

The Filson

A publication of The Filson Historical Society, a privately-supported historical society dedicated to preserving the history of Kentucky and the Ohio Valley Region.



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|---------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|-------------|------------------------------------|------------------|---------------|-------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Recent Acquisitions | Browsing in our Archives | Abramson Family Collection | In Memorial | Gertrude Polk Brown Lecture Series | NEH Final Update | Events Update | PPP Exhibit | Adopt an Artifact | Volunteer Program | Bourbon Bottle Sale | The Filsonians |
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From the President

John Stern has served on the Filson's board for 16 years, the last two as chair. As his final Chairman's letter makes clear, significant advancements have happened on his watch. John is a doer for good.

His energy level is remarkable. He attends every committee meeting. He attends our 60 plus annual lectures. Most significantly, John has ideas. Ideas that tumble forth every minute, every hour, every night, every day by email, text, Zoom, meetings, calls, and visits. He has an incredibly strong desire to engage—always in positive, energetic ways. One can disagree with him, as I've been known to do on occasion, and he'll take no offense.

All of us on the staff are grateful. We also look forward to working with his formidable successor, Ann Wells, who will be next up at bat starting January 1, 2023 with her dream team of Jane Goldstein as vice-chair, Angie Edwards as secretary, Beth Wiseman as treasurer, and Phil Bond as assistant-treasurer.

Here are thoughts from our Leadership Team:

Jennie Cole, Director of Collections Access: Along with his years of service, John's ready smile and easy conversation with staff, members, and visitors have cemented him as a Filson treasure in my mind!

Brenna Cundiff, Director of Development: John is a true advocate for the Filson. He understands the value of our mission to the community and looks for every opportunity to involve others in this work as donors, volunteers, and members.

Jim Holmberg, The Filson Curator: John has been a true worker on behalf of the Filson. As chair of the collections committee and board chair, he's always had the interests of the Filson in mind.

Julie James, Vice President: John has been a consistent, long-time supporter of the Filson ranging from his innovative ideas and leadership as Filson's Board chair to regularly attending programs and events.

Patrick Lewis, Director of Collections and Research: John's tenure has been transformative for the Filson, helping us to emerge from a chaotic couple of years locally and nationally with a strong and bold strategic vision at a time when other organizations are struggling.

Thank you, John!



Richard H.C. Clay

President & CEO, The Filson Historical Society

From the Chair

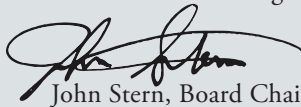
As I write the last newsletter of my two-year term (which has indeed flown by), please allow me to review some of the significant things which have taken place during this time:

- A new 2022–2024 strategic plan was created and is being utilized to guide the Filson's direction.
- The Thruston Legacy Circle is being revitalized to help maximize planned giving.
- Two new committees were created—the IT & Cyber Security Committee and the Investment Committee, both key focuses today which will be even more important tomorrow.
- Native American Collections Repatriation was initiated to inventory indigenous collections and comply with NAGPRA requirements.
- Groundwork is being laid for a future African-American History Initiative and Curator.
- The Filson's by-laws were updated and are being closely followed.
- The finances are in excellent shape as exemplified in the 2021 and 2022 balance sheets and income statements.
- Programs and special events continue to be outstanding in both quality and quantity.

- Grants continue to provide an important component of the Filson's income stream for operations.
- Collections access through research and exhibits continue to be key elements in what the Filson does daily.
- Development keeps on providing the funds which enable the Filson to carry out its mission of collecting, preserving and sharing the significant history and culture of Kentucky and the Ohio Valley.

At the December board meeting, the board will select new directors and the officers for 2023. Do welcome them thereafter but also please do thank the 2022 officers for their service. Indeed, the 2023 board might be the Filson's most diverse board ever in terms of gender, race, and ethnicity.

Finally, thank you for allowing me to serve these past two years. Thanks to the staff (and especially Dick Clay) and the 2021 and 2022 boards for making the Filson the outstanding organization it is today!



John Stern, Board Chair

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The Filson

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OUR MISSION:

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

Recent Acquisitions



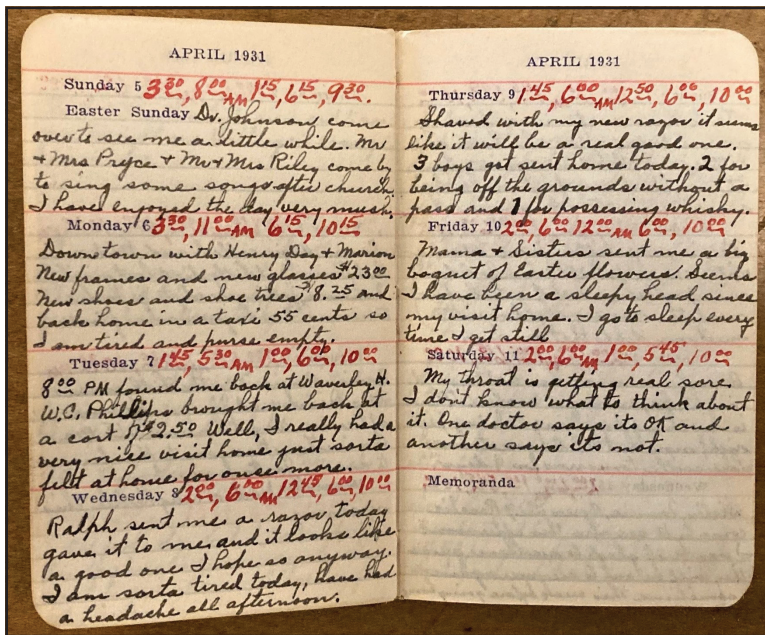
Ishmon Burks Collection includes photos, a portrait, and United States Army dress uniform documenting Colonel Ishmon Burks's career in the military and law enforcement. The Chickasaw native and Vietnam War veteran was Commissioner of the Kentucky State Police and Secretary of the Kentucky Justice Cabinet from 2000–2002, the first and only African American to hold that position. Later, he was Interim Metro Chief of Police 2011–2012, the first African American to hold that position and the only person to hold both of those positions. (Donated by Ishmon Burks)

