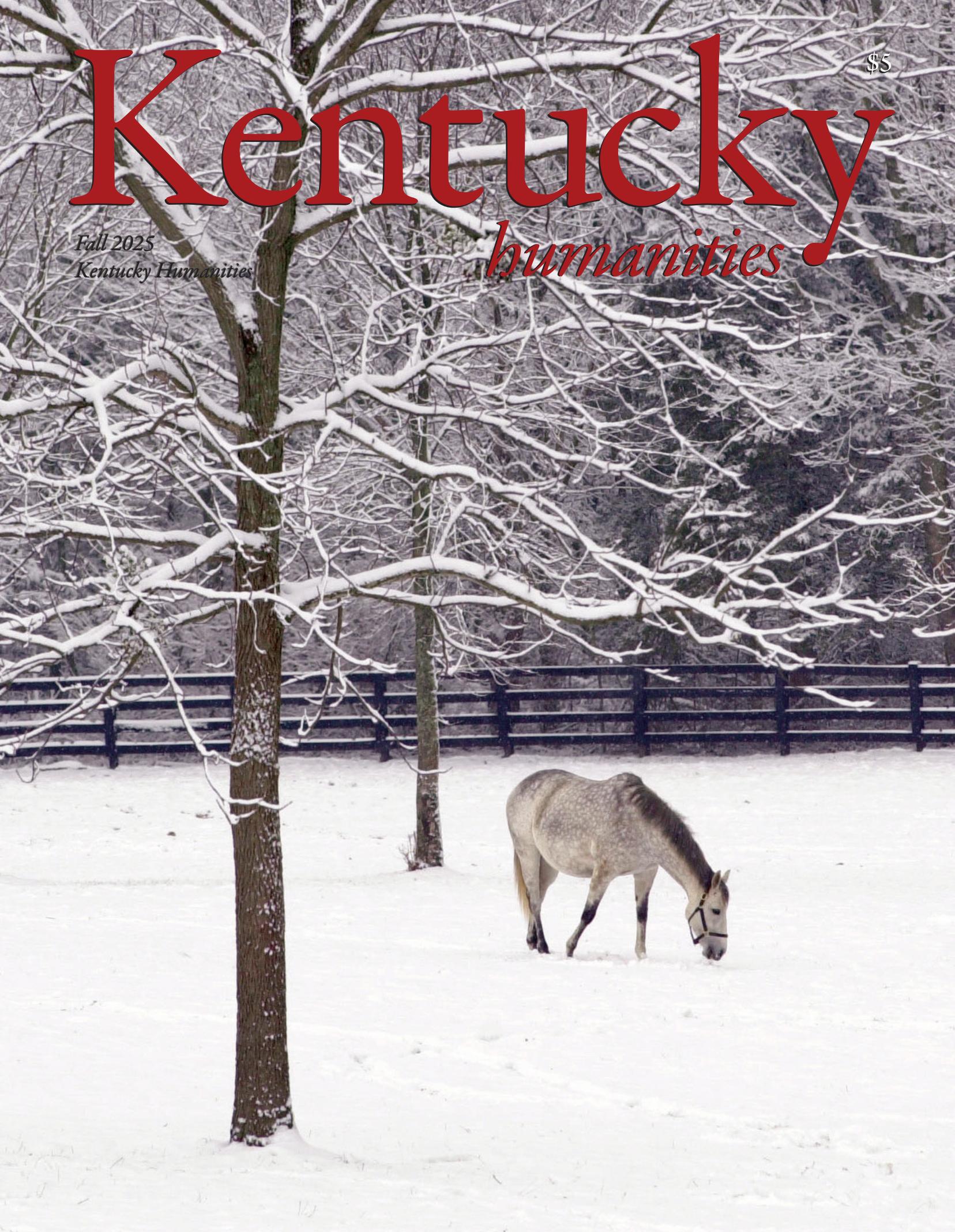


# Kentucky

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*Fall 2025*  
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# Kentucky humanities

Fall 2025



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4

## Join Us in Serving Kentucky Communities

A Letter from Kentucky Humanities

Board Chair Jennifer Cramer, Ph.D.

8

## Forever Belle Sallie Ward of Kentucky

Reviewed by Linda Elisabeth LaPinta

12

## Horses to Horsepower

Why the World is Hungry for the Story of  
Kentucky's Pack Horse Librarians

By Rebecca L. Brothers

20

## America Before the Floods

Rafinesque and Atlantic Theories of Creation

By Dr. Jeremy Paden

25

## Championing Community in the Commonwealth

Morgan Atkinson's Documentaries Explore the  
Capacity of Connection

By Linda Elisabeth LaPinta

29

## The Wedding

By Georgia Green Stamper

# Join Us in Serving Kentucky Communities

I can still remember my first interaction with Kentucky Humanities when I returned to Lexington in 2010. The university hosted an event for new faculty, and they invited a Kentucky Chautauqua® performer—George McGee portraying Henry Clay—to entertain us. One of the most famous Kentucky politicians, right there, on my campus! A public servant, a consensus builder, and a true diplomat, Clay's legacy represents what Kentucky Humanities strives for when we continue to "tell Kentucky's story." He was eloquent, with a strong intellect. He was pragmatic, with a vision of peaceful unity in a time when that was more than a little difficult. And at Kentucky Humanities, we have told Henry Clay's story and the stories of many other Kentuckians—both the famous and the unknown—to embolden people, young and old, and to stimulate conversations in communities around our Commonwealth about the power of knowledge and the intense need for harmony.

Do you know who else understood the power of knowledge? The Pack Horse Librarians. You can read about their history in the Commonwealth in Rebecca Brothers article, "Horses to Horsepower," on page 12. These people—mostly women—delivered books across rural Kentucky in the 1930s and 1940s, a time when many struggled to make ends meet. At Kentucky Humanities today, we still serve rural communities in this way, offering programs like Prime Time Family Reading,® Kentucky Humanities at the Schools, and many others to rural communities. A great example of this is the Smithsonian's Museum on Main Street which opened in Paducah in August. The exhibit, *Americans*, will continue to travel across the state into Summer 2026, visiting a number of small towns along the way. Find out more about the exhibit and its tour of Kentucky on page 6. We hope you'll visit when it comes near you!

But this is why I worry about the future of Kentucky Humanities. We make a big impact in Kentucky communities, but we can't do it without financial support. You are certainly aware of the major changes that have been made at the federal level regarding funding for the National Endowment for the Humanities, the agency that has long funded our mission. Many other state humanities councils are struggling to be able to continue. We're hopeful because of a recent federal district court ruling, but we aren't holding our breath. We are actively working to continue to do our good work. We have been working tirelessly to grow this kind of local, grassroots support, and I hope you will join us in making a difference throughout the Commonwealth.

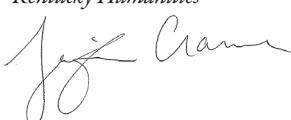
We won't give up without a fight. I have great faith in the staff at Kentucky Humanities. They have worked with our donors, the board, and other stakeholders to review our current offerings and make the necessary changes to continue our mission. We won't give up on our Kentucky communities. We know that our programs in libraries and schools have a positive and demonstrable impact on Kentucky families. We know that our Speakers Bureau and Kentucky Chautauqua programs provide intellectual stimulation and thoughtful engagement for your organization's meetings. We know that programs like *Think History* bring small tidbits of Kentucky history to your rush hour commute, adding to your knowledge about Kentucky and, perhaps, your pride in the story of our shared home.

I am still confident in Kentucky Humanities' future; despite the headwinds we face. You can help us keep the mission moving. You can help us keep Kentucky's stories alive. Your donations and your participation in our events directly support the work we do. The humanities programming our communities rely on need all of us to chip in.



Jennifer Cramer, Ph.D.

*Chair of the Board of Directors  
Kentucky Humanities*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer Cramer".

# Connecting Through Stories

**W**ith winter on the horizon across the Commonwealth, we are reminded of the power of stories to connect us—across generations, across communities, and across time. In this issue of *Kentucky Humanities*, you will find stories of resilience, creativity, and heritage that define who we are as Kentuckians.

From the bold life of Sallie Ward to the enduring legacy of the Pack Horse Librarians, from rare historical discoveries to contemporary storytellers shaping our cultural landscape, these pages celebrate the voices and visions that keep Kentucky's stories alive.

Randolph Paul Runyon's biography *Forever Belle* explores the fascinating life of Sallie Ward Lawrence Hunt Armstrong Downs, Louisville's most famous 19th-century socialite. Born in 1827 to a wealthy Kentucky family, Sallie became a national icon for her beauty, boldness, and defiance of social norms. Sallie navigated dramatic shifts in fortune during and after the Civil War with resilience and charm. Read more about the Kentucky socialite from book reviewer Linda LaPinta on page 5.

The Pack Horse Librarians have long been a fascination for people around the world. On page 12, Rebecca L. Brothers tells us about two Kentucky authors and a playwright—Kim Michele Richardson, Heather Henson, and Holly Hepp Galván—who are keeping the memory of those courageous individuals who delivered books to the most remote parts of Kentucky alive through novels, children's books, and even a play. And that's not all! They are also working to create exhibits featuring photos and artifacts, fundraising for historic markers, and establishing reading initiatives in the spirit of the Pack Horse Librarians.

Constantine Rafinesque, a Transylvania University professor and polymath, was known for ambitious publishing ventures, but he lacked resources to complete them. Transylvania's Dr. Jeremy Paden shares a rare hand-drawn map found in Transylvania's archives that reveals Rafinesque's belief in a pre-flood America composed of islands and linked to Atlantis. Learn more beginning on page 20.

Inspired by his father—a successful journalist and TV scriptwriter—Morgan Atkinson pursued storytelling through film rather than Hollywood screenwriting. Since the mid-1980s, he has produced over 20 documentaries for KET and PBS, focusing on Kentucky history, spirituality, and community life. Atkinson's career reflects a lifelong commitment to telling meaningful stories rooted in Kentucky heritage. Read more about his work on page 27.

Lastly, Georgia Green Stamper reflects on her family farm in Owen County, Kentucky—a place shaped by Eagle Creek and steeped in generations of history. When Stamper's grandson chose the farm for his wedding, plans quickly spiraled into challenges: electrical rewiring, septic repairs, a photographer's illness, and even a fire destroying linens. Turn to page 31 for a story of family connection, resilience, and joy, likening love to light—enduring across time and generations.

For the first time since its launch in 1994, *Kentucky Humanities* cannot arrive in your mailbox. Due to April 2025 cuts to National Endowment for the Humanities funding, we're bringing these Kentucky stories to you online instead. While the format has changed, our mission has not—and that's thanks to you. Your support keeps Kentucky's voices strong and ensures we can continue *Telling Kentucky's Story*.



Bill Goodman  
Executive Director  
Kentucky Humanities

A handwritten signature of Bill Goodman in blue ink.



## A Celebration of Reading & Writing

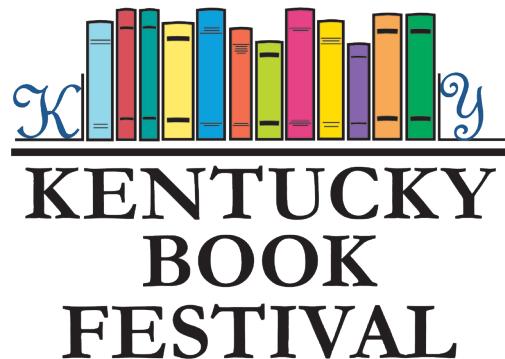
On Saturday, November 1, 2025, Kentucky Humanities returned to Joseph-Beth Booksellers for the 44th annual Kentucky Book Festival, also marking our fifth year with the independent bookseller as a partner. This year, in addition to a full day of activities on Saturday, we hosted events every evening leading up to the festival.

We started the week strong with our annual literary trivia event, Books & Brews, once again returning to Goodwood at Lexington Green. Participants made up 18 teams competing for three cash prizes.

We continued on Tuesday with a special event celebrating Wendell Berry's new novel in the Port William series, *Marce Catlett: The Force of A Story*. Four renowned Kentucky authors (Crystal Wilkinson, Richard Taylor, Robert Gipe, and George Ella Lyon) read from the novel with a visual background of footage from the Port Royal area (the inspiration for the fictional Port William) shot by local filmmaker David Neal and photos of Wendell Berry and friends taken by the late James Baker Hall.

