

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.



Recent Acquisitions	Browsing in our Archives	Staff Profile	Gertrude Polk Brown Lecture Series	People Passage Place	4/3/1974: Where Were You?	History Inspires Profiles	140th Anniversary Events	Life and Legacy	The Filsonians
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From the **President**

Dear Filsonians:

On May 15, 1884, 140 years ago, the Filson was founded in Reuben Durrett's library. On December 31, 2024, I shall have been here for six of these 140 years, after which time I shall disappear into the ether of retirement. Dr. Patrick Lewis, who I hired six years ago and promoted to Director of Research and Collections, will follow me as President & CEO. Call it dumb luck on my part, or skillful succession planning, but you have my personal assurance that Patrick is the right person for the job at this time in the Filson's history. More about Patrick and the transition throughout this year.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my tenure, and am grateful to our phenomenally professional staff, our wonderful board, and all of you—our members—for your support. After a deeply satisfying 42-year career at the Bar, I honestly thought I'd be here at most two years and serve merely as an interim bridge to the next generation. Hopefully it has turned out to be something more.

Which leads me to this 140th year. I said in my last letter that I hoped this year of celebration would be an exploration of what it means to be a Kentuckian, an Ohio Valley resident, and at its deepest core,

an American. If there is a common theme in all my letters to you it has been the importance of an educated citizenry, a citizenry deeply versed in history, and a citizenry devoted to upholding the Rule of Law in our Democracy.

The importance of settled precedents, respect for the Rule of Law, a free and unfettered press, open and fair elections, honorable leadership, civility, working for the common good, caring for the underprivileged, upholding America's crucial role in leading the free world—all of these are gravely serious issues that matter this year and every year, just as they did 140 years ago and just as they will 140 years from now. The Filson Historical Society is here to provide opportunities for lifelong education on the history pertaining to these issues. Learned citizens are essential to the future of this Nation. As I've quoted my undergraduate college's motto before: *Alenda Lux Ubi Orta Libertas*. In liberty let there be learning. In learning let there be liberty.

Thank you,



Richard H.C. Clay

President & CEO, The Filson Historical Society

From the **Chair**

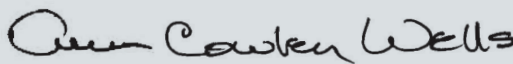
2024 is a big year for the Filson Historical Society with the year-long celebration of our 140th anniversary. What started as a small group of like-minded individuals in 1884 has blossomed into a renowned organization dedicated to collecting, preserving, and sharing ALL of the stories of our region, with membership opportunities for Ohio Valley enthusiasts all over the world.

Filson140 kicked off in January and February with the 80s series: two lectures from Dr. Dan Gifford on pop culture and pop music from the 1980s followed by the "Back to the 80s" party at the Filson in February. I hope you were able to join us for one (or all) of the events in that series. They certainly were a bright spot in a dreary January and February. Looking forward, the Filson has several 140th events on the schedule, which you can find out more about on pages 15–16 of this publication. Our Education and Programming staff have put together a wonderful variety of programs to help us celebrate this milestone anniversary.

Along with celebrating our own anniversary, the Filson is thrilled to partner with other organizations in the region who are celebrating milestones. 2024 marks

the 100th Anniversary of the Kentucky State Parks, and our current exhibit, *Kentucky Progress: Establishing the Kentucky State Parks*, showcases how Kentucky's robust parks system drew visitors to the state and familiarized them with the beauty and natural resources that Kentucky offers. The Louisville Slugger bat is also celebrating its 140th anniversary, and we are pleased to have the Slugger Museum show us how bats used to be turned by hand at the Filson140: A Heritage Jubilee celebration on May 18 (see page 16).

Again, I'd like to thank our members for their ongoing support of this organization. Without your support over the last 140 years, we would not be here to serve the region in preserving our collective history. There is no Filson Historical Society without your support and enthusiasm for our mission.



Ann Wells, Board Chair

COVER: View of Miles Park, ca. 1957. [015PC68, Fld. 30]

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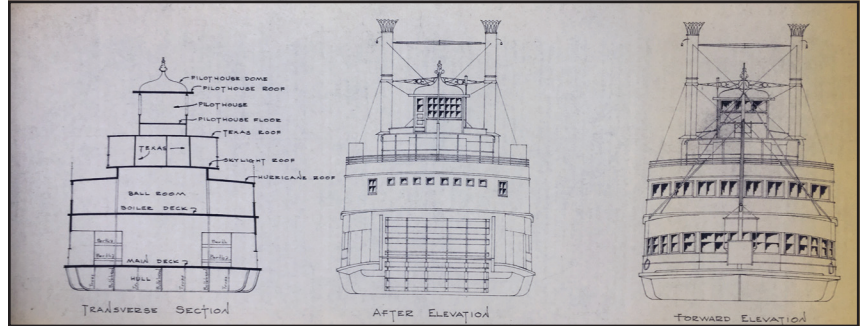
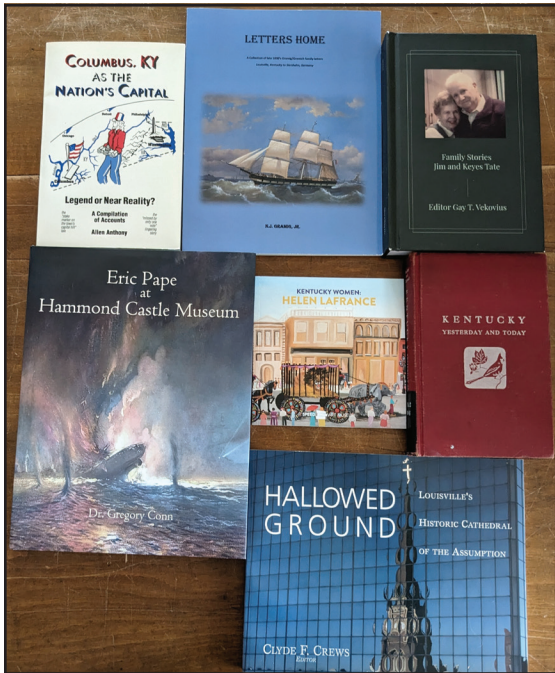
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OUR MISSION:
To collect, preserve, and share
the significant history and
culture of Kentucky and the
Ohio Valley.