This contemporary **Cherokee Ceramic Water Jar** was crafted by Mary Welch Thompson, a third-generation basket weaver and potter who uses centuries-old artistic techniques. The Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, of which Thompson is a citizen, is one of many Federally Recognized Tribes whose ancestors resided in what is now Kentucky. Though the Eastern Band of Cherokee now reside in North Carolina, Thompson occasionally travels back to her ancestral homelands in Kentucky to gather natural materials for her artwork. She made this vessel by using traditional coiling techniques and a hand-carved paddle stamp process. This acquisition will assist the Filson in demonstrating modern connections to the Indigenous peoples that inhabited Kentucky prior to colonization. (Purchase of Filson Historic Acquisitions Fund)

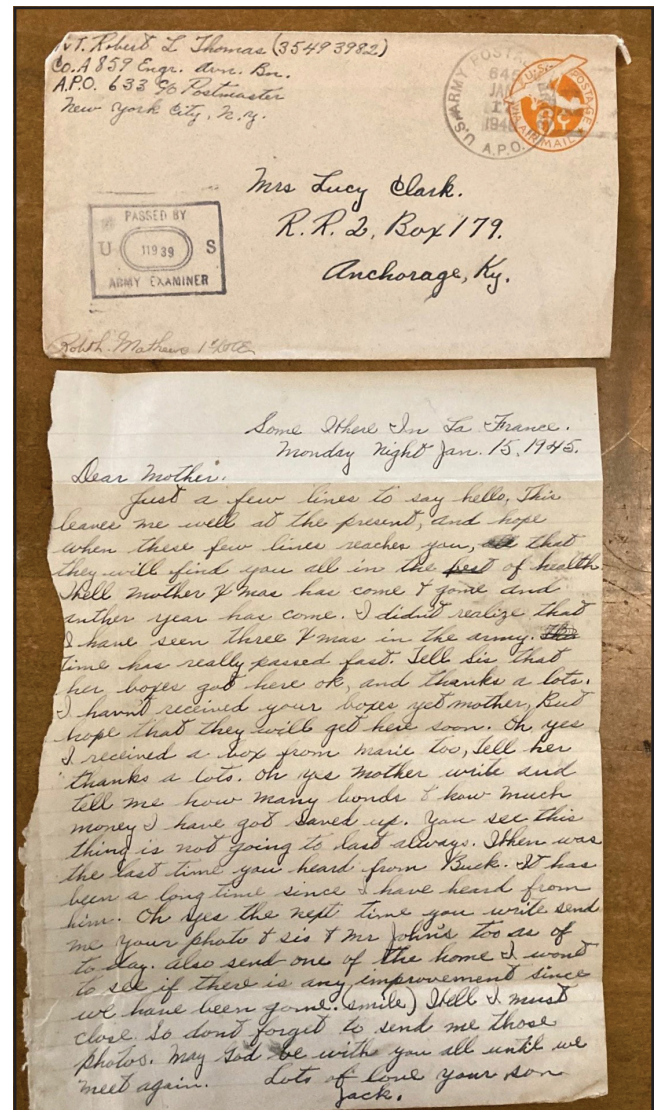


The George Herbert Gray portfolio of architectural drawings includes early drawings such as the pictured 1900 watercolor of a Japanese pavilion, completed during his studies in Paris at the Ecole des Beaux Arts. This addition will complement the two collections of Gray's professional work from Louisville and elsewhere, dating to 1905–1928. (Donated by Robert N. Morrissey)





The Gabhart Family Papers include letters between a courting couple, Mary Lily and James, while she attended Western Kentucky Teachers College and he attended Georgetown College. Also included are three diaries, 1928–1931, documenting James’s life and activities while a resident at Waverly Hills Sanatorium in Louisville. (Purchase of Filson Historic Acquisitions Fund)



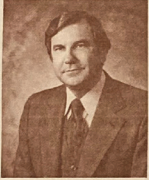
Miles and Robert Thomas Papers are a collection of approximately one hundred letters written stateside and from Europe by two Black soldiers serving in engineering battalions during World War II; many of the letters were written to their mother, Lucy Clark, in Anchorage, Kentucky. This collection will add to the Filson’s documentation of the Black experience at home and abroad during World War II. (Donated by William Johnstone)

PUBLIC FORUM


“TO FREEZE OR NOT TO FREEZE THE
NUCLEAR ARMS RACE?”

MONDAY, NOV. 1, at 7:30 p.m.
UNIVERSITY of LOUISVILLE
Strickler Hall, Middleton Auditorium


Moderated by the League of Women Voters



Senator WALTER DEE HUDDLESTON (D-KY); member of the following Senate Committees: Intelligence; Small Business; Appropriations; and Agriculture.



Admiral EUGENE CARROLL (Retired), Associate Director of the Center for Defense Information; past commander in the U. S. Sixth Fleet; formerly on the NATO staff.



Dr. GLEN STASSEN, Associate Professor of Christian Ethics at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; Nuclear Physicist; Social Ethicist; post-doctoral studies at Harvard University.

Scrapbooks and records of the **Louisville Council on Peacemaking and Religion**. Also known as Just Solutions, the council was an interfaith coalition devoted to stopping the arms race and banning nuclear weapons. Pictured is a circular for a symposium on freezing nuclear weapons, November 1, 1982. (Donated by Dr. Morris Weiss)

Lieutenant William Clark Reports the News

JAMES J. HOLMBERG | FILSON CURATOR

In the summer of 1792, recently commissioned second lieutenant William Clark returned home to Kentucky. Earlier that year he had been attending school in Virginia, both furthering his education, and reconnecting with friends and relatives in the Old Dominion. A gregarious and friendly person, Clark cherished his family ties and developed a wide network of friends and contacts. Why he decided to join the army at that time and place is not known, but given the Clark family martial tradition (five brothers who served during the American Revolution, including George Rogers Clark, Conqueror of the Northwest and founder of Louisville) and the active western war being waged against the Native American nations in the Northwest Territory, the twenty-two year old Kentuckian perhaps perceived a military career as not only his duty but also a path to adventure and glory. His first assignment was recruiting duty. The federal army and Kentucky militia had suffered two disastrous defeats at the hands of the Northwestern Indian Confederacy led by Miami chief Little Turtle and Shawnee chief Blue Jacket. Their ranks had to be reinforced and Lt. Clark set about his assignment in Kentucky towns and the Ohio River Valley.