On Wednesday, we hosted a conversation between *New York Times* best-selling authors Gwenda Bond and Silas House about his latest novel, a thriller written as S.D. House, *Dead Man Blues*.

Thursday brought Martha Barnette and Grant Barrett from the national public radio show and podcast, *A Way With Words*, for a live version of the linguistic and rhetoric question and answer which has made their show so successful.



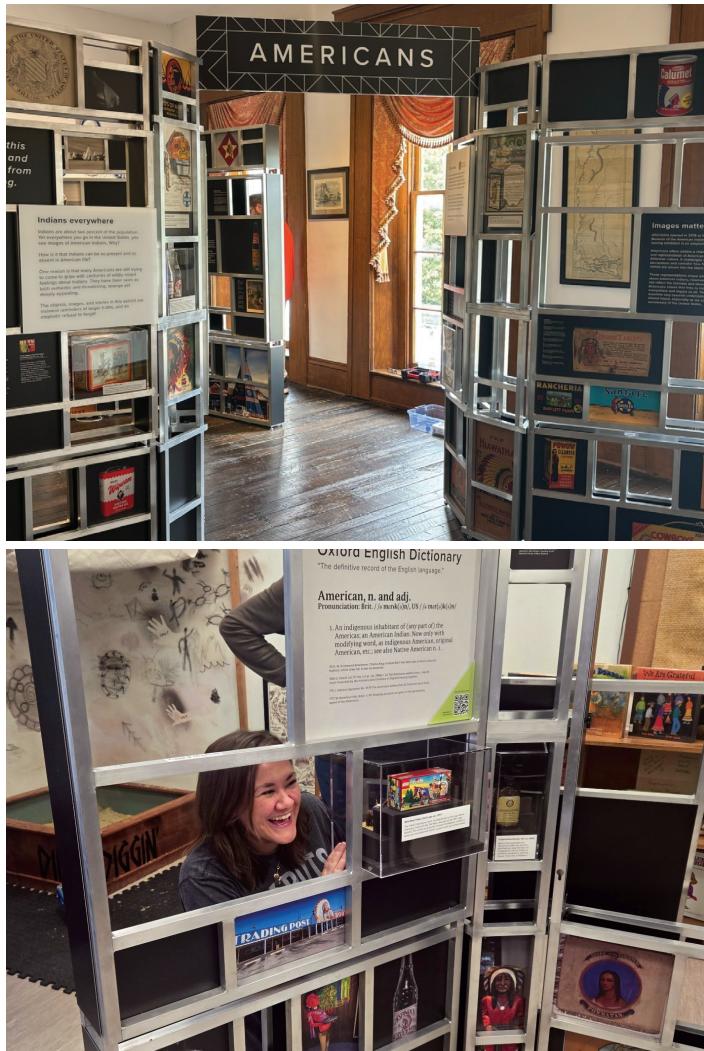
During the day on Friday, current Kentucky Poet Laureate Kathleen Driskell and author Andrew Shaffer visited students in Fayette and Nelson counties, respectively, as part of our Kentucky Humanities at the Schools program. As it was Halloween, Driskell talked about folklore with a high school creative writing class, while Shaffer shared his book, *Mothman's Happy Cryptid Halloween*, with elementary school students. Later that evening, well-known Kentucky folksinger and host of *WoodSongs Old-Time Radio Hour*, Michael Johnathon talked with Barry Mazor about the influence and legacy of the Everly Brothers and Mazor's new biography on the brothers, *Blood Harmony*.

On Festival Saturday, we welcomed more than 140 authors and over 5,000 visitors to Joseph-Beth Booksellers. In addition to meeting a favorite author and buying signed books, participants could choose from a variety of activities for all ages. Adults could attend discussions and programs across three stages on the upper level, while children could choose between on-going story times, illustration workshops, face painting, and craft stations. We distributed over 400 vouchers for free books to children 14 years of age and younger. Several authors from the events of Festival Week joined us again on Saturday along with Gretchen Rubin, Jessica Whitehead, Susan Reigler, James Nicholson, Sarah Landenwicht, T. J. Markert, Christina Dotson, Matt Goldman, Amanda Driscoll, Susan Mills, Shawn Pryor, Mariama Lockington, and Jamie D'Amato, to name a few.

We are thankful for our myriad of sponsors and partners who make the festival possible: Kentucky Tourism, Arts, and Heritage Cabinet; Hardscrabble; the University of Kentucky; Kentucky Community & Technical College System (KCTCS); Kosair for Kids; Spalding University Nasland-Mann School of Writing; James Baker Hall Foundation; Wilden & Thompson Associates Merrill Lynch; City of Lexington; JustFundKY; LexArts; Bank of the Bluegrass; KU/LG&E; Central Bank; VisitLex; Joseph-Beth Booksellers, *Kentucky Monthly*; WKYT; WEKU; RadioLex; Goodwood; Audio Visual Techniques; Bryant's Rent-All; and Wildcat Moving.



## The Smithsonian is in Kentucky!



The latest Smithsonian Museum on Main Street exhibit, *Americans*, has begun its tour across Kentucky. The exhibit opened on August 23rd at the River Discovery Center in Paducah.

Based on a major exhibition at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) in Washington, D.C., *Americans* explores the complex and intertwined history shared by American Indians and the broader American public. Although American Indians make up less than 1% of the U.S. population, their imagery is pervasive—from commercial branding and sports mascots to Western films and place names like states, cities, and even military equipment such as the Tomahawk missile. The exhibit highlights four key historical events—the Trail of Tears, the Battle of Little Bighorn, Thanksgiving, and the life of Pocahontas—examining how each has been remembered, contested, and interpreted, and why they continue to resonate today.

In Paducah, the exhibit drew nearly 2,000 visitors, including close to 1,000 students from McCracken, Marshall, Carlisle, Lyon, and Caldwell counties. The River Discovery Center collaborated with local businesses and organizations to enhance the experience, offering additional programming such as a screening of *Big Medicine: York Outdoors*.

River Discovery Center Education Director Russell Orr shared, “The number of visitors and school trips has been absolutely unprecedented. We are having field trips almost every day of the week, and some on weekends. This is our third Smithsonian exhibit. None of them have generated results like this.”

### Tour Schedule

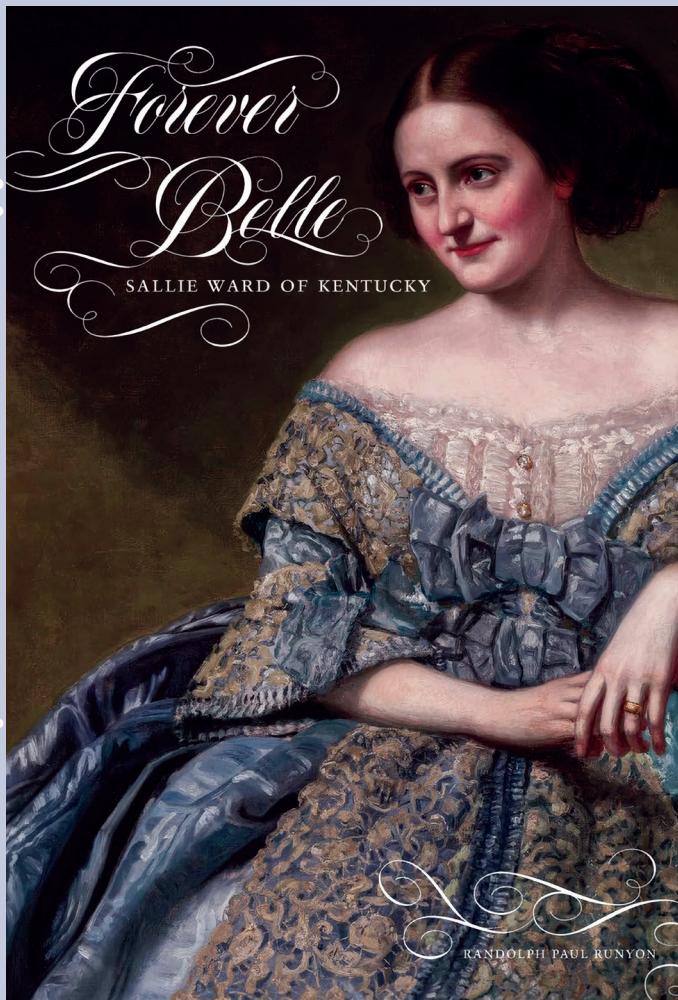
August 23, 2025–September 27, 2025  
 October 4, 2025–November 15, 2025  
 November 22, 2025–January 3, 2026  
 January 10, 2026–February 21, 2026  
 February 28, 2026–April 11, 2026  
 April 18, 2026–May 23, 2026  
 May 30, 2026–July 5, 2026

River Discovery Center  
 Muhlenberg County Public Library  
 Hickman County Memorial Library  
 Henderson County Public Library  
 Carroll County Public Library  
 Woodford County Library  
 Highlands Museum & Discovery Center

Paducah  
 Greenville  
 Clinton  
 Henderson  
 Carrollton  
 Versailles  
 Ashland

*Special thanks to the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet for their support in moving the exhibit throughout the Commonwealth.*



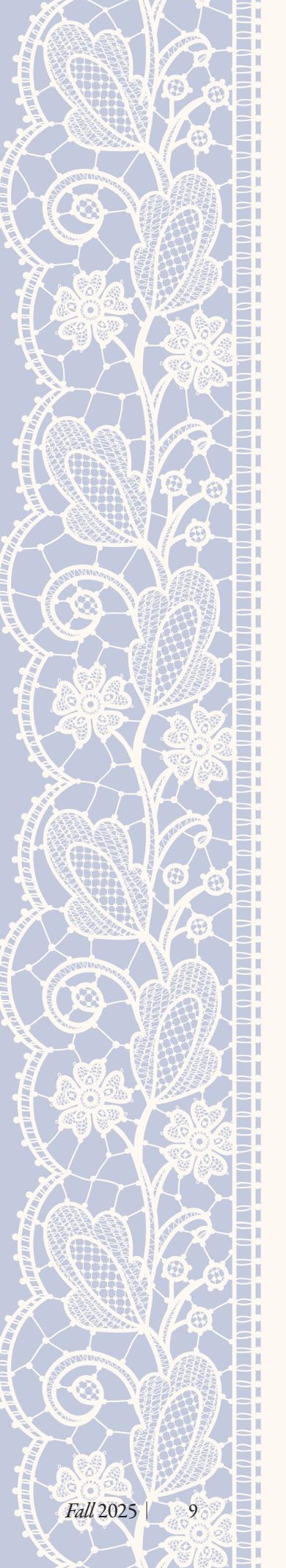


## Reviewed by Linda Elisabeth LaPinta

**R**andolph Paul Runyon, noted writer and professor emeritus of French at Miami University of Ohio, has published a riveting biography of Louisville's own Sallie Ward Lawrence Hunt Armstrong Downs, the nation's most notorious 19th-century belle. As her string of surnames belies, Sallie's reputation as a serial bride, coupled with her notoriety as a dramatic, striking intellectual and physical presence, sealed her stature not only in Kentucky but throughout the nation where, in her own era, Sallie Ward served as a household synonym for any bejeweled beauty sufficiently confident to speak her mind and mesmerize an audience. However, as is the case with all dynamic personalities displaying perplexing, even paradoxical, complexity, Sallie's signature bold command of rooms and situations paralleled her equally stunning kindnesses.

Runyon begins, "Sallie Ward was a charmer. Her beauty inspired poems and duels. Born to wealth in 1827, she used it to advantage, ordering expensive clothes from abroad, setting new standards in fashion and, to the outrage of some, wearing rouge. She knew how to dominate the news and did so for decades on a national scale, from early triumphs and a scandalous divorce to renewed social prestige and prosperous marriages. Newspaper readers and acquaintances alike found her endlessly fascinating, not least because she was able to retain her beauty, or the illusion of it, to the end, which came in 1896."

Born to Emily Flournoy, a well-to-do and commanding Georgetown, Kentucky, native of Huguenot descent, and Colonel Robert Johnson Ward, a planter, attorney, and speaker of the Assembly of Kentucky, who made his fortune in the mercantile business, Sallie and her six siblings grew up privileged in their Louisville mansion on the corner of Second and Walnut Streets, assured of dazzling futures if they played by society's rules. Strong-willed personalities coupled with arrogance and the economic and social calamities that befell many Kentucky gentry following the Civil War caused several of Sallie's siblings to struggle as adults. But Sallie's ability to soldier on and adapt to change by transforming necessary downsizing into chic, new trends served her well.