Recent Acquisitions



▲ The **Belle of Louisville architectural drawings** were done circa 1965 by Alan Bates, a naval architect hired to return the Belle to functioning status following its purchase by Jefferson County. The drawings complement the original 1910–1914 drawings of the Belle (then called the Idlewild), also in the Filson's architecture collection. (Donated by Stuart Roe)

◀ The library receives and purchases books relevant to Ohio Valley history. This is a small sampling of what has come in recently: **Letters Home: A Collection of Late-1800s Gramig/ Gramich Family Letters**, donated by the author, N.J. Gramig; **Family Stories: Jim and Keyes Tate**, donated by the author, Gay T. Vekovius; **Eric Pape at Hammond Castle Museum**, donated by the author, Dr. Gregory Conn; **Kentucky Women: Helen LaFrance, An Exhibition Catalog**, donated by the Speed Art Museum; **Kentucky: Yesterday and Today** by Ruby Dell Baugher and Sarah Hendricks Claypool, **Hallowed Ground: Louisville's Historic Cathedral of the Assumption** by Clyde F. Crews, and **Columbus, KY as the Nation's Capital** by Allen Anthony, all donated by the former Louisville *Courier-Journal* library.



The **S. E. Davis Company collection** features records and photographs from the multigenerational family-owned and -operated store in downtown Louisville from 1936–2017. (Donated by Melvin and Shellia Davis and Cheryl Davis Wittenstein)



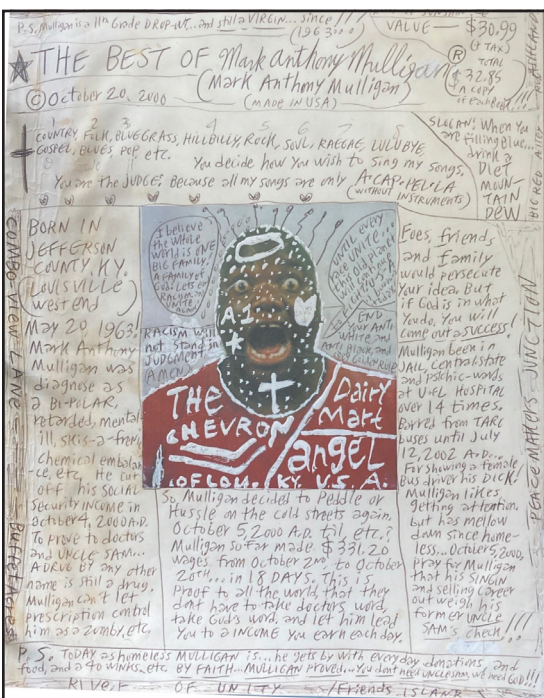
The **Fields, Blair, Williams family collection** documents multiple generations of an Appalachian family from Whitesburg in Letcher County, Kentucky. It includes a mining helmet and items used by Robert Williams (1919–2009) while working as an industrial engineer for Standard Oil / Chevron; a butter churner (later used as pickle jar) from the family dairy; quilts made by Dona Holcomb Fields (1881–1927) and Nora Fields Blair (1901–1995); and a dulcimer made by Arthur Dixon. (Donated by the family of Sheila Williams Huff)



Established in 1986, the American Center for Art and Culture housed a collection of photographs, papers, and artwork documenting the life and legacy of Countess Mona von Bismarck. In 2022, the American Center closed its doors and transferred the entire **Mona Bismarck American Center collection** to the Filson in 2023. Of note are early photos of Mona as a young woman growing up in Kentucky and her early travels.



A collection of artist **Ann Farnsley's papers and photographs** documenting her career. Her journals are a combination of sketches and entries about her daily life, and the photographs document her life, work, and family. (Donated by Douglass Farnsley)



Louisville artist Mark Anthony Mulligan chronicled his personal experiences and perspective on the Louisville urban landscape—especially signs. His handwritten and illustrated letters to his friend Al Gorman over more than a decade document in part his life and career. (Donated by Albertus Gorman)



Louisville attorney Allan Weiss spent some thirty years collecting Louisville business covers and special illustrated envelopes. These illustrated covers date from the mid-20th century. (Donated by Allan Weiss)

Miles Park racetrack and the legacy of John Fred Miles

By Heather Potter, Curator of Photographs & Prints

What later became known as Miles Park racetrack was located on the site of the old Kentucky State Fairgrounds at the southern end of Cecil Avenue, at 43rd Street in Louisville. A one-half mile oval racetrack was built there in 1907 and opened for use in 1908. The track was used for, among other things, harness races held during the State Fair. By the mid-1940's the track fell into disrepair and by the late 40's John Fred Miles began leasing the property.



Fairgrounds Speedway harness race. [015PC68, Fld. 27]

John Fred Miles, also known as “J. Fred” and “The General,” was born in Sheldon, Missouri in 1884 to John Miles, a farmer, and his wife Mary Smith. Around 1896, 12-year-old J. Fred moved with his family to Tulsa, Oklahoma. As a young man he worked as a fruit and produce salesman. While in Tulsa, J. Fred met Georgia Ellis Pittman, the daughter of a successful merchant. The couple married on February 26, 1907. That same year, J. Fred drilled his first oil well. In 1908, Ellis's father G.W. Pittman passed away. For a period,



John Fred Miles as a young man. [015PC68, Fld. 1]

J. Fred took over his role as the manager of the family jewelry store. In these early years he worked hard to build his knowledge and experience in business and the oil fields. Three years later he founded the Swiss Oil Company. In 1913, he incorporated The Neighbors Oil & Gas Company in Oklahoma City. According to newspapers, J. Fred filed a lawsuit against the Union Oil Company, claiming that they sold him defective land titles. A year later, he won the suit and a large payout.

Shortly thereafter he made the move to Kentucky and officially incorporated the Swiss Oil Company in Lexington. In 1923, his son Robert F. Miles was born. A year later J. Fred incorporated Ashland Oil Company under the direction of Paul Glaser, who would replace him in the leadership role only three years later. By August of 1928, J. Fred moved his family from Lexington to Louisville, where they settled into a large home on River Park Drive, later moving to Newburg Road.