The Clarks were a writing family. They wrote letters; they kept diaries; they kept ledgers. Some of these have survived, but unfortunately, many have been lost through the years. Before the advent of the telegraph, telephone, texting, and email, if you weren't with the person to talk to them, you wrote letters. Letters often were conversations on paper, traveling back and forth between correspondents, answering and asking questions, reporting news both major and minor, and simply keeping in touch. Although people got around back in the days before paved roads, trains, automobiles, and planes much more than most of us realize, travel was difficult and often filled with hardship and danger. William Clark was a traveler whether on business or pleasure, and he was a seasoned adventurer before he set off on that "western trip" to the Pacific in 1803.

To assure that his beloved eldest brother Jonathan Clark was kept informed of his own news and that of interest, William wrote him fairly regularly up until Jonathan's death in November 1811. Among his earliest surviving letters to Jonathan is one he wrote as a young officer from Fort Steuben across the river from Louisville.



William Clark by Joseph Bush, ca. 1815. Clark is depicted in the uniform of a militia general, a rank he held in the Louisiana and later Missouri Territorial militia. He was actively engaged in campaigns during the War of 1812 in the Mississippi Valley but also journeyed east to Kentucky. This portrait is believed to date between 1812 and 1817. Collection of the Filson Historical Society.

It is the first of his letters to his esteemed big brother in the Jonathan Clark Papers – Temple Bodley Collection. Published in *Dear Brother: Letters of William Clark to Jonathan Clark* (2002) and to be included in the revitalized First American West currently being developed by the Filson through a National Endowment for the Humanities grant, it is a time capsule delivering the news from the West from 230 years ago.

Fort Stuben Falls this Sept. 2. 1792

Honble Sir

I received your affectionate letter of the 18th of June, by Captain Rogers, wherein you express a desire of knowing ^{my} particular situation. I arrived here safe after a tedious journey of near two months. — I am ordered to recruit my part of the Company in this State, and have already enlisted a ten men, I expect to start in a few days to Lexington to complete my quota of men. — I am not yet informed particularly who will comd. the Rifle Regt. it is supposed Colo. Dark will. — Genl. Wilkinson comd. the Troops of this department at present, our Number of Regulars, as not exceed 1000 effective men — When we shall be of strength sufficient to take the field, I can't determine, as recruiting service go on so slowly. If as it will be next Fall

Mr. William Clark
Sept. 2. 1792

90x40

William Clark to Jonathan Clark, September 2, 1792, Jonathan Clark Papers – Temple Bodley Collection, Filson Historical Society. Often rushing to get his thoughts and the news down on paper, William had a reputation for his creative spelling. A review of his letters and journals reveals just how creative he could be.

Before we shall have men sufficient to carry out a successful ^{Campaign} ~~campaign~~ — I fear that the 5000 men that are to be rose will not be successful, as the Inds. are imboaring, in different quarters to oppose us. we are informed that the Morris Indians that defeated our army, last fall with 500 warriors, have sent runs. to invite all the Lake Indians to join them, we are likewise informed that the Creek nation has declar'd war, and are daily on the Frontiers of the Combarland Settlements Killing and Stealing Horses — Congress has ordered a Treaty with all the Northern Indians, to be held at St. Vincence, this month, about five to? warriors have arrived there for the purpose of Supp. of Treating, tho we have not received any answ. from them, our messengers being all Kill'd by them at their arrival in their Towns — Genl. Putnam one of our Briga: Genls., also an

Fort Stuben Falls Ohio Sept. 2d. 1792

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I Shall afr. [refer] you to Capt. Rogers for the Police [policies or politics] of Kentucky, as I Kno very litle of them at present.

my Bro: George talks of going to Virga. this Fall; he has Collected Some certifects respecting claims on the State of Virginia, which he will Send by an early oppertenity — our Friends in Kentuky are well, Capt. Hite is Mard. to Miss Erickson from Merreland — you will pleas to Give my most respectable compliments to Sister Clark & chidren. Tell Sister Clark, I Shall think my Self honor'd if I am mentioned at her daughters Christning as a Sponsir. you will please to favour me with a letter when you can make it convenient, if you will address yoe letters to Capt. Tanekill at Pittsburgh they will come to me Safe. — I Shall not lose an oppertunity but will at every one, wright to you, my situation, and the State of the army in this department and I reman with the Sincearest offection and Due respect your oft. Bro:

William Clark

NB

I in close you a plat of your 2000 acres Survey that one coast [cost] was left out, and the Entreys of all your other Tracts, they are Said to be all good Entres except the one that calls for the Lead mine, I can find no man that Knows where this mine is, if you think proper, I will have it withdrawn and Enterd. on the NW. Side of the Ohio —

W C.

The number of names and amount of information William Clark imparts in this four-page small quarto size letter is impressive. He truly wanted Jonathan to be fully informed of all the news he could think of to report, whether it be the ongoing war against the indigenous nations of the Northwest Territory or a wedding of a Hite relative. William wanted Jonathan to "See and know all." And like so many of his missions in life, it was accomplished.

Indian Agent papers this about eight days ago
~~on his way to the treaty~~, on his way to the treaty
I fear this Treaty will be of no advantage is, as
the Indians say they will treat untill they can
get their prisoners from ~~from~~ the white people,
those prisoners are gone on to be given up at this
Treaty — This will give you an Idea of the
situation of Indian aff. in this Quarter —
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by an early oppertunity — our Friends in Kentucky
are well, Capt. Hite is Mard. to Miss Erickson from
Merreland — you will pleas to Give my most
respectable compliments to Sister Clark & Chidren.
Tell Sister Clark, I shall think my Self honor'd if
I am mentioned at her daughters Christning as a Sponsir.