Perhaps her hometown public first took note of Sallie when, in or about 1845, she reportedly rode a horse through Louisville's Market House, "upsetting fruits and vegetables and sending sellers and buyers fleeing for safety." Another unproven rumor of the era had Sallie "riding up the front steps of the prominent Louisville hotel known as the Galt House and into the lobby, whirling her horse about and making him bow to the startled guests." Then there was the occasion when, as Runyon writes, "Sallie and a friend disguised themselves as beggars and 'so played upon the credulity of her parents that she prevailed on them to give her a goodly sum of money.'" Another such opportunity for Sallie to make mischief presented itself while she attended a private Philadelphia girls' school from which she graduated in 1844. After donning men's clothes, she walked into a females-only room in the school, causing a bevy of startled classmates to scatter until she revealed her identity.

More such incidents certainly occurred, but Sallie's piece de resistance on the international front took place a few years following her first marriage, an ill-fated union with the strait-laced and hard-of-hearing T. Bigelow Lawrence, a man of great wealth, little humor, and an abhorrence for Sallie's propensity for face painting. Although their liaison cinched a significant business bond between the bride and groom's fathers, the pair were polar opposites who were raised in such distinctly different social milieus that they never saw eye to eye. After spending the first three months following their wedding in Sallie's parents' house, they settled in Bigelow's parents' Boston home or, perhaps, at a nearby domicile, Tremont House. Biglow's mother, a proper, strait-laced Bostonian, expressed her shock at Sallie's extravagantly expansive and expensive wardrobe, as well as her disgust at Sallie's rouge. So, too, did she anger at Sallie's keeping to her own, as opposed to her family's, meal schedule, especially when Sallie kept guests waiting. What's more, the mothers-in-law corresponded, Bigelow's mother expressing her irritations with Sallie, sentiments that fueled the flames of Sallie's mother's ire. On several occasions, Sallie's father, on the verge of starting for Boston to bring his daughter back home, received last-minute stays from Sallie. But matters failed to improve, and one evening when the Lawrences hosted a "grand ball" in honor of Sallie, she horrified the guests by appearing in short pants which, for many years, were assumed to be bloomers. Runyon, though, points out that Dr. Amelia Bloomer's famous short pants did not become popular until 1851 and so could not have been the type of trousers Sallie wore in 1849. Runyon writes that Sallie's garb of choice on that fateful night may have been Turkish pantalets.

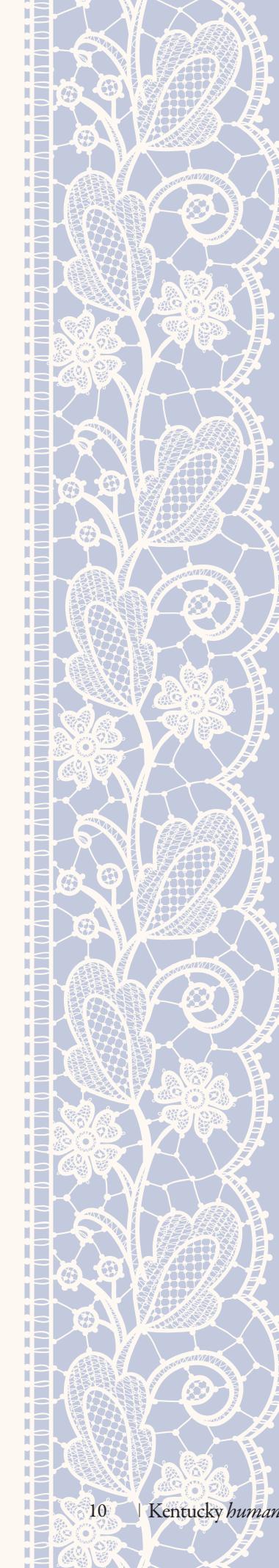
At any rate, Sallie's shocker of a coming out to Boston society proved the calamity that preceded the last straw. A short time later, during the couple's outing at a seaside hotel, Bigelow asked Sallie to join him in a carriage ride. She declined, claiming she was not dressed warmly enough for the weather, so he went alone. While Sallie awaited his return, two female acquaintances accompanied by a man came by in another carriage, this one covered to keep out the cold. The man, who may have been a besotted suitor from Louisville rumored to have followed Sallie to Boston, convinced her to ride with them. At any rate, during their ride the incensed Bigelow spotted her, and problems ensued. That night Bigelow locked Sallie in her room and assaulted her, after which she telegraphed her father to come fetch her. Newspapers nationwide ran the story, and a rare-for-the-era, very public divorce, which Sallie survived quite well, ensued.

Runyon introduces Sallie's second husband, Robert Pearson Hunt, the child of Kentucky's first millionaire, as "a suitor with the courage and financial independence to defy social and religious norms marrying a divorcee and make her his bride." Educated in Lexington at Transylvania University's medical school, Hunt sought further surgical training in France. Upon returning to the States during the Mexican-American War, he enlisted in the Second Regiment of the Kentucky Foot Volunteers, and in 1846 the US Congress approved his appointment as a military surgeon, a role in which he served with great distinction. However, upon his return to civilian life, the well-heeled physician did not seek to practice medicine but rather enjoyed the life of a lettered man of independent wealth at his 186-acre estate eight miles from Louisville on the Ohio River.

Sallie and Robert married at her parents' home on October 1, 1851. Once again, Sallie's vivacious personality won her beau, who declared "he would rather go to hell with Sallie Ward than go to heaven without her."

The Hunts' first two children died; John Wesley Hunt, their third child, became Sallie's sole surviving offspring. In 1853 Robert put his property on the market. In the same year, Sallie's father invested in an elegant steamboat he named the *Robert J. Ward*. The vessel transported well-heeled passengers on six-day trips from Louisville to New Orleans every month. At first all went well, but as the Civil War approached, and as the advent of trains eclipsed the popularity of steamboats, Ward's once-vast fortune dwindled.

By the end of 1860, Robert, Sallie's husband, exhibited anxiety on the day South Carolina seceded from the



Union, a sure sign that “cotton trade on which his income depended was in dire peril.” The author points out that although most Louisvillians were pro-Union, the lion’s share of the upper class leaned Secessionist. Since Sallie “wanted to keep on good terms with her friends,” she kept her comments concerning politics ambiguous.

Her father’s fortunes continued to fall, and in spring 1862 he had to sell his New Orleans mansion. In 1863, Sallie’s husband returned to work as an army surgeon. The following year, he “was placed in charge of the Lee Hospital in Columbus, Georgia. In the same year, Sallie’s father passed away.

Sallie’s life changed too. Although she, her son, John, and her mother continued to live in their Louisville home, “General Buell, a Union military leader, made his headquarters in the Ward mansion.”

In 1865, Sallie’s husband was free to return home from the battlefields. But for almost another year he failed to do so, no doubt because his wife had refused to visit him not once but twice. For a brief time, he resided in Memphis where he advertised for patients. Yet by the following May Robert returned to Sallie in Louisville where the couple decided to gamble for good fortune by leasing and running a mineral springs resort hotel, Bedford Springs in Trimble County. Sadly, their venture proved a short-lived, single season. In July of the same year, Hunt opened a medical practice on Second Street in Louisville.

Although what transpired between the pair is not known, Sallie once again stirred scandal by moving with their son to a furnished apartment above a barber shop on Jefferson Street. Although the public expressed horror at the socialite’s compromised circumstances, Runyon quotes a *Louisville Courier* article of the era as stating, “It took a great deal more than the opinions of the citizens of Louisville, or of the United States, for that matter, to make Sallie Ward change her mind when once she had determined anything. So, there she lived, and there she was visited by some of the best people of the city.”

Sallie remained in her apartment for a decade, but “by January 1867 Robert had left again” to relocate to Chicago where he hoped to launch another new medical practice. But the following summer Robert’s plans exploded when, writes Runyon, “he fell—or jumped—from his second-story office window.” A Chicago witness claimed Hunt was intoxicated when he fell, and “a Louisville acquaintance” implied the surgeon suffered what today would be called post-traumatic stress disorder from the war.

Despite her greatly diminished estate, Sallie maintained her collection of jewels until, that is, her diamonds along with those of numerous other Louisville blue bloods, were stolen from Falls City Tobacco Bank safe deposit boxes. But Louisville’s notorious belle carried on, wedding “her third husband, Venerando Politza Armstrong, in 1876,” a union that, once again, shocked Sallie’s social set because she married “into trade, and the pig trade at that.” Yet Sallie’s third spouse, “a very wealthy man,” altered his will to make her his primary inheritor. In “less than a year into the marriage,” Venerando took ill and died, and Sallie moved into the Galt House Hotel.

Sallie wed one last time in April 1885, on this occasion to clothier and real estate mogul George F. Downs, who, with Sallie, “enjoyed an active social life for the next decade.”

In *Forever Belle*, Runyon expertly navigates the compelling life of a woman whose courage and tenacity alternately balanced and contradicted her seeming superficiality. Despite her storied life that spanned the lion’s share of the 19th century, the legends concerning Sallie that have kept her vivacious reputation alive throughout the 20th into the 21st century far outnumber written accounts of her life. Although she indicated she would write her autobiography, she never did. Numerous letters written by Sallie’s contemporaries, as well as newspaper notices of her exploits, exist. Runyon has examined and weighed them all. What’s more, he has widened the scope of his project to portray the Ward family. In this way the reader gleans far more about Sallie by learning about her intimates’ personalities and their interactions with others, both inside and outside the family. Runyon writes, “The desire to take a lingering look at such a fascinating woman motivated this undertaking.” The biography that stems from the author’s “lingering look” paints a clear and poignant portrait of a much-celebrated Kentucky icon.

## About the Reviewer

Professor Linda Elisabeth LaPinta has authored hundreds of magazine and newspaper articles, journal articles, and book reviews, as well as five books published by the University Press of Kentucky. Her most recent book, *Kentucky Quilts and Quiltmakers: Three Centuries of Creativity, Community, and Commerce*, is the recipient of the 2024 Emily Toth Award for best single work in women’s studies, and her 1998 essay collection, *Savory Memories* (published under L. Elisabeth Beattie), is Kentucky Humanities’ 2025 Kentucky Reads selection.

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# Horses to Horsepower

## Why the World is Hungry for the Story of Kentucky's Pack Horse Librarians

By Rebecca L. Brothers



Photo by Rebecca L. Brothers

*Author Kim Michele Richardson spoke with Rachel Platt at an event honoring Kentucky's Pack Horse Librarians at the Frazier Museum in Louisville on May 18, 2025.*

The Frazier Museum in Louisville was buzzing with the sound of living history. On May 18, 2025, more than 200 people packed into the large event space at the sold-out event honoring the Pack Horse Librarians of the Great Depression, brave women (and a few men) who delivered books by horse or mule as part of a Works Project Administration (WPA) effort. Many attendees came to see best-selling author Kim Michele Richardson, author of *The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek* and the sequel, *The Book Woman's Daughter*, as well as a picture book, *Junia: The Book Mule of Troublesome Creek*.



Photo by Rebecca L. Brothers



Photo courtesy of the Frazier Museum

Left: *Janice Kreider with a portrait of her mother, Irene Crisp. Irene was the youngest Pack Horse Librarian, delivering books at only 15 years old. While her family struggled, the \$28 per month salary paid by the WPA's Pack Horse Library Project saved Irene's family.*

Right: *Kim Michele Richardson's popular The Book Woman series has shined a light on the Pack Horse Librarians who delivered books through grueling conditions.*

As I entered the space, Carmichael's Bookstore employees were selling their last copies of *Junia*. "People just cannot get enough of these Pack Horse Librarian stories," one bookseller said.

He is right. The full house at the Frazier Museum represented only a small portion of Richardson's fans. Her books have sold millions of copies and have been translated into more than 16 languages, according to the author's website. Richardson's fiercely loyal and tender portrayal of Kentucky's people, "my people," she always calls them, have brought a much-needed insider's perspective. For far too long, Kentucky has been the butt of jokes and ridicule, a victim of stereotyping in the worst ways. Richardson's complex stories and deep research on the Packhorse Librarians in Kentucky have shown the world that Kentucky has always led the way for innovation in the spread of literacy.