Due to his importance in the community and interest in horseracing, J. Fred was appointed to the Kentucky Racing Commission in 1939 by his good friend Albert Benjamin “Happy” Chandler, who served over the years as both a Kentucky Governor and Senator. In 1949, J. Fred began leasing a half-mile track called the Fairgrounds Speedway at the old Kentucky Fairgrounds. J. Fred served on the Commission for a few terms, including as its chairman from 1947 to 1950, when he resigned.



View of Miles Park, ca. 1957. [015PC68, Fld. 30]

On June 28, 1956, the first thoroughbred race meeting began on the half-mile oval, the track still being known as Fairgrounds Speedway. In 1957, the track was renamed Miles Park, in honor of J. Fred Miles,

following its second race meeting and the track was expanded to 5/8ths of a mile, or five furlongs, from its original half-mile. This was the first of several changes which would be made to the racing oval. Miles Park held one annual race meeting each summer, after the end of the Churchill Downs spring meet and prior to the opening of the annual Ellis Park summer meet. Tracks, like Miles Park, with a circumference of less than one mile were known in the racing world as “bullrings” because of their sharp turns and short home and back stretches. Horses with inside post positions that broke quickly from the starting gate and were able to negotiate the tight turns had a huge advantage over the rest of the field. Those “horses for courses” became beloved local favorites to the betting public. The connections of most top-caliber horses shunned such tracks. All the other thoroughbred tracks in Kentucky at that time (and since) were at least one mile in circumference.



(Left to right) Bing Crosby, unknown, General J. Fred Miles, and Kentucky Senator A. B. “Happy” Chandler at the 1942 PGA, photograph by Norris E. Mode, Jeffersonville, IN. [015PC68, Fld. 23]

The following year, a tragic fire on May 18, 1964, killed 27 horses and destroyed many of the old barns used for livestock shows dating back to the time the old Fair Grounds was built. By 1969, the track’s concessionaire, Emprise, a New York corporation, had gained a controlling interest in Miles Park. Considerable improvements to the track and facilities were made and the track was renamed Commonwealth Racecourse in 1974. It ran two meetings under that name, the last being the only winter meeting ever held there, in December of 1974 and January of 1975. The end came when the State Racing Commission would not grant racing dates to the track in 1976, following owner Emprise’s conviction for racketeering involving a Las Vegas casino. Thoroughbreds never raced there again, though Quarter Horse races were held in the late 1970’s. The Grandstand burned in 1978 and the property was sold to the Wayne Supply Company who still use the property today.

Many racing fans fondly remember the humble West End track in which the fans were remarkably close to the action, due to its small size. Anyone who spent much time at Miles Park will recall the tune played over the track’s loudspeakers minutes before each race—the Colonel Bogey March from the film “The Bridge on the River Kwai.”



General J. Fred Miles holding a horse named Gov. Chandler (after A. B. “Happy” Chandler), the winner of the 1938 Illinois Derby at Aurora Downs, with Jockey William “Willie” Garner. [015PC68, Fld. 33]

In 1958, J. Fred inaugurated the track’s premier and richest race, the Junior Derby, which was held every summer through 1971. The race was for two-year-olds, with the hope that it would serve as a local steppingstone to the following year’s Kentucky Derby. It never attained such a status. When J. Fred owned the track, investors included his close friends Bing Crosby, Hollywood Director Howard Hawks, and comedian Andy Devine. J. Fred, in declining health, sold the track for \$2,000,000 in March 1962 to Joseph L. Arnold, Bernard M. Kahn and Leonard Fruchtmann. When the two favorites in the 1962 Junior Derby were unable to negotiate the tight turns and could not finish in the top three, the new owners enlarged and expanded the track to 130 feet short of six furlongs, in time for the 1963 meeting. That same year, at the age of 79, J. Fred Miles passed away in a Louisville hospital. He had been a well-known and popular figure in his adopted home of Kentucky. J. Fred Miles was survived by his wife, son, daughter-in-law, and three grandchildren.



General J. Fred Miles with hat, Hollywood, CA, 1938. [015PC68, Fld. 32]

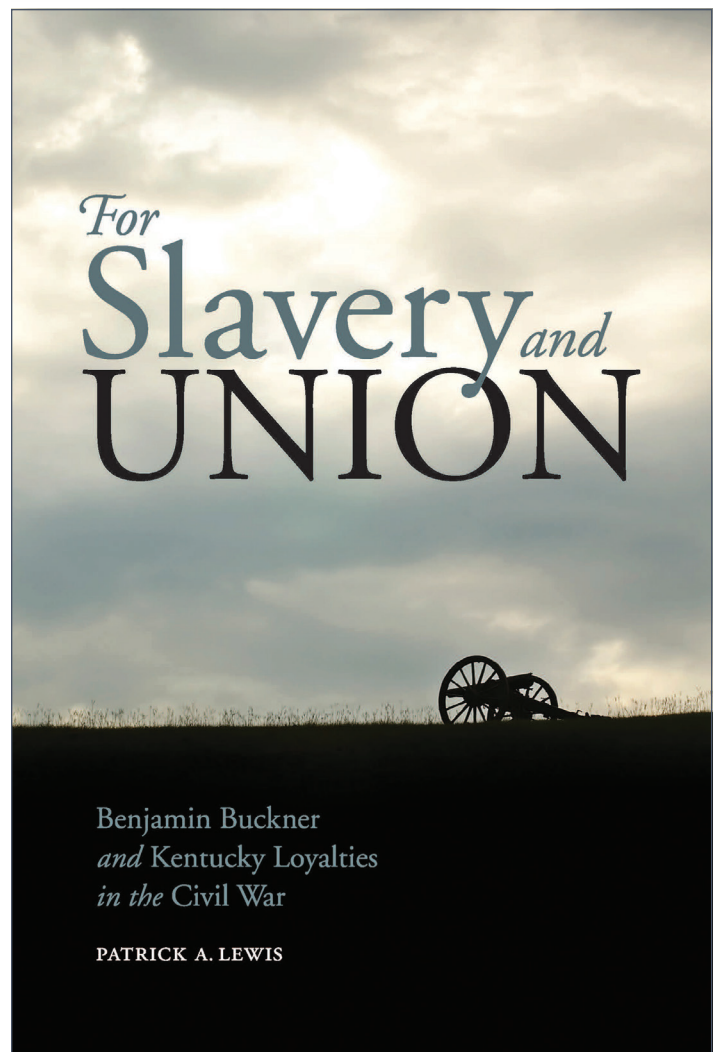
The John Fred Miles and Miles Park photographs were cataloged thanks to the help of Filson Volunteer Steve Zollner who organized and identified photos and provided much of the information about the track’s history. Zollner is a former Racing Official for the Racing Secretary’s Office for Miles Park Racetrack, and various Kentucky Racetracks from 1972–1980. To learn more, you can view the collection online.