You will please to favour me with a letter
when you can make it convenient, if you
will address your letters to Capt Tanekill at
Pittsburgh they will come to me Safe. —
I shall not lose an oppertunity but will at
every one, wright to you, my situation, and
the state of the Army in this department
and I am with the sincearest offection
and Due respect your oft. Bro:
William Clark

NB I in close you a plat of your 2000 acres
Survey that one coast was left out, and
the Entreys of all your other Tracts, they
are said to be all good Entres except the one
that calls for the Lead mine, I can find no
man that Knows where this mine is, if you
think proper, I will have it withdrawn and Enterd
on the NW. Side of the Ohio — W.C.
Capt Jonathan Clark

The Abramson Family

In July 2020, the Filson Historical Society received a donation of papers and photographs from Jerry and Madeline Abramson documenting four decades of family, professional, civic, and political history in Louisville, Kentucky, and beyond. Processing and cataloging the collections was an eighteen-month collaboration between Curator of Jewish Collections Abby Glogower, Collections Cataloguer Lynn Pohl, and dedicated Filson volunteer (and the Abramsons' brother-in-law) Rabbi Stanley Miles. Thanks to their efforts, the Abramson Family Papers and Photograph Collections, comprising six cubic feet of material, is now available for access and study. With assistance from intern Dorian Cleveland and Digital Initiatives & Preservation Archivist Danielle Spalenka, we are pleased to debut *Jerry Abramson, Louisville's Mayor for Life*, a new digital exhibit highlighting the collections, which can be found on the Filson's website.

The collections and the exhibit illuminate the background and long career that led Abramson from a small neighborhood grocery store in Smoketown to Louisville's City Hall, the Kentucky State Capitol, and finally the West Wing of the White House. The grandchildren of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, Abramson and his sister, Sheilah, grew up in a close-knit family that was active in Jewish congregational life and community service organizations. A graduate of Seneca High School, Abramson attended Indiana University Bloomington, where he was a member of the student-run Union Board and Youth for [Robert] Kennedy in 1968. After serving in the military and graduating from Georgetown University Law School, he returned to Kentucky for a career in law and politics.



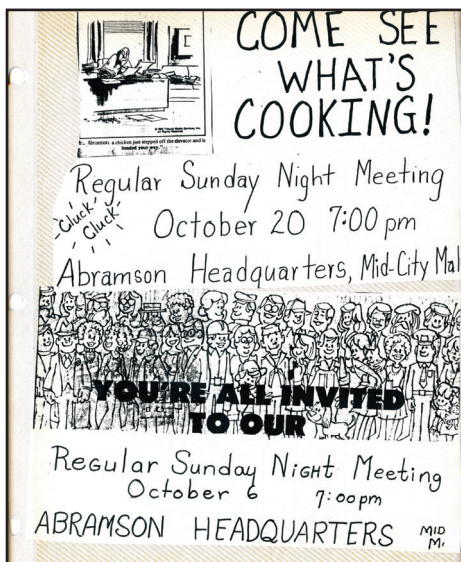
Abramson (second row, center) and his baseball team at the newly constructed Louisville Jewish Community Center on Dutchmans Lane, ca. 1957. [Abramson Family Photograph Collection Folder 1]



Abramson's bar mitzvah certificate from Keneseth Israel Congregation in Louisville, September 1959. [Abramson Family Papers Folder 3]



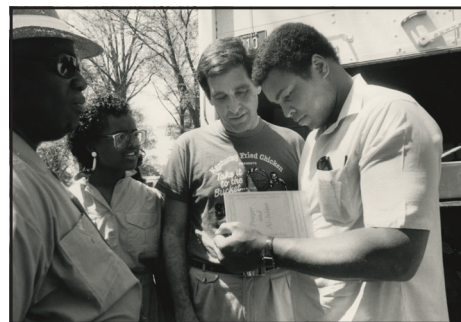
Abramson (front, center) training at Fort Knox, 1969. [Abramson Family Photograph Collection Folder 4]



Page in scrapbook compiled by Roy Abramson [Abramson Family Papers Folder 67]



Abramson announces his run for mayor of Louisville, 1985. Left to right: Roy Abramson (father), Shirley Abramson (mother), Heather Miles (niece), Seth Miles (nephew), and Rabbi Stanley Miles (brother-in-law). [Abramson Family Photograph Collection Folder 1]

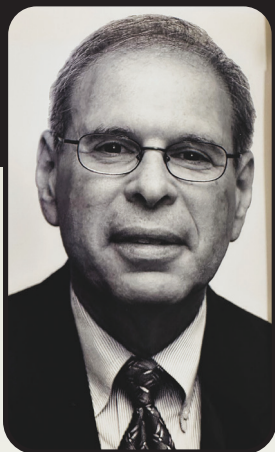


Muhammad Ali inscribing a copy of Imam Warithud-din Muhammad's *Prayer and Al-Islam* (published by Muhammad Islamic Foundation, which Ali founded) to Abramson, ca. 1986. [Abramson Family Photograph Collection Folder 15]

Two terms as alderman laid the groundwork for Abramson's successful mayoral campaign in 1985. A decade later, he became the city's only three-term mayor, earning him the moniker "Mayor for Life." Highlights from Abramson's tenure include the \$700-million expansion of

Louisville International Airport; the creation of Waterfront Park as part of downtown Louisville's revitalization; and the expansion of the local economy by recruiting Yum! Brands and the Presbyterian Church (USA) to relocate to Louisville. In 1989, he married Madeline Malley Miller,

Continued on page 17.



Courtesy of the University of Louisville Department of History

In Memoriam

Professor Lee Shai Weissbach (1947–2022)

Dr. Lee Shai Weissbach, the scholar of American history who put Kentucky Jewry on the map, passed away at his home in Philadelphia on September 29. He was born in Haifa, graduated with highest honors from the University of Cincinnati, and completed his PhD at Harvard, with a dissertation on child labor reform in France. Joining the University of Louisville History Department in 1978, he soon switched his focus to American Jewish history, particularly in his new home state. Over his forty-year career at UofL, Dr. Weissbach produced groundbreaking work on Kentucky Jewish history, including *The Synagogues of Kentucky: Architecture and History* (1995)

and his masterwork, *Jewish Life in Small Town America: A History* (2005). In 1995, he published the article "Kentucky's Jewish History in National Perspective: The Era of Mass Migration" in *The Filson Club History Quarterly* and, in 2012, a study of "Kentucky Jewry during the Civil War" for the *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*. He was a longtime member of and contributor to the Southern Jewish Historical Society and a supporter of the creation of the Jewish Community Archives at the Filson Historical Society.

Dr. Mark Wetherington, former Director of the Filson Historical Society, reflects, "Lee Shai brought a unique perspective to researching and writing Ohio Valley history and Judaic studies. His works ranged from Jewish life in small rural towns to the history and architecture of Kentucky's urban synagogues and beyond. An understanding of our communities today is more complete and insightful because of Lee Shai. He will be missed."

