and driven as it is by nation-encumbering crisis, too dangerous to be desirable. Our preoccupation with greatness in the presidency consistently inflates our expectations, skews the debate over presidential performance, and drives presidents to misjudge their own times and capacity. Our focus on the individual misses the constraints of both the office and the times, distorting how Presidents actually lead. In wanting and expecting our leaders to be great, we have simply made it impossible for them to be good.

Aaron David Miller is currently the Vice President for New Initiatives and a Distinguished Scholar at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. Between 2006 and 2008, he was a Public Policy Scholar when he wrote his fourth book, *The Much Too Promised Land: America’s Elusive Search for Arab-Israeli Peace*. His other books include *The Arab States and the Palestine Question: Between Ideology and Self Interest*, *The PLO and the Politics of Survival*, and *The Search for Security, Saudi Arabian Oil and American Foreign Policy*.



May 18, 2015, 6:30 p.m.

*The Temple,
Congregation Adath Israel Brith Sholom
5101 US Hwy. 42, Louisville*



Tickets are \$10 for non-members.
Free for members of The Filson Historical Society.

Send ticket requests with a self-addressed,
stamped envelope to:
*GPBL Tickets, 1310 S. Third Street,
Louisville, KY 40208.*

THE “NEW FILSON” IS TAKING SHAPE

The Cornerstone Campaign is nearing the \$10.5 million mark, and construction on our \$11.75 million Campus Expansion Project is making rapid progress. Work on the fourth story of the new Owsley Brown II History Center began last month, and, as the photograph on the right below shows, it is already level with the Ferguson Mansion’s 3rd floor.



CONSTRUCTION ON THE OWSLEY
BROWN II HISTORY CENTER



VIEW OF CONSTRUCTION FROM
FERGUSON MANSION'S THIRD FLOOR

Renovations to the Carriage House are well underway. The renovated Carriage House will serve as the Campus’s new public entrance and one of The Filson’s primary museum gallery space. The new entrance will be on the north side of the building and its glass entry will display the names of the Cornerstone Campaign’s Leadership Level donors. From the Carriage House, visitors will have access to both the Ferguson Mansion and the Owsley Brown II History Center via elevated, glass walkways linking all Campus structures.