People traveled from all over the country, as far away as California to attend the event. One mother-daughter pair came because they'd been reading Richardson's books during the mother's long illness as a way to have something else to discuss than sickness.

I chatted with the book-toting attendees about why they loved *The Book Woman* series so much. Most readers pointed to the joy of discovering a piece of nearly forgotten women's history. One reader said, "Once you know that a story like that was almost forgotten, you're kind of frantic to find out more before the memories all disappear."

*Smithsonian Magazine* History Correspondent Eliza McGraw agrees. McGraw writes about famous horses throughout history in her articles and books. When I asked her why people all over

the world are so interested in the Packhorse Librarians, she said, "People are eager to unforget, especially when it comes to the contributions women have made in the past. We know history is full of gaps. And there's a huge crossover between horse girls and book women. Girls who love to read tend to love horses, too. This story has both."

Readers are impressed by the tenacity of these particular girls and their mounts. The Pack Horse Librarians delivered books through treacherous mountains in grueling conditions, letting "neither rain nor sleet nor snow, just like the postman," keep them from their task, as Richardson pointed out. The young women rode through freezing creek beds that served as the only roads in many remote areas, endured snake bites and threats from both man and beast.

Yes, the book women were captivating, but so is Richardson's prose. Many readers say *The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek* was just a damn good story and so is the sequel. They're buying the picture book *Junia* for their kids and grandkids. Her characters feel like family.

In fact, family was the theme of the day. The children, grandchildren, and even the nieces of some of the book women (and one man) told their stories, both to the audience and their seatmates.

"My granny was a Pack Horse Librarian. She rode almost 100 miles a week."

"My great-uncle heard he could go to high school at Berea from something the book woman said..."

These memories made the event feel like a homecoming. The

love for these brave women and the love of books was palpable.

It's not hard to see why. The Pack Horse Librarians project is a prime example of the ingenuity of Kentuckians. While many sources credit Eleanor Roosevelt for the idea, Richardson wants to set the record straight: "The Kentucky women originally implemented the library project in 1913 in Eastern Kentucky with monies donated from local coal baron, John C. Mayo. Unfortunately, a year later it expired after their benefactor passed. However, it would become wildly successful when the Kentucky women revived it through the WPA. Little did anyone realize the program would boost education and economic opportunity, raise literacy rates and become a precursor to Johnson's 1964 War on Poverty and inspire other programs like Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. (I'm extremely humbled to have Dolly as my biggest fan and that she was inspired by my book.)"

She went on to say, "I think it's extremely important that the Eastern Kentucky people, our women be credited for creating the initiative as that is historically accurate."

The difficulty of the Pack Horse Librarians' job is also impressive as Richardson explains, "One of the most striking things that stood out to me during my now 10 years of researching the Pack Horse Library project is: Roosevelt's New Deal promised to provide employment and pay the poor Kentucky women \$28 a month to ride those dangerous paths and deliver books, but they would not provide any mounts, books or places to house books. So, our clever librarians rented their mounts, became authors, and began creating scrapbooks for their patrons until they could solicit cast off books from big cities, PTA penny funds and women's groups. Then they pleaded with the communities to lend their nooks and crannies located in the back of post offices,

chapels, general stores, and other buildings to house books."

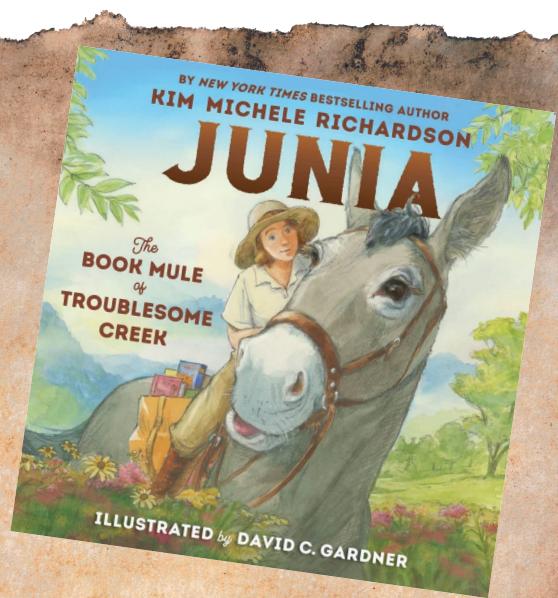
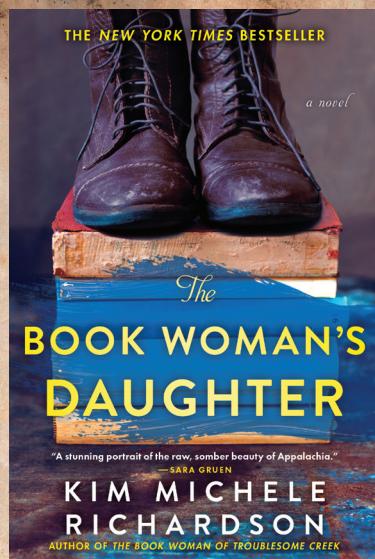
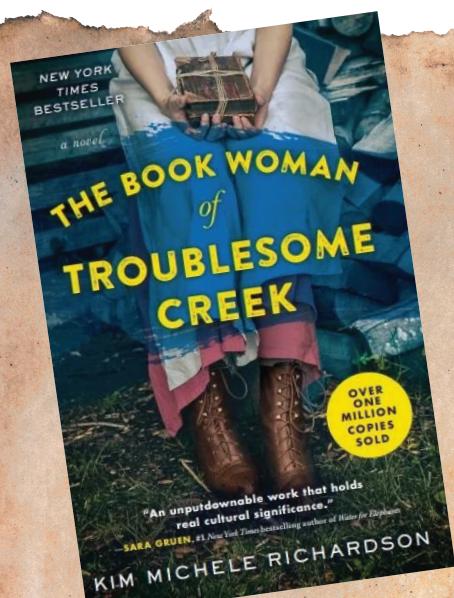
The idea of making something from nothing, of solving unsolvable problems, strikes a chord with readers. Making sure Kentuckians get credit for that work goes beyond personal pride for Richardson. The program would never have succeeded if it had been developed and carried out by people from outside the region.

The patrons in Eastern Kentucky had been uncomfortable with the idea of taking charity from the start. It's a good thing the librarians were local women who understood the mountain ways and knew how to win the hearts of people who had so often been ridiculed by the outside world. The book women were from here. They were Kentuckians who knew what their neighbors needed.

Richardson is one of those knowing neighbors today. She provides authentic stories about Kentucky. When I asked her readers why they are so drawn to her books, "grit" is the word that keeps coming up. "You'll never find a braver or more tenacious person than a Kentucky woman," Richardson always says.

It seems the world agrees. Her books have shown millions of readers the complexities of Kentucky's past in an honest light that never stoops to stereotype. Richardson will tell you right off the bat that she's "fiercely protective of my people, Kentuckians," and she won't stand for anyone belittling her neighbors, both present and those of the past. When the world laughed at literacy rates in our state, Richardson schooled them in her elegant and gritty stories: reading is a luxury when you spend every waking moment breaking your back on the farm, in the mines, or drawing water from a well. Richardson shows in patient detail how the Pack Horse Librarians brought books that became a respite from that hard life. She does so by shining the spotlight on Pack Horse

*Author Kim Michele Richardson has spent 10 years researching the Pack Horse Librarians. Her study has resulted in three books, The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek, The Book Woman's Daughter, and her children's book, Junia: The Book Mule of Troublesome Creek.*



Librarians and moonlight schoolteachers who taught adults to read after dark when their daytime toil was done.

At the Frazier event, Director of Mission for the Museum Rachel Platt asked Richardson to explain a little about the context for the WPA project. Images of remote cabins and steep mountain-sides flashed across a screen behind them. Richardson reminded the audience that the Depression was a time of violence in Eastern Kentucky, with the coal mine wars destroying families. Reading became more than a needed distraction in those times. Platt said of the project, "It was a lifeline, wasn't it? These books and the book women."

Richardson nodded. "The women brought health and agricultural news, fashion magazines, quilting patterns, recipes. Reading became a lifeline to a better education and an easier future."

That lifeline was also extended to the librarians themselves. A striking photo popped up of a book woman named Irene with her mule. She was the youngest Pack Horse Librarian in the project, starting at just 15 years old.

A woman in the audience leaped to her feet. Janice Kreider, retired educator, proudly announced, "That's my mother. Irene Crisp."

Janice's eyes were wet before she was through that sentence. She described her mother's early life; one so hard and tragic it would be worthy of its own novel. Irene was one of nine children. Her dad died when she was 13. Her mother, Janice's grandmother, was pregnant again at the time and was battling tuberculosis. Irene had to drop out of school to scramble up enough food to feed everyone. The WPA Pack Horse Library Project and the \$28 a month salary saved them.

Janice swallowed hard. "My mother had true grit her whole life. She passed away at 91. Everyone that knew her remembered her."

Janice honored her mother's legacy in her own career as an

educator: "Our school was recognized as the best for our reading skills by the Library Association. We did so well!"

Richardson explained the origin of the photograph: a man came to photograph the Pack Horse Librarians for the WPA one day but refused to take Irene's picture because she didn't have a pay stub. Richardson says she wants to right that wrong by giving Janice a place to share her mother's incredible story. As Rachel Platt said, "For Kim Michele, it's never about herself. It's always about Kentuckians, about uplifting everyone."

Richardson is not the only Kentucky author keeping the memory of these brave librarians alive. Danville, Kentucky, native Heather Henson, daughter of Pioneer Playhouse founders Colonel Eben and Charlotte Henson, now serves as managing director of the summer outdoor theater staple. Before this role, she was an editor in New York for Harper Collins for many years. Her books for children and young adults include critically acclaimed *Wrecked*, a retelling of *The Tempest* set in modern-day Kentucky. Her picture book *Lift Your Lamp a Little Higher* about Stephen Bishop, a formerly enslaved man who became a famous Mammoth Cave tour guide, garnered several awards.

And most importantly to this slice of Kentucky history, Henson's 2008 picture book, *That Book Woman*, was the first fiction book for children about the Pack Horse Librarians. Richardson credited this beautifully written story as one of her inspirations for her novels. "I showed it to my agent," Richardson said. "I told her this story was important, and Heather's work is important."

Indeed, it is. Henson's story centers on a young farm boy named Cal who thinks he has no time for reading. His sister reads all the time and neglects her chores. Cal prides himself on helping the family in real ways, like herding the sheep with his Pa.

Kentucky author Heather Henson worked with playwright Holly Hepp Galván to turn her children's picture book *That Book Woman* into a play performed at Pioneer Playhouse in Danville, Kentucky.

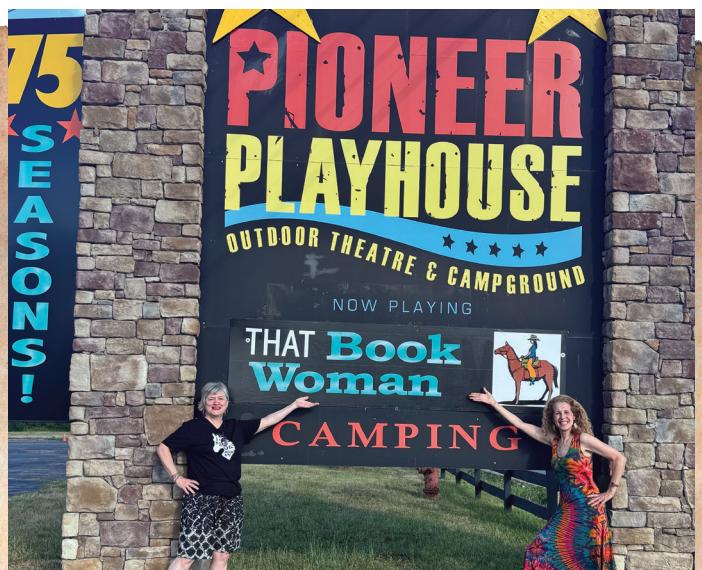


Photo courtesy of Heather Henson



Photos by Kirk Schlea, courtesy of Pioneer Playhouse



*Heather Henson's book That Book Woman was published in 2008. It has sold more than 380,000 copies and is part of the curriculum in South Korean Schools. But Henson always knew she wanted a bigger audience for the story. The play based on her book, written by playwright Holly Hepp Galván, magnified the story of the Pack Horse Librarians, honoring their grit, tenacity, and dedication to delivering books to people in the most rural areas of Kentucky.*

Henson knew the prejudices and stereotypes associated with Kentucky, especially when it comes to education.