At UofL, Dr. Weissbach served as History Department Chair and Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and spearheaded the creation of an endowed chair in Judaic Studies before his retirement in 2015. Professor Tracy E. K'Meyer remembers him as a "warm, generous, and funny colleague, mentor, and friend," known for "his pun-filled grammar tip sheet for students, which I still use in class, the truly bad 'dad' jokes he shared at the department's annual winter potluck lunch, and his deep commitment to service to the profession, university, and community."

Dr. Weissbach, his wife, Sharon, and their children were dedicated and highly involved members of Louisville's Jewish community who have contributed extensively to communal, spiritual, and intellectual life in the Ohio Valley region and beyond. His work helped chart a course for regional minority history, creating a legacy we are honored to remember and continue.

Tuesday, January 31, 6:00–7:00 p.m. (EST) | Bomhard Theatre, 501 W. Main St, Louisville
Free for members, \$27.20 for non-members

This is a hybrid in-person/virtual lecture. Tickets must be purchased at KentuckyPerformingArts.org

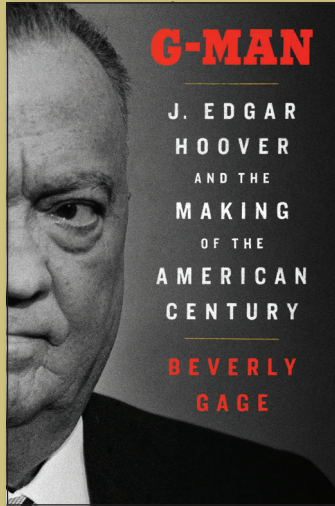
G-Man: J. Edgar Hoover and the Making of the American Century

Beverly Gage

We remember him as a bulldog—squat frame, bulging wide-set eyes, fearsome jowls—but in 1924, when he became director of the FBI, he had been the trim, dazzling wunderkind of the administrative state, buzzing with energy and big ideas for reform. He transformed a failing law-enforcement backwater, riddled with scandal, into a modern machine. He believed in the power of the federal government to do great things for the nation and its citizens. He also believed that certain people—many of them communists or racial minorities or both—did not deserve to be included in that American project. Hoover rose to power and then stayed there, decade after decade, using the tools of state to create a personal fiefdom unrivaled in U.S. history.

Beverly Gage's monumental work explores the full sweep of Hoover's life and career, from his birth in 1895 to a modest Washington civil-service family through his death in 1972. In her nuanced and definitive portrait, Gage shows how Hoover was more than a one-dimensional tyrant and schemer who strong-armed the rest of the country into submission. As FBI director from 1924 through his death in 1972, he was a confidant, counselor, and adversary to eight U.S. presidents, four Republicans and four Democrats. Franklin Roosevelt and Lyndon Johnson did the most to empower him, yet his closest friend among the eight was fellow anticommunist warrior Richard Nixon. Hoover was not above blackmail and intimidation, but he also embodied conservative values ranging from anticommunism to white supremacy to a crusading and politicized interpretation of Christianity. This garnered him the admiration of millions of Americans. He stayed in office for so long because many people, from the highest reaches of government down to the grassroots, wanted him there and supported what he was doing, thus creating the template that the political right has followed to transform its party.

G-Man places Hoover back where he once stood in American political history—not at the fringes, but at the center—and



uses his story to explain the trajectories of governance, policing, race, ideology, political culture, and federal power as they evolved over the course of the 20th century.

Beverly Gage is professor of 20th-century American history at Yale. She is the author of *The Day Wall Street Exploded*, which examined the history of terrorism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. She writes frequently for the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and *The Nation*, and is a contributing writer at the *New York Times Magazine* and *The New Yorker*.

Praise for

G-Man: J. Edgar Hoover and the Making of the American Century

"This is a monumental work about power, responsibility, and democracy itself. With deep research, an engaging voice, and penetrating insights, Beverly Gage has crafted a portrait of a man and a country in all its complexity and contradiction. To understand who we are, Gage argues, we need to understand the rise and reign of J. Edgar Hoover. And this book is now an indispensable element in the unending work of grasping the nature of our flawed nation."

—Jon Meacham, Pulitzer Prize winner and author of *American Lion: Andrew Jackson in the White House*

"An incomparable portrait of one of the most influential and reviled figures in American history. In stunning detail, Beverly Gage presents J. Edgar Hoover's complex life and career within the wider political contexts and cultural value systems that facilitated his rise to power—and his notorious, often discriminatory abuses of that power—as FBI director for nearly a half century. This extraordinary biography raises critical questions about the scope of police authority, the contours of citizenship, and the limits of democracy that strongly resonate."

—Elizabeth Hinton, author of *America on Fire: The Untold History of Police Violence and Black Rebellion Since the 1960s*

National Endowment for the Humanities Update

With the support of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), the Filson is launching a new initiative to transcribe some of the most important documents in its collection. Over twenty years ago, the Filson joined with the Library of Congress and the University of Chicago to publish *The First American West*, an online collection of letters, financial records, sermons, books, maps, and objects from the Ohio Valley in the mid-1700s through 1820.

Now, the Filson is re-launching *The First American West* and expanding the original materials to include the voices of women, the enslaved, and Indigenous communities. An NEH-funded research team including Hailey Brangers, Marissa Coleman, and intern Jade Wigglesworth have identified new objects and documents and made high resolution rescans of originally selected materials.

The original *First American West* was a beloved resource for researchers across the world and teachers in classrooms across the United States. Now inaccessible because of old underlying technology, the Filson is excited to bring an expanded selection of documents back to these audiences. This historical era is at the heart of the Filson's world-class research collections and publications, and through this project the Filson can share its one-of-a-kind materials with thousands of history students and enthusiasts every year.