Patrick Lewis

A community member recently asked Filson Director of Collections & Research Patrick Lewis what his job looked like day-to-day. What does a historian actually do at a historical society? Dr. Lewis had started that week with two days of dancing, games, cultural presentations, and storytelling in the revitalized Myaamia language hosted by the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma at their Winter Gathering. A day and 700 miles later on Monday, he was meeting with Filson exhibit designer Brooks Vessels to review graphics and layout for the upcoming *Kentucky Progress* exhibit celebrating the centennial of Kentucky State Parks. Tuesday, introducing Martin Luther King, Jr. and Muhammad Ali biographer Jonathan Eig at the Gertrude Polk Brown Lecture. Wednesday, planning the Southern Jewish Historical Society annual conference, which the Filson will host in the Fall, and working on cover art for a new book on Civil War video games that he is publishing with Louisiana State University Press. Thursday, building a reading list and seminar notes for the Filson's upcoming Northwest and Indigenous Revolution bus tour to the old French and Spanish colonies of Missouri. Friday, opening the building at 4:00 am for the crew of the WDRB morning show to film live spots highlighting Black history collections and programs as part of the African American History Initiative.

On the surface, very little of that has to do with his graduate training in history from the University of Kentucky—though the next weekend he gave a lecture at Camp Nelson National Monument about his 2015 University Press of Kentucky book, *For Slavery and Union: Benjamin Buckner and Kentucky Loyalties in the Civil War*. For Dr. Lewis, history teaching happens outside the classroom.

He's been at this a long time. Starting at age ten, Lewis camped in tents and cabins at Ft. Donelson National Battlefield just across the Tennessee state line from his home in Trigg County, Kentucky, and learned the art of historic site interpretation from rangers and reenactors there. A dozen years later, after graduating from Transylvania University, he packed a car full of books and drove straight





On February 3, the Filson's Registrar and NAGPRA Coordinator, Kelly Hyberger and Director of Collections and Research, Patrick Lewis attended the grand opening of the Myaamia National Archives and Myaamia Winter Gathering in Miami, Oklahoma

from Lexington to Lookout Mountain and his first job sharing Civil War history with visitors to Chickamauga & Chattanooga National Military Park.

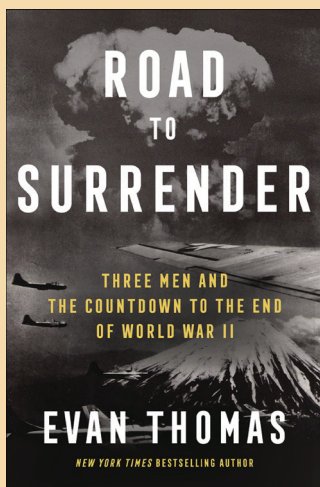
“History is an adventure. It’s an opportunity to explore, even to make a familiar place seem strange and new,” Lewis says. At Chickamauga, he and fellow rangers road tripped on their off days to out-of-the-way small town historical societies, state archives in Nashville and Montgomery, and university special collections at places like Sewanee, Tuscaloosa, and Chapel Hill. “If there wasn’t a collection that you needed for your project wherever we went, you’d just call some papers that seemed interesting and dive into the boxes. I put eyes and hands on hundreds of manuscript collections every month, in all different types of research settings.” Spending a day at Emory waiting on a friend to finish a project, Lewis read microfilm of Frederick Douglass’s newspaper covering racial violence and voting rights in Kentucky in the 1870s, and those quotes anchored his first peer-reviewed journal article. “Someone else pulled [Emory professor and prolific mid-century author] Bell Wiley’s lecture notes for his Civil War course in the 1950s, and we read those by flashlight in the car on the way back,” Lewis remembered. “Best research trip I ever took.”

After coming to the Filson in 2019 to manage scholarly research, conferences, and publications, Dr. Lewis took charge of the collections department in 2020. Now, he is slated to follow Dick Clay as the next President & CEO of the Filson beginning in January of 2025. “I want everyone to have the opportunity to experience history, feel it, not just have it told to them,” Lewis says, reflecting on his early career experiences. “The Filson was formed by people who collected, wrote, presented. They were active participants in the historical process, and our current membership keeps that spirit alive.” Lewis wants the Filson to be a place where members find community, get comfortable digging in to hard questions, and open themselves to change and growth by encountering the past. “That gets me excited. Take a trip, meet a family who is donating materials, listen to a new book talk. I’m always learning something new, immersing myself in a topic or a culture that I don’t know well. But the best part is that at the Filson, we pull these threads together into a larger story about Kentucky and Ohio Valley. We’re all woven together, as different as we may think we are.”

Wednesday, April 10, 2024, 6:00–7:00 pm | Hybrid

The Kentucky Center—Bomhard Theater, 501 W. Main St., Louisville

Free for members (use code FILSON), \$26.62 for non-members

Tickets may be purchased online at kentuckyperformingarts.org or by phone at (502) 584-7777

Road to Surrender

Three Men and the Countdown to the End of World War II

Evan Thomas

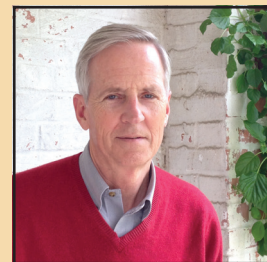
At 9:20 a.m. on the morning of May 30, General Groves receives a message to report to the office of the secretary of war “at once.” Stimson is waiting for him. He wants to know: has Groves selected the targets yet?