"You cannot talk about the book women without addressing the need for their services," Henson said. "You can't just skate over illiteracy in this state during the Great Depression." Modern readers, especially those without ties to rural America, just don't understand that survival on a subsistence farm, like much of Appalachia during that time, meant reading was seen as a waste of precious daylight, a sin. Henson said, "I wanted to give readers some empathy for that perspective."

"But once people in those remote areas had access to books through the Pack Horse Librarians, attitudes changed. Book women helped them learn to love reading. My book is a love letter to librarians," Henson added. "My mother was a reader and took me to the library often. She was my first book woman."

Henson is tapping into an important part of the appeal for the Pack Horse Librarians. Those of us lucky enough to have had our own version of book women (or men) as parents or teachers or librarians know how important that relationship is to a love of reading and education. We know the power of getting the right story to the right kid.

Cal's book woman does finally win him over by proving her mettle. As he watches her ride away from his cabin in near-blizzard conditions, books in her saddle bags for other neighbors, he thinks, "It's not the horse alone, that's brave, I reckon, but the rider, too. And all at once I yearn to know what makes that Book Woman risk catching cold, or worse."

Sales of *That Book Woman* continue to be good: more than

380,000 copies in 25 printings, "which is kind of unheard of for a book that came out so long ago, 2008," Henson explained. "The book is taught all around the country now, in large part, I know, because of Kim Michele's series. *That Book Woman* is a part of the curriculum in South Korean schools every year. I think that's just incredible, that people that far away want to know this story and have chosen my book to do it."

Henson said, "I always felt that the story was bigger than just a picture book. I always wanted a wider audience because I knew people would grab onto this story. It just grabs people."

Longtime friend and playwright Holly Hepp Galván thought so, too, and she kept telling Henson *That Book Woman* would translate well to the stage. "When I read Heather's book, I knew everyone needs to know about these incredible women." And although Henson likes to keep her writing life and Playhouse lives separate, she finally agreed.

Respect for the tenacity and grit of the Pack Horse Librarians is evident in Galván's script. To paint a complete picture for the audience, Galván added a storyline about Cal's father, John. His family farm is being threatened by an unscrupulous coal company.

The documents he's received from the coal company are written in a complicated, elitist legalese meant to confound and confuse. John is at a loss. He's another example of an intelligent man without the tools to do the work. The book woman who brings fairy tales to his children and quilt patterns to his mother has something she thinks might help. She has a dictionary in her saddlebags.



Photos courtesy of the Boyle County Public Library



Heather Henson and Holly Hepp Galván worked with the Boyle County Public Library to create an exhibit featuring photographs and artifacts from the Pack Horse Librarians to celebrate the opening of the play, *That Book Woman*. The exhibit included a saddlebag like those carried by the Pack Horse Librarians. Kim Michele Richardson is working with the Frazier Museum to create an exhibit honoring the Pack Horse Librarians in Louisville.

Galván wants to be clear: though access to books through the Pack Horse Librarians did provide useful knowledge like this example, she wanted to make sure this wasn't the only message.

Galván gives Cal some of the best lines of the play in the final scene. The boy who was slow to warm to books pulls out a collection of poetry by Kentucky author James Still and quotes:

*Earth loved more than any earth, stand firm, hold fast;  
Trees burdened with leaf and bird, root deep, grow tall.*

The roots planted by the book women have never stopped growing. The WPA discontinued the project when World War II began, but that wasn't the end of their story. Today, their legacy can be seen all over our state.

Richardson's initiative, Courthouses Reading Across Kentucky & Beyond, is a perfect example.

Along with a group of other women she calls her "Book Angels," Richardson works to put books in Free Little Libraries in courthouses, places where so much grief and worry reside. When I asked one of those Angels, Jan Mattingly-Weintraub, if she saw the parallel to the work the book women in the WPA did, she said, "I never thought of it like that. We are just sharing resources, using the horsepower of my car instead of a pack horse so we can move a lot more books. Kentucky is full of book-loving people."

When members of the Indiana Court of Appeals and Supreme Court chose *The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek* for their book club, they invited Richardson to join in the chat. She agreed to come if they could make a book donation to the Louisville Courthouse library.

The Honorable Dana J. Kenworthy of the Court of Appeals of Indiana said, "[Richardson's] effort in Kentucky inspired us to launch parallel efforts in our state... [Judges] recognize the value of providing books in the courthouse setting. Visitors to courthouses are typically there for reasons that are stressful and life-challenging—testifying as victim, defending against criminal charges, or attending a hearing to determine child custody. It is our hope that courthouse libraries will provide some comfort. In life, every small kindness matters, particularly on dark days. Sharing books feeds human connection."

Richardson says often that the best part of this journey with *The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek* series has been the kindness the books have kindled: "...readers have been inspired to start book mobiles during the height of the pandemic, and others who wrote they are now buying books for book deserts, and yet more who are donating regularly to food banks, and those who raise money for underserved libraries, and more."

Those readers are indeed doing much, much more.

Mary Sullivan, an employee at Metro United Way of Louisville, and her boss, Mary Grissom, started a Free Little Library program in Louisville years ago. They've received tens of thousands of dollars and thousands of books from the community to support the effort. Eagle Scouts and a local carpenters' union maintain the libraries.

When Sullivan's sister gave her a copy of *The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek* with a card that said, "You're continuing the legacy of [the Pack Horse Librarians]," she was touched. She said she read the books eagerly and was thrilled to feel like a part of the legacy.

In Richardson's upcoming novel, *The Mountains We Call Home*, she will feature this information in her notes section: "1949, Mary Belknap Gray of Louisville, Kentucky, purchased her first surplus army ambulance and had it converted into a bookmobile and then donated the unusual vehicle to a library...The organizers expected only a few books would be donated, instead it was over a million. Thanks to the tenacity and generosity of prominent Louisvillians such as Mary Belknap Gray, Mary Bingham, Harry Schacter, and Barry Lenihan, a statewide campaign for motorized bookmobiles was launched."

Today, librarians across Kentucky are driving bookmobiles around their counties, still on the mission to give access to services in remote or underserved areas. But they aren't just passing out books.

John H. Cain, Director of the Kentucky Kids Eat program, says his organization is partnering with local libraries all over Kentucky to bring food to kids and their families. "A partnership with libraries is a natural extension of our mission. One in seven Kentuckians faces chronic hunger. Chronic hunger leads to chronic illness which can lead to a decline for the whole family. If we can keep kids fed, they do better in school. They get a better future for themselves, and we can break the cycle."

Modern-day bookmobile librarians bring their patrons everything from seeds to fresh produce along their routes.

Rae Church, Bookmobile Librarian for Taylor County, says her library partners with the local school district to keep kids fed throughout the summer. Church brings information to parents along her route on ways they can access meals through USDA programs, along with non-perishable items and bottled water. Church visits all the usual places you'd expect, like daycares and neighborhoods. She

also stops at a local park, just like an ice cream truck.

"Regular visitors of the bookmobile are eager to revisit me to return their books and grab a snack when they stop by!"

A friendly face, books, nourishment for body and soul. The book women and men of yesterday and today really are sustaining us in troubled times. "Love thy librarian" might be a good commandment to adopt.

Heather Henson and Holly Galván worked with the Boyle County Public Library to create an exhibit full of photographs and artifacts from the Pack Horse Librarians to celebrate the opening of the play, *That Book Woman*. Richardson is working with the Frazier Museum in Louisville to create a Pack Horse Librarian exhibit. "People ask me all the time, 'Where can I go in Kentucky to honor these women?' We just didn't have anything. So, I'm working hard to change that." She also successfully lobbied for an historic marker to be placed in Leslie County, the site of the first Pack Horse Library outpost. The tireless work of our Kentucky neighbors is finally in the spotlight.

As Junia the Book Mule says in Richardson's picture book, "Tomorrow will be another long hard day with different patrons and other adventures. But tonight, we are two tired yet happy hearts. Grateful for each other and for our readers, who love our books."

## About the Author

After 20 years of teaching, Rebecca Brothers now writes essays, poems, short stories, and novels for adults and children. She incorporates the history and folklore of her native Kentucky in her work for a contemporary audience.

Left: Artist Brandon Long designed a horse that sits outside the Pioneer Playhouse celebrating Heather Henson's book *That Book Woman*.

Right: Heather Henson and Holly Hepp Galván discuss their play and the exhibit at the Boyle County Public Library.



Photo courtesy of Heather Henson



Photo courtesy of the Boyle County Public Library



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# America Before the Floods

## *Rafinesque and Atlantic Theories of Creation*

By Dr. Jeremy Paden

When Constantine Rafinesque, Transylvania University's well-known and infamous professor of botany, outlined the four schools of American geology in an 1832 article published in his *Atlantic Journal and Friend of Knowledge*, he made no mention of the Scottish geologist Charles Lyell. Two years before, in 1830, Lyell had published the first volume of his *Principles of Geology: Being an Attempt to Explain the Former Changes of the Earth's Surface, by Reference to Causes Now in Operation*, a book that shook the foundations of how Europeans understood earth formation and that clearly marks a before and after. Lyell eschewed catastrophism for uniformitarianism and set the course for modern geology. The physical world, he argued, is what it is today because of slow changes over time that operate on the land in accordance with constant physical laws. Lyell's ideas refuted the widely held belief of catastrophism or that the world was formed, both geologically and biologically, by events like Noah's flood. As with all such watershed moments, the before is comprised of a series of insights and discoveries that inform the author's revolutionary mind. Lyell relied on, refined, and popularized the work of two other Scottish geologists, James Hutton and John Playfair. Likewise, the landscape of ideas after such moments is never immediately settled.

That Rafinesque does not mention Lyell's now seminal text, a work Charles Darwin took with him on his *Beagle* trip, is quite understandable. Not only does the adoption of novel views take time, the spread of ideas among the educated in the early to



mid-19th century, though certainly faster than when the Copernican Revolution shook Western science and religion, was still nowhere near as fast as today. Furthermore, even had he known of Lyell's book, the purpose of his article was to position himself as a leader in the field of geology. The brief list of schools that Rafinesque outlines serves to present his school as the best. He developed his ideas on geology, he states, between 1819 and

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*Above: Constantine Samuel Rafinesque was born on October 22, 1783, in Galata, a suburb of Constantinople in Turkey. In 1819, Rafinesque arrived in Lexington, at Transylvania University where he had been hired as a professor of botany and natural science.*

1820 as he prepared lectures in natural history while in Lexington, Kentucky.

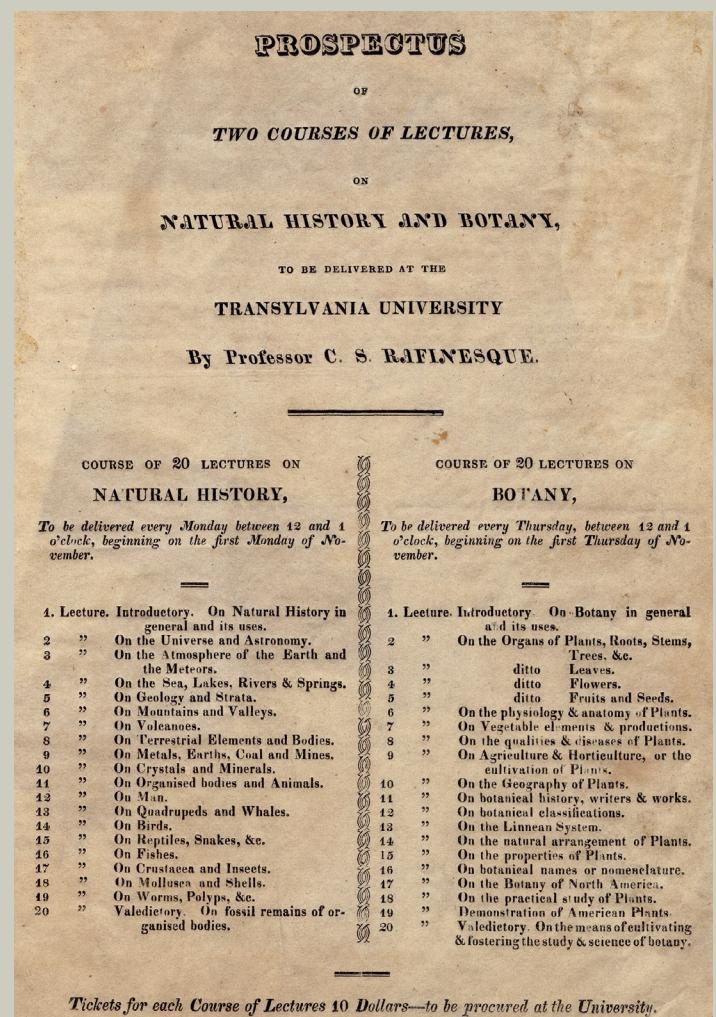
The French polymath, who while in Lexington had a reputation for loving dance and for disappearing on trips to observe biota, collect specimens, and visit Indian mounds, does dedicate a few sentences to English geology, which he quickly dismisses as too solipsistic. Curiously, the British Isles were the innovative center of the science of geology, due to institutional reasons (the existence of the Royal Society and the role that geologists played in coal mining) and accidents of geography (the complicated geological history of the Isles that have resulted in the presence of a wide variety of different geological strata and features in a relatively small area). Nothing visualizes this complicated history better than the revolutionary cartography of the self-educated son of a blacksmith and canal digger, William Smith, who in 1817, after almost two decades of work, published the first geological map of any nation.