RENOVATIONS CONTINUE ON THE CARRIAGE HOUSE



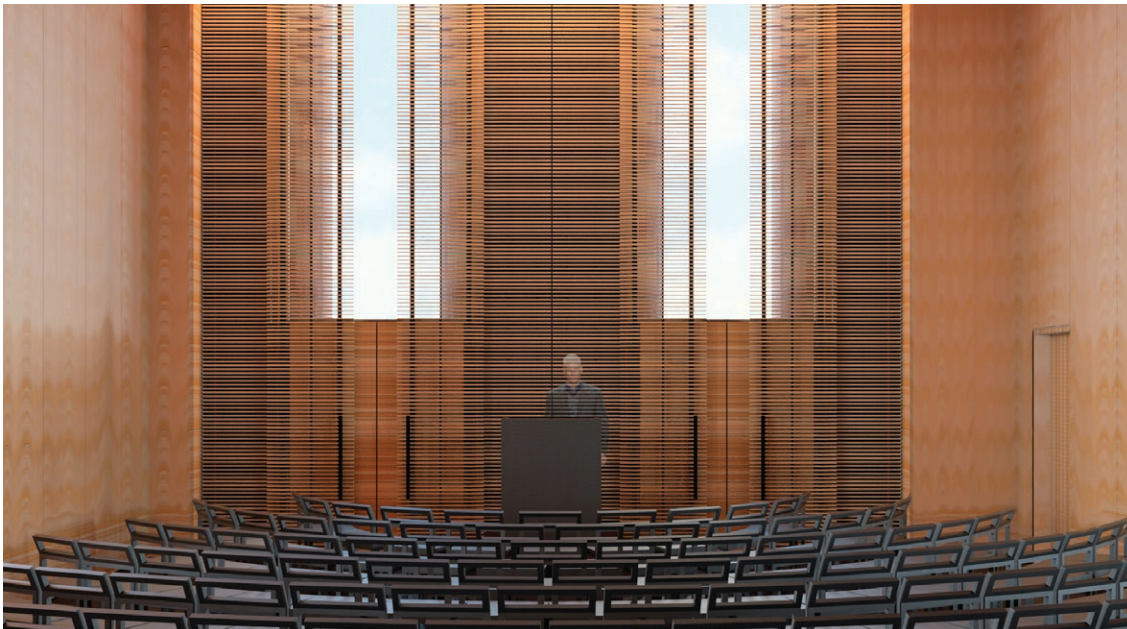
RENDERING OF RENOVATED CARRIAGE HOUSE

The 20,000 square foot Owsley Brown II History Center, shown below, will feature stunning spaces for events and exhibits, and five new floors of modern archival storage for our ever-expanding collections. The east wing of the new Center (left side in the view below) will house new archival storage as well as digitization and preservation facilities. The Center's west wing (right side in the view below) will house two new event halls featuring museum-quality exhibit space.



THE OWSLEY BROWN II HISTORY CENTER VIEWED FROM ORMSBY AVE.

The west wing's new Event Hall is comprised of two flexible spaces suitable for a wide variety of events – a three story primary hall on the first floor and another two story hall above it – together accommodating up to 500. The second floor will afford visitors panoramic views of historic Old Louisville.

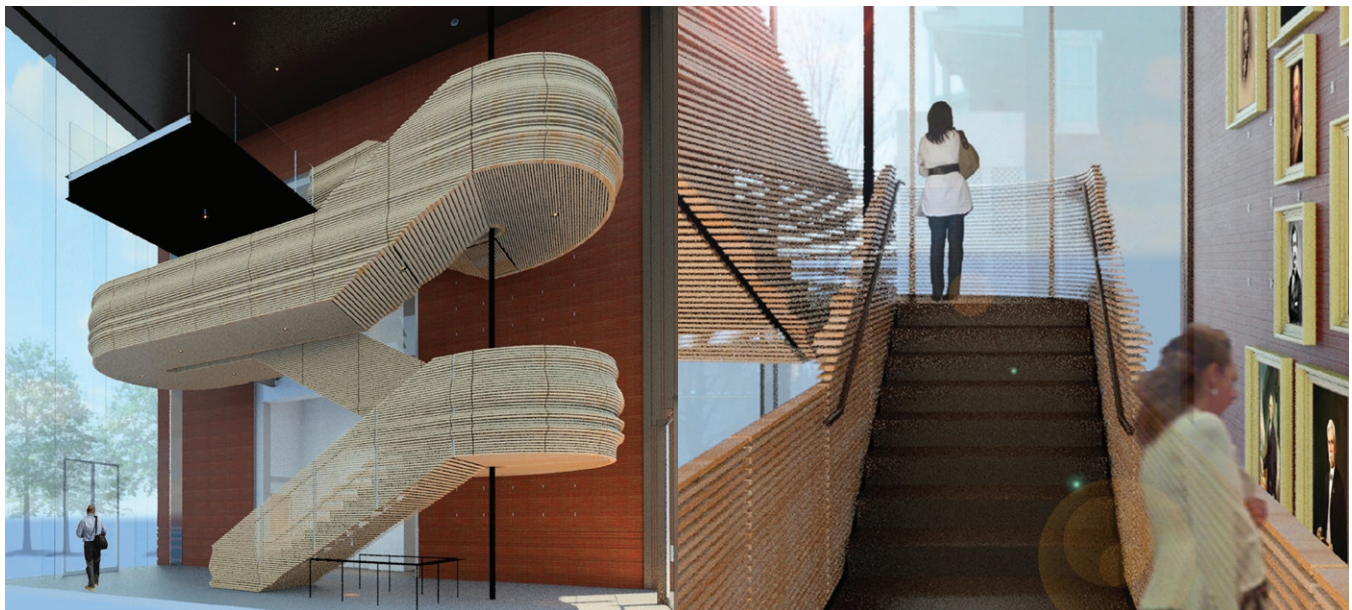


FIRST FLOOR EVENT HALL IN WEST WING OF HISTORY CENTER



RENDERING OF SECOND FLOOR HALL IN THE WEST WING OF THE HISTORY CENTER

On their way to the second floor hall via the exciting Center Staircase (below left), our visitors will enjoy a splendid display of portraits and other art from our collection. The stairway itself is a signature element of the wonderful design for the Project by our architects, DeLeon and Primmer Architecture Workshop of Louisville.