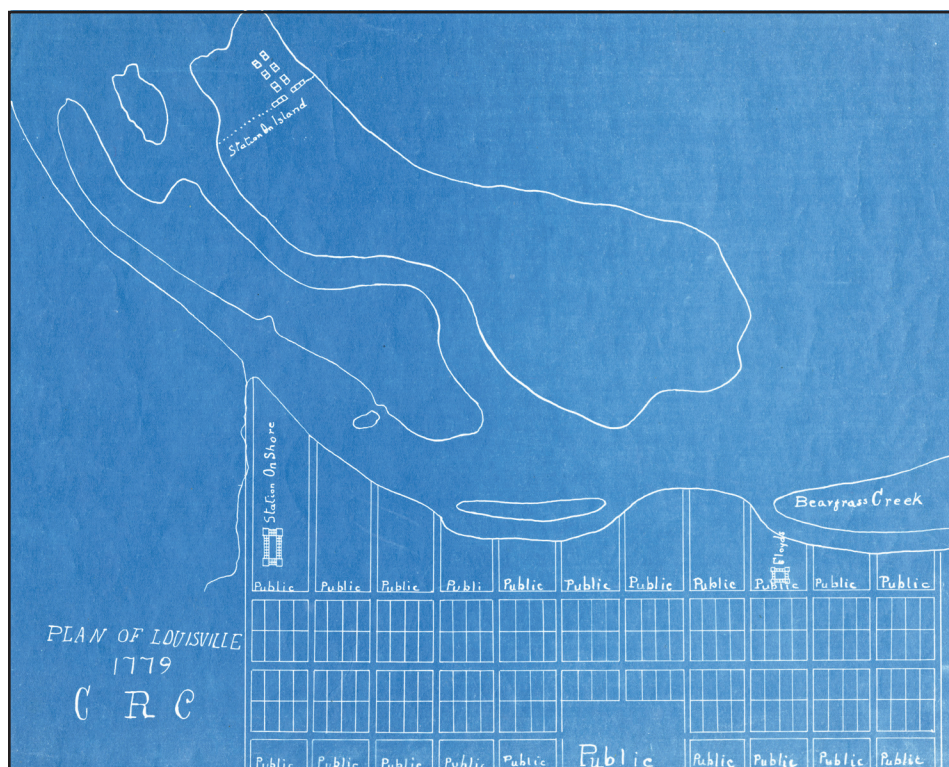
Filson members and supporters can be the first to access these manuscripts and help us complete this new digital exhibit! The Filson is using the transcription platform FromThePage to crowdsource transcriptions of the documents that will go into the new



Collections Assistants Hailey Brangers (left) and Marissa Coleman (right), who were hired as part of the grant-funded project, stand in front of a cart of recently digitized materials.

First American West. FromThePage lets anyone create an account to help archives across the world transcribe and annotate historical texts. If you can read 18th century handwriting or want to dive into political treatises from the era of the founding of Kentucky, help the Filson by typing as you read.

The project team is constantly uploading documents to the Filson's FromThePage collection. So create an account and make sure to check back in frequently to see some of the earliest materials in the Filson's stacks. Visit www.fromthepage.com/filson to join in the work of re-discovering early Kentucky!



"Plan of block houses and cabins on island at Falls of Ohio, 1779." Facsimile of plan of settlement on Corn Island by George Rogers Clark. Rare Small Map 976.9911 C593 1779.

Filson Programs and Events Update

BY DR. JULIE SCOSKIE JAMES

Do you remember as a child how much fun you had playing marbles and cutting out paper dolls? While you are probably familiar with the many educational programs the Filson offers, did you know we also offer educational programs for people of all ages? For youth up to age 21, the Filson is one of more than 50 venues throughout our community offering fun, educational activities through the Cultural Pass every summer. Kids of all ages (including parents) are learning to play marbles, participating in scavenger hunts through the exhibits, and discovering the simple joy of making and coloring paper dolls. Groups also schedule visits including schools, Girl Scout Troops, home-school youth, and college classes.

We have something for everyone with programs ranging from concerts to trolley tours and from renowned author talks to the Haunting Fireside Stories. As a non-profit organization, our annual fundraiser, the House Tour, hosted its 28th year with a record-breaking crowd of 200. The Filson Sporting Clay Classic offers another unique way to engage with Filson staff and members in a beautiful outdoor setting.

Collaborative partners help us to extend the breadth and depth of Filson programs. The Notable Louisville Neighborhoods series this year featured Butchertown. We kicked off at the Waterfront Botanical Gardens learning the history of Butchertown and gathered at TEN20 Brewery with a discussion on the opportunities and future of Butchertown. This program series spotlights the history, people and places, and future opportunities of neighborhoods in Louisville. In 2023, we will explore the Portland neighborhood. We also hosted the Violins of Hope film premiere, the AIA Award for architectural design of the Filson's Owsley Brown II History Center celebration, and hosted 600 people at our annual Music Under the Trees concert at Oxmoor to listen and dance the night away.

We are excited to be back offering weekly in-person programs, but we continue to offer virtual programs as a convenience and to broaden our outreach and impact nationally and internationally. In fact, did you know people from 36 states and 9 countries attended our programs virtually?

Following the social justice movement in Louisville in 2020, the Filson has taken a reflective look at equity, diversity, and inclusion across all departments and levels of the organization. The Filson recently partnered with the Louisville Urban League to host Clint Smith, author of *How the Word is Passed*, the latest event as we increasingly strive to diversify the stories we share. Our forthcoming African American History Initiative will collect, convene, and drive public and academic conversations about the past with significant contemporary impact.

You can't change the past, but you can change the future. Sharing the significant stories of our region's history is part of the Filson's core mission. Programs offered by the Filson spark great dialogue, peak intellectual curiosity, and offer thought-provoking content. If you haven't attended a program lately, visited our building to tour and see the exhibits, or attended one of our events, please bring a friend and take advantage of the wonderful experience that awaits you! As always, we welcome program suggestions. Just email me at julie@filsonhistorical.org. We hope to see you soon!



Mark Maxwell, lead vocalist for The Crashers, sings to the crowd while participants dance in the foreground at Music Under the Trees.



A large crowd gathered at Waterfront Botanical Gardens for the 2022 Notable Louisville Neighborhoods: Butchertown series.



Author George C. Wright discusses his book, *Life Behind a Veil: Blacks in Louisville, Kentucky, 1865-1930*, as part of our Dine & Dialogue series.



A local family participates in the Filson's 2022 Cultural Pass program.

Behind the Scenes of Exhibits at the Filson

Have you ever wondered what goes into the production of an exhibit at the Filson? How did we come up with the idea for an exhibit? How are items selected? What challenges do curators face?

The upcoming exhibit *People, Passage, Place: Stories of the Ohio Valley* is one of our most ambitious exhibit projects to date. It reimagines ways for visitors to engage with the Filson's collections and invites them to think about how history shapes their lives and communities.