So begins this suspenseful, impeccably researched history that draws on new access to diaries to tell the story of three men who were intimately involved with America’s decision to drop the atomic bomb—and Japan’s decision to surrender. They are Henry Stimson, the American Secretary of War, who had overall responsibility for decisions about the atom bomb; Gen. Carl “Tooe” Spaatz, head of strategic bombing in the Pacific, who supervised the planes that dropped the bombs; and Japanese Foreign Minister Shigenori Togo, the only one in Emperor Hirohito’s Supreme War Council who believed even before the bombs were dropped that Japan should surrender.

Henry Stimson had served in the administrations of five presidents, but as the U.S. nuclear program progressed, he found himself tasked with the unimaginable decision of determining whether to deploy the bomb. The new president, Harry S. Truman, thus far a peripheral figure in the momentous decision, accepted Stimson’s recommendation to drop the bomb. Army Air Force Commander Gen. Spaatz ordered the planes to take off. Like Stimson, Spaatz agonized over the command even as he recognized it would end the war. After the bombs were dropped, Foreign Minister Togo was finally able to convince the emperor to surrender.

To bring these critical events to vivid life, bestselling author Evan Thomas draws on the diaries of Stimson, Togo and Spaatz, contemplating the immense weight of their historic decision. In *Road to Surrender*, an immersive, surprising, moving account, Thomas lays out the behind-the-scenes thoughts, feelings, motivations, and decision-making of three people who changed history.

Evan Thomas is the author of nine books: *The Wise Men* (with Walter Isaacson), *The Man to See*, *The Very Best Men*, *Robert Kennedy*, *John Paul Jones*, *Sea of Thunder*, *The War Lovers*, *Ike’s Bluff*, and *Being Nixon*. *John Paul Jones* and *Sea of Thunder* were *New York Times* best-



sellers. Thomas was a writer, correspondent, and editor for thirty-three years at *Time* and *Newsweek*, including ten years (1986–96) as Washington bureau chief at *Newsweek*, where, at the time of his retirement in 2010, he was editor at large. He wrote more than one hundred cover stories and in 1999 won a National Magazine Award. He wrote *Newsweek*’s fifty-thousand-word election specials in 1996, 2000, 2004 (winner of a National Magazine Award), and 2008. He has appeared on many TV and radio talk shows, including *Meet the Press* and *The Colbert Report*, and has been a guest on PBS’s *Charlie Rose* more than forty times. The author of dozens of book reviews for *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, Thomas has taught writing and journalism at Harvard and Princeton, where, from 2007 to 2014, he was Ferris Professor of Journalism.

Praise for *Road to Surrender*

“A terrifying, heartbreaking account of three men under unimaginable pressure ... This is history that crackles with journalistic immediacy. I challenge you not to read this book in a single sitting.”

—Nathaniel Philbrick, author of *In the Heart of the Sea* and *Travels with George*

“An exploration of the moral quandaries that surrounded the atomic bombing of Japan ... a thoughtful study of nuclear war, its early discontents, and alternate scenarios that might have been worse.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*

Thank you to our sponsors: Dace Brown Stubbs, Marshall Farrer, Dace Polk Brown, Laura Lee Brown, Garvin Deters, Polk Deters, Laura Lee Gastis, Garvin Brown IV, and Campbell Brown.

People Passage Place

Tom T. Hall's beautiful five-string banjo, a modified Gibson RB-250, provides the centerpiece of a case on Ohio Valley music in the Filson's ongoing exhibit, *People Passage Place*.

Tom T. Hall was born in Olive Hill, Carter County, Kentucky, in 1936. As a young man, Hall performed in bands and worked in radio in Kentucky and West Virginia, where he began dabbling in songwriting. He moved to Nashville to pursue songwriting full time in 1964. Hall went on to be one of the best-selling country songwriters of all time, a Country Music Hall of Fame inductee, and a long-time member of the Grand Ole Opry.

Early in 2016, Filson Collections staff member Aaron Rosenblum reached out to Hall concerning his materials. In response, Hall made a generous donation of two wonderful collections belonging to him and his wife, country and Bluegrass songwriter Dixie Hall. Both collections added significant depth to the Filson's musical holdings and documentation of Kentucky and regional culture. One collection documents the

creative act of songwriting and the business side of music publishing. The other represents the tools of the trade in the form of rare acoustic instruments that are the signature of Bluegrass and country music.

The banjo featured in *People Passage Place* was Hall's stage banjo, used during performances for many years. It began life as a Gibson RB-250 model but was modified over the years with parts from other brands and manufacturers. Details include an inlay on the heel of the neck depicting a snake, perhaps added in honor of Hall's popular 1974 children's song "Sneaky Snake."

*Boys and girls take warning, if you go near the lake,
keep your eyes wide open, and look for sneaky snake.
Now, maybe you won't see him, and maybe you won't hear,
but he'll sneak up behind you, and drink all your root beer.*



▲ Tom T. Hall's modified Gibson RB-250. (Tom T. and Dixie Hall Instrument Collection, 2016.6.2)

Detail of snake inlay on the heel of Tom T. Hall's banjo. (Tom T. and Dixie Hall Instrument Collection, 2016.6.2) ►



**NASH
GALLERY**
ongoing

PEOPLE PASSAGE PLACE

STORIES OF THE
OHIO VALLEY

The Filson
Historical
Society

The semi-permanent exhibit *People Passage Place: Stories of the Ohio Valley* shares stories of family, community, art and craftsmanship, business and agriculture, social justice movements, Indigenous heritage, colonial settlement, Antebellum, Civil War, and Reconstruction narratives, travel, immigration, religion, foodways, music, and more. You are invited to engage with the Filson's collections and to think critically about how history shapes your lives and communities.

Exhibit generously sponsored by:

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Kentucky Progress

Establishing the Kentucky State Parks

March 1–
August 9,
2024

One hundred years ago, history and tourism were the drivers of economic transformation in Kentucky. Liberated by the automobile, tourists could travel on their own time, away from the rails. Parks would draw visitors along newly paved roads, lodge them in modern accommodations, and familiarize them with the natural beauty and resource wealth of the state. With an eye on out-of-state industrial investment, parks were the face of **Kentucky Progress**. 2024 marks the 100th anniversary of Kentucky State Parks and the 140th anniversary of the Filson. In this exhibit, both institutions tell an intertwined story of interpreting Kentucky's past, promoting its economic success in the present, and reflecting the slow progress from segregation to inclusion.