CENTRAL STAIRCASE AND PORTRAIT GALLERY IN THE OWSLEY BROWN II HISTORY CENTER

The walls of the Event Hall's first floor venue will include architectural engraved wooden panels (shown on next page). We are offering a limited number of these special panels to all who wish to memorialize their, or another's, support of The Filson and the Project. Each panel purchased will be engraved with

name(s) chosen by the donor and will become a part of the Event Hall walls, permanently honoring those named and helping us reach the full goal of our Cornerstone Campaign. You can order wall panels by phone at (502) 635-5083 or by email at lkerr@filsonhistorical.org.



ENGRAVABLE EVENT HALL WOOD PANELS FOR ORDER

We are still on track to celebrate the new Campus's Grand Opening in spring 2016, and hope you will join us for that occasion. It will be a grand celebration of The Filson's past, present, and future.



AERIAL VIEW OF THE CAMPUS FROM 4TH AND ORMSBY

We need almost \$1.3 million more to reach the Campaign's total goal and Project budget of \$11.75 million. With your help, we are confident we can do so before the Grand Opening.

Will you help us reach our goal? You can donate online at <http://filsonhistorical.org/give-join/campus-expansion/> or by contacting Cornerstone Campaign Manager, Laura Kerr, at 502-635-5083 or lkerr@filsonhistorical.org. Thank you for your support.

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Filson Intern Focuses on Architectural Collections



Johna Picco, 2014 H.F. Boehl Intern

Johna Picco is a 2014 graduate of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, where she earned her Master's degree in Library and Information Science. While at Illinois, Johna focused her studies on archives as well as library architecture. Prior to attending graduate school at Illinois, Johna worked within both academic and non-profit publishing, first as an acquisition assistant at the MIT Press in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and later as a marketing coordinator for the books and products department of the American Medical Association in Chicago, Illinois.

Though new to Kentucky, Johna became aware of The Filson's collections while she interned at the University of Louisville's Archives and Special Collections in 2013. Johna's time at The Filson began in June 2014 and she's been busy ever since. Her first project at The Filson was to inventory, process, and catalog 217 architectural drawings of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad. These plans are now fully processed and ready for use. Johna also worked with Danielle DiGiacomo and Wes Cunningham to properly inventory, pack, and move The Filson's museum collection due to our campus expansion. During her time as an intern, Johna fully-processed a total of three architectural collections: two collections of L&N Railroad drawings and one collection of *Idlewild (Belle of Louisville)* drawings. She has also written a blog post, as well as a "Browsing in our Archives" article, on the L&N Railroad.

Johna is now a full-time staff member of the Special Collections department, assisting the team as an Assistant Curator of Special Collections.

AMERICAN MEMORY, THE IRAQ WAR, AND THE **LOUISVILLE PEACE ACTION COMMUNITY** **RECORDS**

By Jana Meyer
Assistant Curator of Special Collections



Wars loom large in American memory. None perhaps larger than the Civil War – a war commemorated in ways that its original participants would no doubt find surprising, if not bizarre or downright offensive. The Civil War has been commemorated by elaborately costumed reenactors as well as the preservation of its forts and battlegrounds. In South Carolina, there are even those who remember the Civil War through events such as an annual Confederate Memorial Day and a Secession Ball, held to commemorate the 150th year anniversary of the signing of the Ordinance of Secession.

As such, one cannot but wonder: how will Americans remember the recent Iraq War?

Already we are choosing how to remember those years in the early 2000s when our nation went to war. Hollywood's recent release of *American Sniper* has been described as “war, minus the angst” – a film where the bad guys are thoroughly bad and the film's hero, Chris Kyle, is untroubled by doubts, regretting only that he did not use his rifle to protect more American Marines. Judging by the movie's success at the box office, this straightforward narrative is how many Americans currently prefer to remember the war. Were Americans to internalize the narrative promoted by such a film, would there be a place to remember the sharp divisions the Iraq War created in our society? Would we recall the unpopularity George W. Bush suffered during the waning years of his presidency, the acrimony he faced from a war-weary public?