Developing the Framework

Planning for the exhibition began more than 17 months before the opening and included a dynamic team of nine staff members from the collections, education, and development teams. Our goal was to create a semi-permanent exhibit that would be:

- Self-reflective
- Curiosity-sparking
- Diverse and inclusive
- Flexible

But how do you distill more than 250 years of history in the Ohio River Valley—which comprises six states—and represent its complexities in a gallery that has less than 700 square feet of storytelling space? The project team participated in a series of brainstorming sessions discussing many options for constructing an intellectual and interpretive framework for the exhibit. The team quickly recognized that it would be nearly impossible to take such a vast history and fit it into a single gallery using a conventional structure, such as a chronological exhibit. Instead, the group developed a schema that highlights overarching themes prevalent throughout the Filson's collections and that visitors can relate to in their own lives:

- Land, Water, Labor
- People, Family, Community
- Culture, Creativity, Craft

Selecting the Items

Using their extensive knowledge of the Filson's holdings, Jim Holmberg and Heather Potter took on the arduous task of identifying approximately 50 items for possible inclusion in the exhibit. This was no easy task, considering there are more than 2 million items in the manuscript collection, 65,000 books in the library, 1 million photos and prints, and 10,000 works of art and historic artifacts. Jim and Heather methodically combed through collections catalogs and storage areas, selecting items that represent diverse geographic regions, time periods, and points of view.



Heather Potter and Jim Holmberg selecting items for the exhibition.



Exhibition team discussing storylines and possible gallery layouts.



Founder of Asia Institute—Crane House Helen Fay Lew (1926–2017) and founder of the University of Louisville's Biomedical Aging Research Program Calvin Allen Lang (1925–2008) are featured in the *Family History Spotlight*.



Chemist, artist, and community activist Elmer Lucille Allen is featured as the first *Local Luminary*. Allen in the chemistry lab at Brown-Forman, 1968.



Portrait of Elizabeth Logan Hardin (1784–1861) by Matthew Harris Jouett (1788–1827), c. 1818.

PROJECT TEAM:

Emma Bryan

Community Engagement Specialist

Hannah Costelle

Research Specialist

Abby Glogower

Curator of Jewish Collections

Kelly Hyberger

Native American Collections Specialist

James J. Holmberg

The Filson Historical Society Curator

Maureen Lane

Curator of Museum Collections and Exhibits
Coordinator

Patrick A. Lewis

Director of Collections and Research

Heather J. Potter

Curator of Photographs and Prints

Brooks Vessels

Assistant Museum Curator and Exhibits Designer

Although the exhibit will be a long-term feature in Nash Gallery, it has been designed to allow staff to regularly rotate in new items and share new and interesting stories found in the depths of the Filson's collections.

Writing the Narrative

After the objects were selected, the next challenge was weaving their stories together in a way that makes sense. How do you take 40-50 objects from different times, places, and points of view and create a cohesive visitor experience? Through great writing and design!

Once the object list for the first rotation was finalized, the writing team—consisting of Abby Glogower, Emma Bryan, Hannah Costelle, and editors Patrick Lewis and Maureen Lane—met on a regular basis and began work on exhibit text. Writing for exhibits is a most challenging task. The writers take pages of knowledge from many different sources and distill it all into 50-150 words for a theme panel and 20-50 words for an object label. The text must be concise, accurate, accessible, and engaging. We don't want to simply talk at visitors; rather, we invite them to be active participants in the interpretive process and to connect the exhibit to their personal lives and histories.

The exhibit will also feature text designed to highlight specific stories and people. *Community Voices* labels are just one way multiple voices will be represented throughout the exhibit. Abby Glogower came up with the idea of reaching out to members of the community and inviting them to share their knowledge by writing object labels; Emma Bryan coordinated the outreach effort. The exhibit also features two sections that will rotate regularly. *Family History Spotlight* will be an in-depth look into the histories, stories, and contributions individual families have made in our region. *Local Luminary* will feature an extraordinary individual (historic or contemporary) whose life and work has had a major impact in our community.

Designing the Space

The physical exhibit design, created by Brooks Vessels, works harmoniously with the artifact selection, interpretive strategy, and text. Hundreds of hours have gone into researching, prototyping, and curating colors, typefaces, wall graphics, and theme panels. These design elements will stitch together many vignettes into a larger narrative that considers how individuals have shaped the landscape, community, and culture of the Ohio River Valley.

The Filson invites you to visit *People, Passage, Place: Stories of the Ohio Valley* starting December 2, 2022.

Exhibit generously
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Introducing the Filson's Adopt-an-Artifact Program

About the Program:

In order to fulfill our mission to *preserve* the history and culture of Kentucky and the Ohio Valley, the Filson works each year to identify, research, and fund the restoration and conservation needs of our physical collections to maintain the integrity of these items for future generations.

We need your help! Join us in preserving the stories these material objects hold by Adopting an Artifact! We have chosen projects that represent the wide scope of our collections. Learn more about each project below.

Projects:



B'nai B'rith Louisville Lodge No. 14 Records
19th Century
Total Conservation Cost + Indexing
Project Funding: \$5,000

One of the first donations to the Filson's Jewish Community Archives came in the fall of 2017: a series of record books documenting the membership and activities of two Louisville chapters of the international Jewish Fraternal Organization, B'nai B'rith. The total collection of six volumes comprises some of the oldest and richest documentary history about 19th century Jewish life in Kentucky currently preserved in our commonwealth. The collection is catalogued and available for research. However, the oldest volume, the early records of Mendelssohn Lodge No. 40 covering the years 1860-1870, is in profoundly fragile condition. The cover is disintegrating, and pages are disassociating.



Painted Tintype of a Portrait of Horace Walker (1828-1872)
Unknown
Ca. 1870s
Oil on tin over a photograph
Purchased by the Historical Acquisitions funds from an art gallery in Nashville, TN in 2001 (2001.4)
Total Conservation Cost: \$2,000

This painted tintype of Horace Walker is a rare and important piece that documents the free Black experience in a post-emancipation world. The object itself plays a significant role in the documentation of painted tintypes, which were an immensely popular artform during this period. A tintype or ferrotype is a photograph made by creating a direct image onto a thin sheet of metal. From about 1860 onwards, tintypes grew in popularity throughout all social classes, as they were inexpensive, and easy to make. The images were black and white, giving the now largely out of work itinerant portrait painters a newfound opportunity to flesh out the sitters and bring them to life—creating a new genre of American Folk Art painting.