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To view the associated programming for this exhibit, please visit filsonhistorical.org/events/upcoming-events.

4/3/1974: Where Were You?

This article was originally written by former *Filson* staff member Johna Ebling for the *Filson's* blog on April 3, 2018. It is being republished for the 50th Anniversary of this disaster.

The date was April 3, 1974 and by all early appearances, the weather was unremarkable. Initial forecasts for the area showed a chance of showers and thunderstorms—similar weather to that of the prior week.

By mid-morning, the forecast had changed. The first of nine WHAS severe-weather warning broadcasts came at 10:28 am. Again at 1:19. The warnings were pumped out in quick succession: 2:34, 2:54, 3:38, 3:47, 4:02. The last two warnings, issued at 4:26 and 4:36 made it clear: tornadoes were coming.

Not even an hour before Louisville would experience its own horror show, tornadoes ripped through southern Indiana, bringing unfathomable destruction and death in Palmyra and Madison. Despite the warnings and storms to the north, many in Louisville were taken by surprise. Likely in part due to the sheer speed the storms descended upon Indiana, shocking its residents and leaving

communications in shambles. Undoubtedly, the placement of tornado sirens (at the time Louisville had 10) and the tornado's path was also to fault: only two areas within hearing distance of the siren experienced the storm—the other eight likely only wondered what the unscheduled siren test was about.

Measured at a quarter-mile wide and spinning out of control at 250 miles an hour, the Kentucky State Fairgrounds and Expo Center were the first hit. From there it traveled I-65 toward Audubon Park. Enroute to Poplar Level Road, century-old trees of George Rogers Clark Park snapped in its path. Eastern Parkway, Bonnycastle neighborhood, Cherokee Triangle and Park, Grinstead Drive, Frankfort Avenue, Crescent Hill, Brownsboro Road, Rolling Fields, Indian Hills, Knollwood, Watterson Expressway, Lime Kiln. The twister finally began to sputter out as it reached the Oldham County Line.

For twenty never-ending minutes, the twister of 1974 wreaked havoc on Louisville. In total, two were killed, 207 injured, some 900 homes were destroyed. The damage from the storm was even more severe than the storied '37 flood. In Cherokee Park alone, an estimated 2,000 trees were destroyed. The Louisville Water Company suffered a 24-hour water shortage, as its Crescent Hill filtration and pumping station was without power due to the destroyed transformer. In all, 20 tornadoes ravaged Kentucky on April 3, 1974. 71 died and 693 were injured. Southern Indiana saw just one but in the hour and 35 minutes it was on the ground, covering 120 miles, death and damage was severe: 14 deaths and 286 injuries.

The content from this post is derived from *Tornado!* a *Courier-Journal* and *Louisville Times* publication created to document and commemorate the fateful events of April 3, 1974. Proceeds from the publication aided storm relief and those in need. I am grateful to the journalists and photographers who worked on creating this important record—and to all the journalists who continue to document the difficult, as without them, these stories undoubtedly would fade. As executive editor for the project, Samuel Thomas wrote in the preface, "Producing a book born of disaster is not a pleasant undertaking. But there is a compelling reason to record for posterity the events and aftermath of April 3, 1974...The passage of time will dissipate the horror and anguish of those who bore the disaster or viewed its terrible wake. Memories will blur, even those etched so deeply by fear and bewilderment."

Where were you on April 3, 1974?

24 hrs per day!!

April 1974

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY
JEFFERSON COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT
208 SOUTH FIFTH STREET • LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY 40202
PHONE: 582-2281

L. J. HOLLENBACH, III
COUNTY JUDGE

RUSSELL M. DANIEL
CHIEF OF POLICE

DISASTER AREA ADMITTANCE SLIP

NAME AND ADDRESSES OF PERSONS VISITING DISASTER AREA.

DATE: Good any day 24 hrs a day Mrs. Richard H. Hill

NAME: any area

ADDRESS:

ISSUING OFFICER'S NAME AND RANK
Cadet T.A. Seldorf

74x46

Pass for the disaster area permitting twenty-four-hour access, following the April 3, 1974, tornado. Mrs. Richard Harrison Hill Papers (Mss. C H).

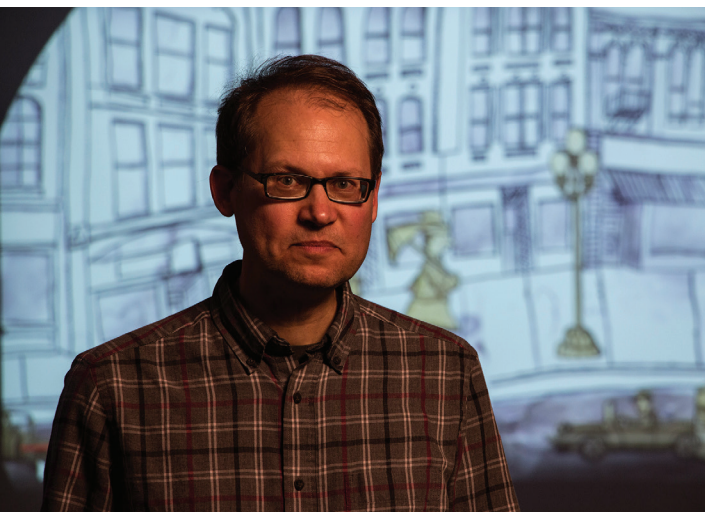
The Filson Historical Society Awards History Inspires Fellowships

The Filson Historical Society is pleased to announce the recipients of the 2024 History Inspires Fellowships (HIF). This unique program will allow artists to interpret the Filson's collections with a creative filter.

In recent years, the Filson has established relationships with regional artists, either through the artist's donations of materials to its collection or by artists' conducting research for creative projects. The HIF program will build upon those relationships by

promoting the Filson Historical Society as a resource for artistic scholarly research and inspiration while strengthening the bond with the creative community.