Rafinesque, ever the entrepreneur and self-promoter, started a series of publishing ventures, of journals and serialized books: *Western Minerva or American Annals of Knowledge and Literature*, 1820, *Atlantic Journal and Friend of Knowledge*, 1832, *The American Nations; or Outlines of A National History; of the Ancient and Modern Nations of North and South America*, 1836. His model was Alexander von Humboldt, the renowned German inspector of mines, who was the scientific superstar of the age, and whose writings inspired scientists, like Darwin, and artists, like Fredric Edwin Church, the Hudson School River landscape artist who traveled to South America and painted breathtaking epic canvases of Andean volcanoes. Each of Rafinesque's new ventures promised more volumes that never materialized. As the alternate title of *The American Nations* states, he wanted to produce something systematic and integrative of all the sciences with accompanying maps and illustrations, "the whole history of the earth and mankind in the western hemisphere; the philosophy of American history; the annals, traditions, civilization, languages, &c., of all the American nations, tribes, empires, and states." The front matter of his *Atlantic Journal* contains an advertisement for another never-finished book, his *Iconography and Illustrations*, which was to contain "30 volumes in folio, with 3000 figures and maps." Part 2 was to cover Geography. Part 3, Geology, each, he affirmed, would contain 200 maps, among other images. The prohibitive cost of producing image plates and the dearth of subscribers meant an inability to finance any of the many promised volumes. Rafinesque, unlike Humboldt who relied on inherited wealth, could not personally finance the publication of his projects. Nor did he have the business sense or network that helped his Kentucky rival John James Audubon finance his *Birds of America*.

Should one only read the printed material, it would seem that the maps he alludes to are fiction. Yet tucked away in a gray box in Transylvania University's Special Collections is a hand-drawn

map of Central and South America that includes a portion of the Southeastern United States and the westernmost parts of Africa. It is titled, *Carte del Amerique Meridionale avant les Deluges par C. S. Rafinesque, or Map of South America before the Floods* by C. S. Rafinesque. It is the only such map in Transylvania's collection; no other information accompanies it, and his various biographers neither mention it nor mention similar maps in their treatment of him.

The landmass of the Western Hemisphere before the Floods, this map suggests, was a series of islands: the southern U.S. is marked as I. Apalache, the isthmus between North and South America as I. Panama, and the island of Hispaniola as I. Hayti. The Amazon Basin is called the *Mer de Maragnun*, or the *Marañón Sea*, and the plains of northern Argentina (the Pampas and the Chaco region) are the *Golfe Paraná*. As the legend on the lower right-hand side of the map notes, the solid lines demarcate historical coastlines, while the dotted lines denote the present-day, 19th-century coastline. Along with names that correspond to the high places of the American continents, off the coast of



*The prospectus for Professor Rafinesque's course on Natural History and Botany at Transylvania University.*



Photo courtesy of Special Collections & Archives, Gay/Carrick Library, Transylvania University.

Africa is a land called *Petite Atlantide*, or *Small Atlantis*; the Western Hemisphere, in turn, is *Grande Atlantide*, or *Large Atlantis*; and the great bulge of West Africa is *Atlantes*. As this map and his writings show, Rafinesque believed the origin of America to be the mythical Atlantis.

Wondering about the land and the origin of the people of the Americas has a long history in European and Euro-American letters. Much of this thought is bound up with myth and fiction. When the Spanish first sent priests to Mexico soon after the fall of Tenochtitlan, 12 Franciscan friars were commissioned in hopes that the conversion of what some thought to be the lost tribe of Israel would bring about the end times. A little over 100 years later, Roger Williams, the London-born puritan and founder of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantation, in his *A Key into the Language of America*, a primer on the Narragansett language, after a discussion of the possible origin of the First Peoples, notes

that he thinks that the language shares much in common with Hebrew. He goes on to list various customs he thinks are shared by Jews and Native Americans. The persistence of the lost tribe of Israel as the origin of the First Peoples of America is present in Joseph Smith's *Book of Mormon*.

*Above: Found in Transylvania University's Special Collections is a hand-drawn map of Central and South America that includes a portion of the Southeastern United States and the westernmost parts of Africa. It is titled, Carte del Amerique Meridionale avant les Deluges par C. S. Rafinesque, or Map of South America before the Floods by C. S. Rafinesque. It is the only such map in Transylvania's collection.*

Rafinesque discredited the Lost Tribe theory, and instead thought the people came to the Americas across the Bering Strait or island-hopped from Europe, using Atlantis as a stop. Almost half a century after a Rafinesque's *The American Nations*, the Minnesota politician and celebrated crackpot Ignatius Donnelly published in 1881 his very popular *Atlantis: The Antediluvian World*, a book that takes Plato's parable as historical fact. Donnelly even mentions Rafinesque and cites an extensive passage from *The American Nations* on the role cataclysms played in forming America. Even as late as 1925 serious thinkers, like the Mexican philosopher José Vasconcelos, were still proposing Atlantis as the origin of America's First Peoples.

The 19th century, as Kevin Young notes in his book *Bunk: The Rise of Hoaxes, Humbugs, Plagiarists, Phonies, Post-Facts and Fake News*, was filled with claptrap. Rafinesque, while erudite and a prolific producer of Latinate names for Kentucky flora and fauna, was very much a showman and an entrepreneur. It seems that at the end of his life, this polymath with the undisciplined mind of an autodidactic became a plagiarist and a humbug artist looking for fame and remuneration. While he saw himself as one chosen to "[raise] the veil that was thrown over the annals of" the Americas (*The American Nations*, 15), he is now more remembered as the perpetrator of the Walam Olum archeological hoax. Something that has overshadowed his flashes of insight regarding how to decipher Mayan glyphs or his defense of the Bering Strait as a means of peopling the Americas.

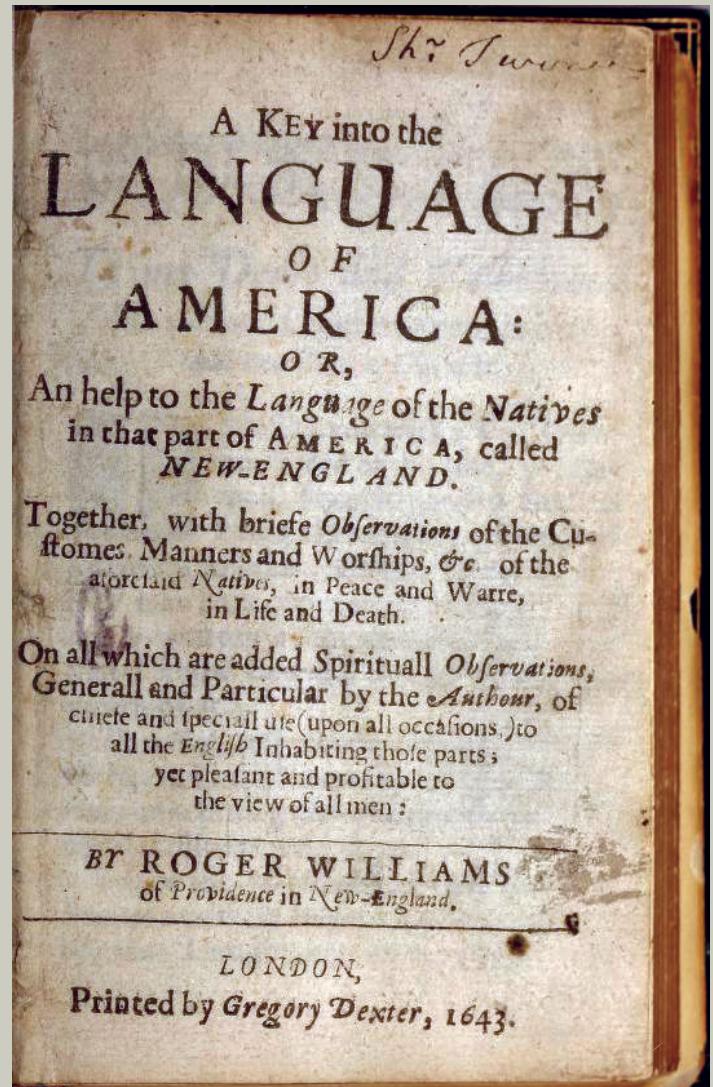
One of the difficulties with determining Rafinesque's status as a hoaxter was the lack of his collection of antiquarian artifacts. Fortunately, as to his hand-drawn map, Rafinesque's 1836 book *The American Nations* sheds light on it. In Chapter 2, as he outlines the four periods of American geography, he mentions a series of maps of America he hopes to publish that correspond to his four main divisions of American geology:

- 1-Primitive Geography of America
- 2-Ancient ditto, or between 1400 and 1500
- 3-Modern Colonial Geography
- 4-Modern Independent Geography (50)

He states that a subsequent publication (presumably one of the six volumes of *The American Nations*, or in a newly mentioned work, his *Illustrations of the Ancient Geography of America*) will reproduce these maps. *Illustrations* was never published, and only two of the promised six volumes of *The American Nations* saw print.

At the end of chapter 1 of *The American Nations*, Rafinesque traces out a slightly different periodization. There is ancient history, which ends with Columbus, and modern history, which runs from 1492 on. Ancient history, in turn, is divided into three periods, rather than two:

1. *Antidiluvian period*, beginning at the creation, about 6690 years before Columbus according to the Tols, and ending with the last cataclysm of Peleg, about 3788 years before Columbus.



*Roger Williams, author of A Key into the Language of America, was an English clergyman and founder of Rhode Island. His book, published in 1643, was the first comprehensive study of a Native American language in English, focusing on the Narragansett language and providing invaluable insight into the culture and daily life of the Narragansett people.*

2. *Doubtful period*, from that epocha [sic] till the reform of Tol astronomy, 1612 years before Columbus ...

3. *Certain period*, from 1612 [before Columbus] till Columbus' arrival in 1492. (34-35)

The *Doubtful period* and the *Certain period* are further divided into lesser epochs.

Chapter 3, titled "Cataclysms," goes on to lay out what these various antediluvian, cataclysmic periods looked like. His discussion describes the map in Transylvania's special collections.