The Wedding
G. Caliman Coxe (1907-1999)
Ca. 1950s
Oil on canvas
Gift of Kay Oliver (2015.23.2)
Total Conservation Cost: \$3,685

For nearly five decades, abstract painter Gloucester Caliman "G.C." Coxe (1907-1999) was a fixture of the Louisville art scene. The first Black artist to receive a fine arts degree from the University of Louisville, Coxe worked and exhibited with a milieu of artists including Sam Gilliam and Fred Bond. He co-founded the Louisville Art Workshop, where he worked alongside Gilliam, Bond, Robert Douglas, and Ed Hamilton, and was a mentor to generations of Louisville artists. In 2015, the Filson acquired three wonderful Coxe canvasses. The paintings exhibit aspects of Coxe's process and practice, ranging from vibrant pieces reminiscent of the color field movement to assemblages using everyday objects like cardboard and dowels to create stunning sculptural forms that leap away from the two-dimensional plane of the canvas.

How to Adopt:

Contact Community Engagement Specialist, Emma Bryan, via email at emmabryan@filsonhistorical.org or at 502-635-5083. We are happy to discuss these projects in greater detail!

Adopters will receive regular updates on the condition and conservation progress of the piece, private viewing at the Filson once the item is restored and returned, and if recognition is desired, your name on our website with gratitude for helping us preserve the piece.

The Filson's Volunteer Program

Seeking more hands-on engagement with Ohio Valley History? Consider volunteering with the Filson! There are a variety of ways to become involved!

Our volunteers assist us with collections projects such as cataloging entries, inventory assessments, transcription, organization in storage, and historical research needs. Volunteers are involved in exhibit preparation, installation, and deinstallation. Our volunteers serve as tour guides and docents for our daily tours and special events! We enlist the help of our volunteer base to welcome guests to our campus daily and to our programs in the evening. Volunteers serve on committees to prepare for large events such as the Old Louisville Holiday Home Tour! The Filson's Annual House Tour is staffed by volunteers. Volunteers assist with educational activities such as our Cultural Pass programming. With increasing interest from our community, the possibilities for volunteer involvement are evolving!

In addition to the day-to-day work and operations, Filson volunteers contribute immeasurably to our institutional historical knowledge, and help to create a community of individuals brought together by a shared interest in and passion for the history of the Ohio Valley.

Throughout this year, the Filson has benefitted from the work of 31 volunteers who have contributed over 1,000 collective hours. Projects supported by volunteer work include: the photograph collections of the Abramson Family, Rogers Clark Ballard Thruston, and the Bingham Family; the records of the Jewish Community of

Louisville and the Orphan Brigade Kinfolks Association; Mary Cummings' and Katherine Hagan's Fashion Illustrations; the papers of the Clark-Strater-Watson-Hill Family and the Wolford Family; research on our First American West Project and the Ferguson Mansion; and the inventory of our silver collection, just to name a few!

The generous donation of time, energy, creativity, and passion from our volunteer base is integral to the fulfillment of our mission! Thank you, Filson Volunteers!

Interested in learning more about the Filson's volunteer program? Contact Community Engagement Specialist, Emma Bryan: (502) 635-5083 or emmabryan@filsonhistorical.org



Collections Volunteer Jean Marlowe busy inventorying the Filson's silver collection.
Photo Credit: Emma Bryan

Here, Collections Volunteer Stephanie Ray is inventorying the fashion illustrations of artist Katherine Hagan.
Photo Credit: Emma Bryan

Docent Volunteer Margaret Scharre speaks to a guest prior to a tour of the Filson's campus. Photo Credit: Clinton Spaulding, StoryPoint Prospect



Abramson's inauguration as Lieutenant Governor of Kentucky. Left to right: Sidney Abramson, Madeline Abramson. [Abramson Family Photograph Collection Folder 22]



Jerry and Madeline Abramson, ca. 1990. [Abramson Family Photograph Collection Folder 21]

Continued from page 9.

a legal assistant from a Catholic family in Louisville's South End who were active in Democratic politics and with the *Kentucky Irish American* newspaper. Madeline converted to Judaism, and in 1991 the couple adopted their son, Sidney.

After helping with the Louisville and Jefferson County merger, Abramson won 73 percent of the vote in the first Louisville Metro mayoral election. In 2011, he was elected Lieutenant Governor under Steven Beshear and, in 2014 was appointed Deputy

Assistant to President Barack Obama and White House Director of Intergovernmental Affairs. Today, Abramson serves as Spalding University's Executive-in-Residence and on the University of Louisville Board of Trustees. Both Jerry and Madeline Abramson serve on many boards for Louisville's Jewish, philanthropic, and civic organizations. The Abramson collections are important resources for students and scholars of contemporary local politics, government, and Jewish life.

The Filson is tremendously grateful to Rabbi Stanley Miles for all his work arranging the Abramson collections and writing their biographical and contextual notes.



Scan the QR code to visit the exhibit and begin exploring the Abramson Family collections.



Filson supporters and bourbon lovers have an opportunity to purchase a 100 proof Filson signature label Old Forester Single Barrel bourbon whisky in the Filson Silent Auction, November 21-December 20, 2022. The barrel was selected by Master Taster Jackie Zykan, members of the Brown family spanning three generations, and leadership members of the Filson Historical Society.

\$100/BOTTLE

THE FILSON HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S
VIRTUAL AUCTION

All proceeds benefit the Filson Historical Society

NOVEMBER 21-DECEMBER 20, 2022

For more information, please visit filsonhistorical.org/bourbon

The Filsonians

August–October 2022



The Thruston Legacy Circle is an honorary society established in 2015 to recognize those who have followed the example of R. C. Ballard Thruston by including the Filson in their estate plans. Since our founding in 1884, the Filson has been privately supported and planned giving is an ideal way to continue that tradition of private support.

If you have made a planned gift to the Filson and have not so advised us, we thank you and ask that you let us know so we can welcome you to the TLC. If you have not made a planned gift but would like more information about doing so, please call our Development Department at (502) 634-7108 or email Brenna Cundiff at brenna@filsonhistorical.org.

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