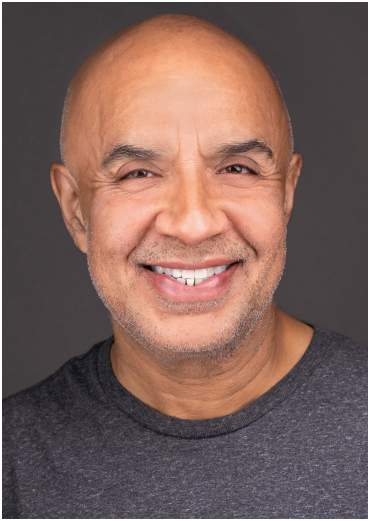
For the 2024 cycle, 13 applications featuring a wide array of creative project ideas, were reviewed by a cross-departmental committee made up of six Filson staff members. Of the 13, four were selected to receive the fellowship. The candidates are as follows:



John Akre is a stop motion and digital animator who creates films in his home studio using a variety of materials and techniques, including paper cutouts and drawing directly on movie film. He also enjoys creating animation in public places with the help of anybody who passes by. His History Inspires project will use the Louisville Transit Company Records, survey plats, architectural records, streetcar photographs and maps to find imagery in the Filson collections to create an animated short film about the connections created by and inherent in the streetcars that once tied together the streets and citizens of Louisville, and the single screen cinema palaces that once gave Louisvillians their gathering spaces. Because his animation work is often created with community collaboration, a temporary stop motion studio will be set up in the Filson's Carriage House where the public will be able to help as part of the summer Cultural Pass programming at the Filson.

Tammy Burke is a contemporary artist and garment maker for a costume company. During her fellowship, she plans to examine two common decorative practices, mosaic and quilting, and create versions of them that counter their traditional forms. Gathering inspiration from the patterns of the mosaic tile work featured in the Ferguson Mansion, she will take what is otherwise an immobile solid artwork and design an article of clothing that can be viewed outside of the mansion, making the mosaic flexible and more accessible. In turn, she will study the Filson's extensive quilt collection to find inspiration from the various historic patterns and designs of these delicate items to translate into weather resistant glass mosaic panels to be displayed outdoors. This project will showcase parts of the Filson collection that may seem out of reach and not only take the collections outside of the physical location, but outside their material limits.





Zed Saeed is a photographer and writer who is deeply invested in historical research. Many of his projects start out with weeks, and sometimes months, of in-depth research into a topic. As a History Inspires fellow, he intends to create a photo showcase drawing on the Filson's manuscripts, photographs, library, and museum collections to gain understanding of the history of race relations in Louisville and the heyday of Walnut Street. The archival research will be incorporated into his creative process by photographing specific locations along what is now known as Muhammed Ali Boulevard to tell the tragic story of Walnut Street's rise and fall, of race relations and the grand dreams of urban renewal that destroyed it. Saeed's project will culminate with an article in *Ohio Valley History*, a peer-reviewed scholarly journal jointly produced by the Filson Historical Society, the University of Cincinnati, and the Cincinnati Museum Center.

Ashley Thursby is an artist in her 16th season with Louisville Ballet. A dancer and choreographer, she plans to delve into the archives of Alun Jones-Helen Starr and Vincent Falardo collections to create a dance piece where individuals can experience the power of storytelling that is built through connecting the mind and body with movement. By utilizing both visual and written design excerpts from the archives, she plans to create a work that can be performed in a non-traditional dance venue and incorporates audience participation. Through this process of sharing, the stories of Louisville Ballet's history will strengthen the ties of past and present within our arts community.



The History Inspires Fellows began their research in January 2024 and are meeting with Filson staff on a regular basis to discuss their progress. Each project for this cycle will conclude in Fall 2024 with an event to highlight the fellows' projects. These events will be open to the public and dates will be announced in the second half of the year. In 2026, the fellows' work will be

showcased in an exhibit, which will highlight their project alongside the materials they utilized from the Filson's collection.

A second round of History Inspires Fellowships for the 2025 cycle will open in the spring of 2024 with a fall submission deadline. To learn more about the Filson's fellowship programs, please visit filsonhistorical.org/about-us/fellowships.

Since its founding in 1884, The Filson Historical Society has preserved the region's collective memory, not only of Kentucky but also of the Ohio Valley and the Upper South. The Filson continues to collect and share the significant stories of the region. An independent historical society, The Filson serves the public through its extensive research collections and numerous educational opportunities. The Filson is headquartered in the Ferguson Mansion in Old Louisville and offers research facilities, events, and rental space.

140th Anniversary Events

April-June

Tuesday, April 16, 6:00 pm | Hybrid

The Filson Historical Society, 1310 S. 3rd St., Louisville | Free for members, \$18 for non-members

Lonnie & Twyla Money: 50 Years of Kentucky Appalachian Folk Art

Karen Abney

Lonnie & Twyla Money: 50 Years of Kentucky Appalachian Folk Art is the story of two iconic Kentucky artists who have not only been making highly regarded folk art pieces for nearly 50 years, but who have helped to shape this unique Appalachian art form.

Karen Abney grew up in the Ohio River Valley and has since traveled extensively, led by a natural curiosity and desire to seek out beautiful things. Kentucky has been her adopted home for nearly 40 years—familiar because of her Appalachian heritage, and enjoyed for its natural beauty.



April 18–April 20

\$345 for members, \$395 for non-members

Northwest & Indigenous Revolution Tour

When George Rogers Clark struck north from the Falls of the Ohio in 1778, he plunged head-first into a century of Native and European diplomacy, trade, exchange, and settlement. Touring the intersection of the Ohio and Mississippi Valleys, we connect Kentucky to ancient Cahokia, Parisian palaces, Great Plains fur camps, and Havana barrios. At no time until the present was our region as linguistically, spiritually, and culturally diverse as it was on the eve of American Independence. Visit colonial Ft. de Chartres, Ste. Genevieve, St. Charles, Cahokia, and

Vincennes and meet local experts, architectural historians, artisans, and curators who keep the memory of this global crossroads alive.

The price of the trip includes transportation, admission to all museums and historical sites, two dinners with guest speakers, and two lunches. Participants are responsible for covering the costs of overnight accommodations at special group rate hotels and one lunch (totaling approximately \$300). The tour will be visiting sites that require lots of walking over varied terrain, including stairs.