The Filson archives contain a collection that preserves the memory of that vocal opposition to war. In 2002, a group of concerned Louisvillians gathered to protest against war in Iraq. Initially, they called themselves the Louisville Committee to Stop the War Against Iraq. In June 2003, the group was renamed the Louisville Peace Action Community (LPAC). LPAC donated its records to The Filson in 2008; the collection has recently been cataloged and made available to the public.

LPAC records document the domestic opposition to the Iraq War, highlighting the activities of Louisville's peace activists during the war years. To many, the post September 11 world witnessed a dramatic increase in the powers of the executive branch of the U.S. government, both to pursue terrorist threats abroad as well as to conduct surveillance of its own citizens through mandates such as the Patriot Act. LPAC records exemplify part of the backlash against this movement by a citizenry concerned by the government's growing power, its intrusion into the lives of ordinary people, and its tendency to embroil the country in foreign wars.

LPAC records include papers relating to the history of the organization, its meetings and activities, and the planning of events and protests. The collection also contains informational brochures, flyers, and signage, as well as several scrapbooks of photographs and clippings. Among the records of the Louisville Peace Action Community can be found documents such as the journal of Doug Johnson, a Louisvillian who traveled to Iraq with the Iraq Peace Team in the weeks just prior to the U.S. invasion. The collection also contains items such as a handwritten note from Representative Anne Northup, written in response to an LPAC member's criticism of her justification for the war in Iraq. LPAC records also contain evidence of the pro-war sentiment held by many in the region. Among LPAC's email

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A vigil on the steps of the Jefferson County courthouse on the 1st anniversary of the war commemorates soldiers killed in action. March 19, 2004. (Mss. BJ/L888/86)



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Representative Anne Northup was criticized for her support of the war. LPAC members protested outside of her Louisville home on a number of occasions. (Mss. BJ/L888/86)

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As the president who had led the nation to war, George W. Bush was a frequent target of criticism from LPAC members. (Mss. BJ/L888/87)

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Louisville Progressive Peace March. April 2003. (Mss. BJ/L888/85)

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A 2007 memorial at Louisville's Waterfront Park. (Mss. BJ/L888/89)

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LPAC booth at the Kentucky State Fair in 2006. (Mss. BJ/L888/88)

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Anti-war bumper sticker. (Mss. BJ/L888/82)

correspondence, there is a heated exchange between members of the group and the Protest Warriors, a pro-war group of Louisvillians who occasionally counter-protested against LPAC.

The Filson is excited to preserve and provide access to the LPAC collection. The records of organizations such as LPAC are important because they will influence how future generations remember the Iraq War. With the aid of these records, researchers and especially future historians, will have a better understanding of how the Iraq War was experienced by people of our time.

Of course, the Louisville Peace Action Community records tell only part of the story of how Americans responded to the war in Iraq. The Filson encourages others who lived through the Iraq War – whether soldiers or activists, supporters or detractors of the war – to donate their materials and preserve the history of this time for future generations.



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Filsonian listing reflects membership renewals received through March 15.

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January - March 2015

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Planned gifts create opportunities for both you and The Filson Historical Society. Choosing the right type of commitment for you and your needs is just as important as making the gift. It could be something as simple as naming The Filson as a beneficiary to a more complex trust arrangement. In addition to the tangible benefits of planned giving, you will have the joy of knowing that your commitment helps The Filson continue to be a steward of the past and ensures our future as a resource for Kentucky and the Ohio Valley. To learn more about planned giving options, please contact Rick Anderson at 502-634-7109.

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FILSON FRIDAYS

RETURN SUMMER 2015!



Once again, The Filson Historical Society is proud to present **Filson Fridays**, an opportunity to meet our staff as they share the results of their research in The Filson's collections. This summer, the following staff members will give lectures on these exciting topics:

Keep an eye out on your upcoming calendars for specific dates for our Filson Fridays!

James Prichard - June 19
Famous Kentucky Duels

Sarah Strapp Dennison - June 26
Online Membership Benefits 101

Jana Meyer - July 10
Caricatures and Cartoons

Laura Kerr - July 17
Appalachian History

Jim Holmberg - July 24
Filson Treasures

Heather Stone - July 31
Mammoth Cave