*The American hemisphere had then probably two great islands in the North and South, with many smaller islands between them, in the tropical sea: the Alleghany and Atlantis forming two others in the east, and many*

others studding the wo polar regions... I have endeavored to express this first configuration of America in my two maps of North and South America; when the Ocean was yet about 5000 feet higher than it is actually. Whether this cataclysm was contemporaneous throughout, or by successive throes must be ascertained by Geogony... This was the fourth period of terrestrial events in this hemisphere; but the first of terrestrial separate existence. (79-80)

Rafinesque's understanding of pre-Columbian American geography and geogony is scattered through several works: *Ancient History; or Annals of Kentucky* (1824), *Atlantic Journal*, *The American Nations*, and *The Ancient Monuments of North and South America* (1838). These accounts mix pre-Lyell geological notions with early chapters of Genesis, and they bring together European travel accounts to the Americas, Plato's myth of Atlantis, and Native American cosmologies. A belief in long, unmeasured amounts of time where seabeds rise around a cluster of large islands to form the bulk of the American landmass coincides with an affirmation of an 8,000-year-old earth. This particular mélange of ideas was quite typical in 19th-century American antiquarian thought. Atlantis, Noah's Flood, and cataclysms associated with an obscure reference to the

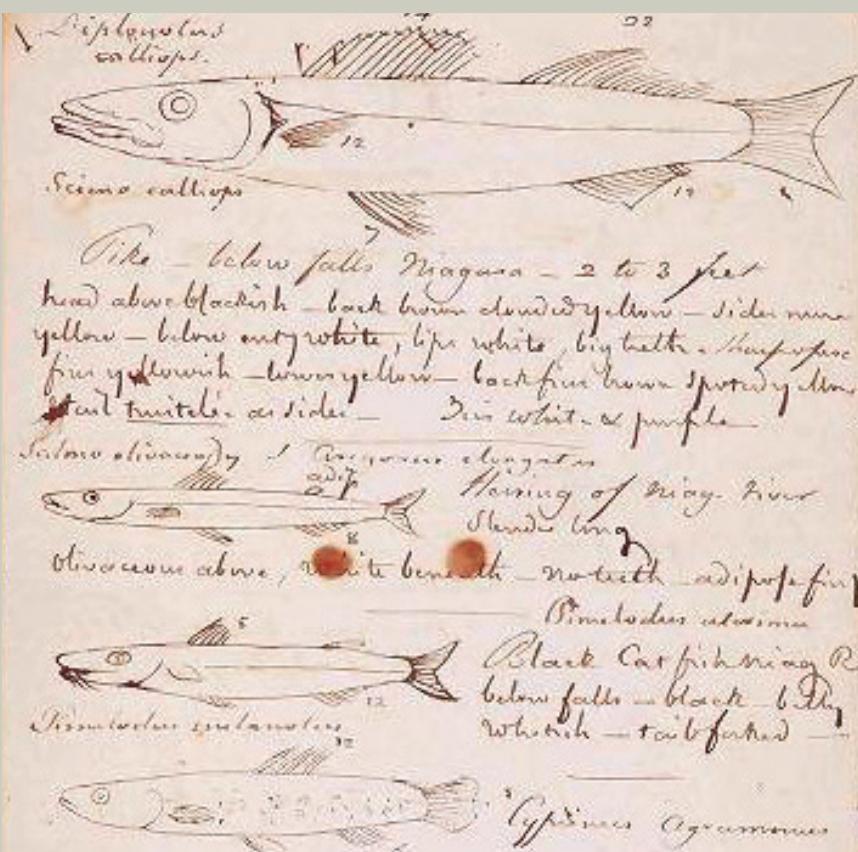
division of the earth during the days of Peleg in Genesis 10 and I Chronicles 1 are common explanations for American geogony in the 19th century. Such ideas only began to wane once continental drift moved from a fringe theory to accepted fact in the 1960s due to the work of geologists and oceanographic cartographers like Marie Tharp, who plotted out the Mid-Atlantic Ridge in the 1950s. It should be noted that today most geologists do not follow a strict and rigid uniformitarianism; for example, catastrophes of various kinds, like the Chicxulub meteor strike near the modern-day Yucatán Peninsula are recognized as having had a drastic effect on the landscape.

The Atlantean notions of Donnelly and Rafinesque are seen as crackpot. In part this is because our knowledge of geology was reformed by Lyell's seminal text and subsequent developments in the discipline. The idiosyncratic histories of geogony produced by natural historians trying to reconcile the textual authority of the Bible and Plato with observations of the natural world that contradict the textual authority make them seem a little off kilter. In the case of Rafinesque, given his role in disseminating the Walam Olum account, it is easy to merge this act of humbuggery with his outdated geological views and fully write him off as outlandish or unstable, regardless of whether or not he afforded the cosmologies of First Peoples an equally important weight as biblical accounts in his attempts to understand the migrations of humans in the western hemisphere.

What makes the map "America Before the Floods" interesting is the very myths that we now recognize to be erroneous. It is a hand-drawn artifact that gives us a picture of a moment in time before the advent of the new, reigning paradigm. The advance of knowledge is messy. It is hard to let go of preconceived notions to see the world as it is. Ironically, this visual artifact of American natural history encapsulates the provisional nature of knowledge and the need to be humble as we sift through the past and try to understand the present.

## About the Author

Born in Milan, Italy, Jeremy Paden was raised in various southern states of the United States of America, in Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and the Dominican Republic. He completed his Ph.D. in Spanish at Emory University and is Professor of Spanish and Latin American Literature as well as the Chair of the Humanities Division at Transylvania University. He is also on faculty at Spalding University's Low-Residency MFA. He is the author of various books of poetry in English and Spanish.



This drawing can be found in a notebook titled "Notebooks containing a journal kept on Rafinesque's trip from Lexington, Kentucky, to Philadelphia, 1826: notes on his travel to New York and Massachusetts, 1827; a list of his travels, 1819-1830; natural history notes; and drawings, especially of fishes."



# ***Championing Community in the Commonwealth***

***Morgan Atkinson's Documentaries  
Explore the Capacity of Connection***

**By Linda Elisabeth LaPinta**

**A**s a young boy raised on Bonnycastle Avenue in the heart of Louisville's Highlands neighborhood, Morgan Cook Atkinson boasted a ready yet reluctant role model in his dad, B.M. "Buddy" Atkinson, a beloved *Louisville Times* journalist whose success extended to Hollywood. That his father wrote scripts for such popular 1960s sitcoms and variety shows as *The Beverly Hillbillies*, *Petticoat Junction*, *The Love Boat*, and *The Tim Conway Comedy Hour* proved beyond cool for a school kid whose classmates watched celebrated actors recite lines his dad had written. But what proved even better as Morgan grew into a teenager and—from time to time—hitchhiked across town was the recognition he received once he gave drivers his name. Their exclamation, "You're Buddy Atkinson's son!" always made for a red-letter day in the validation department. What's more, by watching and listening to his dad, Morgan began to envision writing as an attainable vocation. However, when he asked his father whether he wanted to pen the Great American Novel, Buddy's reply never wavered. "No!" he insisted. "I want to get hired, write my piece, and be done with it!"

Although Morgan has always wondered whether his father's adamant declarations were entirely forthcoming, Morgan also knew the value of making a living, and, as a burgeoning idealist, the goal of accruing wealth for its own sake held little appeal. In fact, while an undergraduate at the University of Kentucky (UK), he could not decide whether to major in history, journalism, or English, all subjects that sparked his interest, until his advisor admonished, "There's only one way out for you; you must major in general studies!" And so, he did.

It is also important to note, out of seeming chaos can come order or, as the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche pointed out, "One must still have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star." While still in college, Morgan, whose interests spanned too many subjects to choose just one, purchased a Super 8 camera with which he and friends made short movies he now deems "sophomoric." He aspired to direct megahit feature films in the style of Martin Scorsese and Francis Ford Coppola until, after graduating from UK, he spent a year in Los Angeles and realized that there are so many moving parts in creating feature films that manufacturing blockbusters would not fit his personality.

However, upon returning to the Commonwealth, Morgan reconnected with friends he had made at UK, a group of like-minded men and women to whom he refers as the foundational team of Appalshop, a filmmaking, educational, and Appalachian history-preserving organization in Whitesburg. Morgan watched what his UK friend Elizabeth Barrett and her husband, Herb E. Smith, were constructing and said to himself, "That's worthwhile. I'd like to film a variation on that theme."

With a vision in place, Morgan's chaos dissipated. Having multiple passions can drive a writer's desire to create, and Morgan soon proved that undecided does not mean uncommitted. Morgan the documentary maker showed signs of soaring. He would soon be a rising star. "I started out just writing, he says, "and it turned out that I was doing all the work of shaping a story and developing a script prior to hiring a video crew that made most of the money. That's when I decided to not only write stories but also do my own videography or work with videographers with whom I had already worked a great deal."

In the mid-1980s, a little more than a decade after graduating from UK, Morgan began writing and producing his first documentaries. *A Change in Order*, his 1987 film focused on the Ursuline sisters of Louisville, tracing the order of Roman Catholic nuns who came to Louisville from Germany in 1858 to teach immigrant Catholic children. It was the first of Morgan's films to air on Kentucky Educational Television (KET). In 1965 the order had 597 members; by 1987, their number had been reduced to 324 by sisters passing away or leaving the religious life. Sister Ursula O'Conner, age 98 when Morgan made the film, comments, "I love living in community." More poignantly, the sisters ask one another, "Who will be left to turn out the lights?" Morgan credits the order for the many Louisville communities they founded,

among them Ursuline and Sacred Heart academies, and he is currently writing and producing a follow-up film to capture this order's final gifts to their own, as well as to the larger, community.

Since 1987, Morgan has written and produced more than 20 documentaries, all set in whole or in part in Kentucky, for state and national audiences who view his work on KET or the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS). He captures history not only in words but also on film which preserves pictures that are moving in every sense of the word. "Perhaps my best-known documentary nationally is my 2008 *Soul Searching: The Journey of Thomas Merton*. The vast majority of my programs have been Kentucky-centered, but Merton, who had and continues to have a wide national and international audience, has been my biggest hit in terms of attention and financial remuneration. In 2010, from my documentary about Merton came my film *Uncommon Vision: The Life and Times of John Howard Griffin*, who wrote *Black Like Me*. Merton and Griffin had been very friendly to one another."

In 2002, Morgan had written and produced a thematic forerunner to *Soul Searching*. *Gethsemani* tells the story of the Bardstown-area abbey community to which Merton belonged. Morgan agrees that community is among his strongest themes. He states, "While I was growing up, my mother would take us to church. My dad was not anti-spiritual, but he was definitely anti-institutional religion. I was raised a Presbyterian and had a happy experience at Highland Presbyterian Church. But then, like many teens, I went through a period in which I proudly said I was an atheist. However, when I came back to Louisville from Los Angeles, I didn't feel as though I had achieved anything, and I was looking for something that seemed a little more structured and reflective of the values I wanted to bring into my own life. Reading Thomas Merton inspired me. Before then, when I had tried to read spiritual writings, the experience had been like encountering white noise. But reading Merton, who had himself been a very unconventional monk who had come to his religious life from a decidedly secular existence to which I could relate, was different. So, I went to Gethsemani for a weekend, an experience that had a real impact on me. I became a Roman Catholic. In all, I have made five films on aspects of the monastic life."

Although Catholic communities with Kentucky connections comprise a fair number of Morgan's subjects to date, his documentaries focus on other types and varying aspects of social networks as well. *A Way of Life* (2000) is Morgan's homage to Kentucky basketball, *Our Library* (2018) reveals the gifts of reading that enhance and enlighten the Louisville community. *Falls City* (1994) may be as much a study of human nature as it is a tale of a city's identity crisis as its citizens consider whether the world's tallest fountain that erupted from the Ohio River in the form of a fleur de lis for a decade between 1988 and 1998 helped or hindered Louisvillians' self-image. *Metro, Act One* (2003) details as much of Louisville's city and county merger as Morgan could

capture in the merger's first iteration. He planned to revisit the subject every few years, but, he says, "Sometimes you have to let stories breathe and develop or let your own consciousness about your subject develop, while you are in the midst of creating."

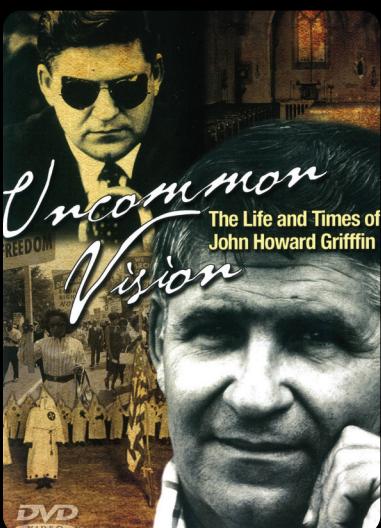
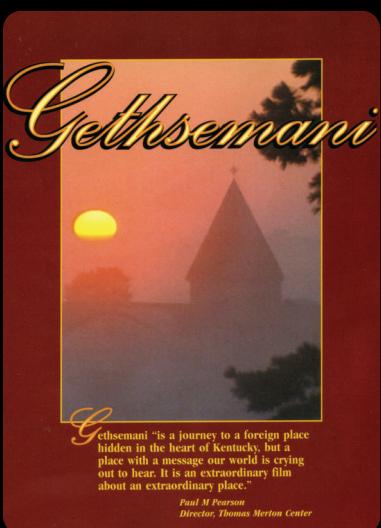
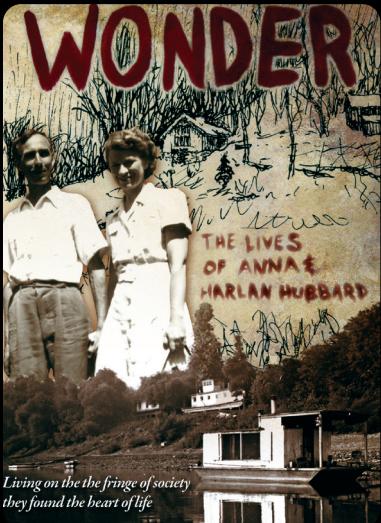
*Wonder: The Lives of Anna and Harlan Hubbard* (2012) tells the tale of a cozy community of two, a couple renowned for their simple yet richly rewarding lifestyle. Harlan painted. He and Anna both played music. They raised their food, chopped their wood, and lived first in a shanty boat before building a simple home on the banks of the Ohio. They read to each other the classics of the mid-20th-century canon, and they welcomed visitors as did the monks of Gethsemani and the Ursuline nuns. In whole and in part, Morgan's documentaries highlight the ache for community, as well as the art and act of creating it.