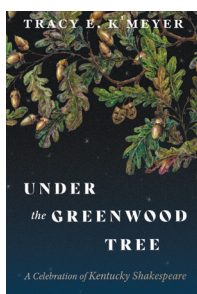
Thursday, April 25, 6:00–7:00 pm | Hybrid

The Filson Historical Society, 1310 S. 3rd St., Louisville | Free for members, \$18 for non-members

Under the Greenwood Tree: A Celebration of Kentucky Shakespeare

Tracy K'Meyer

In the summer of 1960, director C. Douglas Ramey took his Carriage House Players theater company down the street from their Old Louisville venue to Central Park, where the actors performed scenes from the Shakespeare classic *Much Ado about Nothing*. Buoyed by the enthusiastic audience response, Ramey's company returned to the park the next year for the first full season of the Kentucky



Shakespeare Festival. More than sixty years later, Kentucky Shakespeare is now the oldest free, non-ticketed Shakespeare in the Park festival in the country. To commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the festival, in spring 2020 Kentucky Shakespeare cooperated with students in the University of Louisville's Department of History to record twenty entertaining and enlightening oral interviews with

longtime members of the company. In *Under the Greenwood Tree*, author Tracy K'Meyer captures the history of Kentucky Shakespeare in a series of carefully selected and edited transcripts of these interviews. *Kentucky Progress: Establishing the Kentucky State Parks* will be open for 50 minutes prior to the program.

Tracy K'Meyer is professor of US history at the University of Louisville, where she has served as codirector of the Oral History Center. She is the author of *"To Live Peaceably Together": The American Friends Service Committee's Campaign for Open Housing and Civil Rights in the Gateway to the South: Louisville, Kentucky 1945–1980*.

Tuesday, April 30, 12:00–1:00 pm | Hybrid

The Filson Historical Society 1310 S. 3rd St., Louisville | Free for members, \$18 for non-members

The Kentucky Oaks: 150 Years of Running for the Lilies

Avalyn Hunter

In *The Kentucky Oaks: 150 Years of Running for the Lilies*, author Avalyn Hunter sets out to recover the history of one of the most watched and highly attended events in Thoroughbred racing. Beginning with Meriweather Lewis Clark Jr.'s creation of a race designed to parallel England's historic Oaks Stakes, Hunter traces the evolution

of the Kentucky Oaks through the stories of the men, women, and fillies that have made the Kentucky Oaks a symbol for women's growing participation in the sport at all levels.

Avalyn Hunter is a nationally recognized authority on Thoroughbred pedigrees and racing history.

Saturday, May 18, 10:00 am–1:00 pm

The Filson Historical Society, 1310 S. 3rd St., Louisville | Free

Filson 140: A Heritage Jubilee

Please join us for a family-friendly celebration in Old Louisville as The Filson Historical Society commemorates its 140th anniversary! Bring the family for a day of exciting activities, engaging exhibits, and fascinating tales from the past. Enjoy live music from The Louisville Leopards and Appalatin, Kona Ice, story time with StageOne, vintage fire truck rides, bubbles, balloon animals, face painting, photo opportunities, and fun giveaways. The historic Ferguson Mansion and Filson exhibits will be open for guided tours. The festival will also include booths featuring some of our community partners who are celebrating



milestone anniversaries, such as the Kentucky Derby Museum, Cave Hill Cemetery, the Belle of Louisville, the Louisville Slugger Museum, the Division Street School, Kentucky State Parks, Stock Yards Bank & Trust, and more! We are excited to hold this celebration in collaboration with Springfest (10:00am–7:00 pm) for an extended weekend of Old Louisville festivities.

Thursday, June 13, 6:00–10:00 pm

The Filson Historical Society, 1310 S. 3rd St., Louisville | Free

The Filson + Shakespeare in the Park: Where History and Entertainment Come Together in Perfect Harmony

This event is held in partnership with Kentucky Shakespeare.

Join the Filson for an enchanting evening filled with history, culture, and the magic of Old Louisville with The Filson + Shakespeare in the Park. Whet your appetite with light refreshments at 6:00 pm, setting the stage for an evening of discovery and entertainment. At 6:30 pm, enjoy an engaging presentation by Dr. Patrick Lewis, Filson's Director of Collections and Research, that unveils Old Louisville comparing its points of interest in 1884 to the landmarks of today. Discover the rich tapestry of our city's history and witness the fascinating transformations that have taken place over the

decades. Participants will enjoy exclusive access to the Filson's exhibits and receive a commemorative self-guided tour map, allowing them to venture into the heart of Old Louisville at their own pace. Following the festivities at the Filson, an escort will walk you a few blocks to Central Park for a viewing of *Romeo and Juliet*. Revel in the timeless allure of Shakespearean drama under the stars. Enjoy complimentary parking at the Filson, making your evening stress-free. Additional refreshments will be available for purchase at Central Park as you relax and enjoy the open-air ambiance.

HOW WILL YOU ASSURE YOUR LEGACY?



“I am honored to participate in the Legacy Circle of the Filson Society. The Filson is a treasured repository of history encompassing all sectors of our community. The research I do as a volunteer considers all aspects of our past; good and evil. Truer words were never written than those who forget history are condemned to relive it. The Filson Society makes our community's history live to guide us into a better future.”

— Rabbi Stanley Miles,
Thruston Legacy Circle Member and Filson Volunteer



To discuss your legacy gift, contact Brenna Cundiff, Director of Development,
brenna@filsonhistorical.org • 502.634.7108 • www.filsonhistorical.org.

Filsonian listing reflects membership gifts received October 21, 2023–January 28, 2024.

The Filsonians

October 2023–January 2024

FILSON Membership | \$5,000+

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Elizabeth F. and Richard H.C. Clay
Augusta Brown and Gill Holland Jr.
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Vivian Ruth Sawyer

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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.

If you have made a legacy 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 circle. If you would like

more information on the Thruston Legacy Circle, please contact our Development Director, Brenna Cundiff, at 502.634.7108 or by email at brenna@filsonhistorical.org.

We want to thank the Thruston Legacy Circle members listed below for investing in the future of our organization by making a legacy gift to the Filson Historical Society.

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