Morgan's most recent film, *This is the Ohio: Life Death Rebirth of the Beautiful River* (2024), recounts the historical and current significance of this huge and vastly important river to the people, ecology, and economy of the six states that share its water. *Beargrass, The Creek in Our Backyard* (2017) argues the necessity of tending to a community's natural resources.

*Statues, This is What We Stand For?* (2021) details the controversy borne of maintaining or taking down statues of subjects that have fallen from grace. Louisvillian Steve Hurst, an award-winning editor working at Videobred, Inc., who has known Morgan for 35 years and edited eight of his documentaries, references *Statues* and Morgan's other films when he comments, "I think Morgan's treatment of his topics ensure his documentaries long viewing lives. He does not force a heavy-handed viewpoint on his topics but allows the viewer to come to a conclusion. He mostly asks questions. Sometimes, in the end, there is no clear answer. And, most of all, there is a good deal of humor in his perspective." Hurst continues, "A common string through Morgan's films is that his topics are personal. They all touch on places and things within his environment and his heart. Morgan's films don't tell you how to feel, but they do make you want to do something to improve the situation. They often reveal quirky little stories from history that have long been forgotten, such as *Louisville's Falls Fountain* and *Derby Clock*. These little tales can make you realize that you can make a difference by being adventurous like Anna and Harlan Hubbard, supporting your local library, or working to keep our water supply clean."

Morgan says of Hurst, "The ways in which Steve has improved my documentaries are legion. We work well together. It is as if you took your notes and rough draft of a story you want to tell and give them to another writer, who makes them better than what you had imagined, but that writer also keeps your story within the bounds of what you hoped to convey. Steve knows where I am trying to go with something, and he shapes his development in that direction. A lot of times, seeing his edited version of my work is like a revelation. It's like opening a package on Christmas Day."

Hurst adds, "Morgan develops his stories as production and editing go along. He has a structure or outline in mind, but it is not rigid. Usually, I will work for six months on various segments, not knowing how they will fit together. Then, at some point, transitions develop that place the story in a somewhat logical order. Often, toward the end of a film, an earlier tale will be referenced, and we will pursue a new fork in the story. Sometimes, outside forces change things. For instance, Morgan began writing *Statues* in early 2018. The topic was public art and how different communities reacted to it. John Castleman's statue in Louisville's Cherokee Triangle was kind of the central figure in Louisville, but there was a lot





of rumbling around the country regarding Confederate States of America monuments. We were about to wrap up the editing in mid-2020 when Black Lives Matter and the Breonna Taylor protests occurred. So, the theme of the film shifted somewhat and became more visceral. None of the facts in the film were proven wrong, but the conclusion became more open ended, so Morgan had to rewrite the last third of the film."

Hurst also notes, "In many of his documentaries, Morgan writes the narrator in his voice then he selects a voice-over artist. He stages community screenings of each of his films before their release, and he takes questions after these showings. The audiences' questions and comments are, a lot of the time, kind of astounding and insightful. Often, after listening to such feedback, Morgan and I are able to make some adjustments to clear up misunderstandings or clarify a few points."

Morgan assures his admirers that his capturing history and popular culture has proved profitable in every way except financially. "Unless you are Ken Burns or Alex Gibney," he says, "most people don't make money creating documentaries. That's why through so much of my working life my documentaries remained back-burner projects while I tried to make money and raise funds to write and produce my heart projects. For me, unless I really love a topic and am prepared to not keep track of my hours, making a documentary is like writing a novel. I know going in that the odds of this being financially lucrative are pretty long. My motivation has been to write documentaries I want to get out of myself and get out in the world in the hope that they find an audience."

Morgan's films have found not only an audience, but a following. He has received grants from Kentucky Humanities, turned to crowdfunding sources such as Kickstarter, and called upon like-minded philanthropists to help fund his documentaries. Meanwhile, he has forged a parallel career creating training and promotional videos, mostly for such nonprofit organizations in whose missions he believes, such as Dare to Care and Hosparus, for which he has also volunteered for as many as 40 years. More recently, the nonprofits Neighborhood House, Hildegard House, and Bringing Justice Home have also benefited from Morgan's desire to give back to his community through volunteering.

Morgan credits his wife, Barbara Sievert Atkinson, for her ongoing support and eternal patience as he follows his documentary-making dreams and sometimes even insists on filming footage while on family vacations. What's more,

he attributes his ability to pursue his vocation not only to Barbara's encouragement, but also to the love and support of his stepdaughter Kerry Novotny and her sons, Ben and Will; and his stepdaughter Shara Szott and her sons, Brayden and Cole.

Craig Cornwell, KET's former program director, who now serves as a KET programming consultant, states, "I always considered it a special day when I received Morgan Atkinson's latest documentary because he takes a spotlight to some aspect of Kentucky culture that you usually don't know about. Whether it is a person or a place, his profiles provide a unique look at the things we call home. Even with subjects about things long forgotten, he makes you understand their importance to our history and lives. KET's mission is to present stories about Kentucky's history and culture, and Morgan's documentaries, with the humanistic approach he takes with his subjects, have been the perfect way to tell those stories."

In 2022, Morgan won the Governor's Awards in the Arts Media Award from a leader he admires, Governor Andy Beshear. Morgan describes receiving that recognition as "a tremendous thrill, a validation."

But what motivates Morgan is neither financial rewards nor prestigious awards. He says, "People I have befriended through making my documentaries have become my colleagues. I have probably sacrificed some success as a producer in that I have fallen in love with my subjects, so I don't tell my stories in ways that might be more sensational." Indeed, he does not. Whether he is making a documentary about a fast friend who passed away, the musician Tim Krekel (*Live Music, A Tim Krekel Story*, 2009), or highlighting the life of a hero he never met (*Thomas Merton*), Morgan illuminates truths that encourage his audiences to think.

## About the Author

Dr. Linda Elisabeth LaPinta has authored hundreds of magazine and newspaper articles, journal articles, and book reviews, as well as five books published by the University Press of Kentucky. Her most recent book, *Kentucky Quilts and Quiltmakers: Three Centuries of Creativity, Community, and Commerce*, is the recipient of the Popular Culture Association's 2024 Emily Toth Award for best single work by one or more authors in women's studies, as well as an honorable mention from the Southeastern Library Association's Southern Books Competition Committee.

# The Wedding

By Georgia Green Stamper

Photo by Jeff Rogers Photography



*This is a story about a wedding, one fleeting moment in the history of a place. It is also a story about that place and the creek that shaped it, and about generations of human-kind who have loved the place. And so, before I can tell you about the wedding, I must tell you a little about all the rest.*

## The Place & The Creek

A million years before the Ohio River was born, before the glaciers froze, the wild and rushing waters of Eagle Creek carved out valleys and even an island in the swathe of the Outer Bluegrass that I call home. On the Owen County, Kentucky, land where I grew up, Eagle Creek created an enormous oxbow—a broad, circular racetrack-shaped “bottom” of fertile land surrounded by towering hills. All this, of course, occurred in Eagle Creek’s raucous youth, before it retreated to its present-day exhausted, timid boundary on the yon horizon.

## The People

Five to 12,000 years ago, prehistoric people occupied our Owen County farm. Historians give them various names, but I simply call them the Early Ones. I know they were here because my father and my grandfather routinely carried their Clovis point arrowheads back up to our farmhouse on the high hill when I was a child. They’d turned them up while plowing the tobacco fields in the ancient oxbow bottom down below. I have them, still, and from time to time I pull them out and touch them. I am neither an archeologist nor a geologist. Mine is only the reverent eye of a human being pondering upon the lives and handiwork of others who walked here on our farm near the beginning of time. I may donate them to a museum at my death, but for now, I selfishly hoard them, my tactile connection to the first people to know this land.

By the time Boone, Harrod, and their kin wandered through here thousands of years later in the 1700s, the Early Ones had evolved into a number of diverse “modern tribes” like the

Shawnee and Cherokee, who fought to stay here. I leave to others to tell those stories.

Though my family has been here on the creek almost 200 years, we would have to be called the Late-Late Ones. In the 1830s, when the cholera epidemic devastated Kentuckians a little farther south in Scott and Fayette counties, one of our people acquired a large amount of land along Eagle Creek to escape the disease. Soon, all his kin followed him to this mecca of pure, uncontaminated springs, including his son-in-law, my great-great-grandfather, Silas Hudson. My line stayed put, generation after generation, and in time, I inherited a chunk of their land on Eagle Creek, including the large bottom shaped like an oxbow and an old farmhouse on the high hill overlooking it.

I no longer live on the farm. I am old and prefer to sleep near hospitals and DoorDash. Charitably, I might be called a conservationist protecting rough, undeveloped land. In reality, I am but a placeholder in a long line of others who have fallen under the ancient spell of this piece of Kentucky.

## *The Wedding*

Although I think our farm is beautiful in its rolling, up-and-down Outer Bluegrass way, I resisted when our grandson and his fiancé approached me about having their wedding reception there. “We have a tight budget,” they said, “and want to have a simple, inexpensive, outdoor gathering at the farm.”

“But it’s a wild old place, and our barn is only a barn inhabited by cows and the memories of cured tobacco,” I argued. They

persisted, however, and since our grandson is the seventh generation of our people to know and love this land, I relented. I advised them to keep their guest list small and their plans, indeed, simple. If they did that, I reasoned, not too much could go wrong.

Ten months before the wedding: Their guest list ballooned like an inflatable at a tire dealership. And their emerging plans were obviously—well, I will merely say they looked puzzled when I described the menu at my wedding a half-century ago of only cake and lime sherbet punch. (And mints, I added. We also had mints.) I began to worry about what could go wrong.

Six months before the wedding: Everyone began to notice that the electric line sagged low over the only semi-level site for a wedding tent beside the farmhouse. From its uphill transformer in the barnyard on its path downhill to the farmhouse, the line had always swung low, but age and gravity now made it hang precariously like a fat man’s belt. “Can we bury it?” I asked. “Well, no,” said the electrician. “You have a cistern in the wrong place.” This was something going really wrong!

One month before the wedding: After much consultation, wringing of hands, and complicated scheduling, the electric line was moved to a transformer on a pole downhill behind the old house. This also required relocating where the new line entered the house. That’s when the electrician said, “A 1949 fuse box?? Are you kidding?” Yes, the old farmhouse had to be rewired. But surely nothing else could go wrong now.

Three weeks before the wedding: We had a septic tank crisis. I will spare you the details but envision digging up one whole side of the lawn at the farmhouse, plus a wide strip across the hayfield directly behind the tent site, and begging grass to grow. But surely nothing else could go wrong.



Photo by Jeff Rogers Photography

Two weeks before the wedding: The professional photographer was hospitalized with a medical crisis. We relied on generations of friendship to locate another. But surely nothing else.

One week before the wedding: The groom's father landed in the ER after nearly cutting off his finger while helping the groom ready the lawn for the big day. Not to be outdone, I fell through the attic floor and destroyed the kitchen ceiling at the farmhouse. Miraculously, I was only bruised, and a nearby saint dashed over and replaced the ceiling. But surely nothing ...

Five days before the wedding: An early morning fire at the rental emporium destroyed the bride's carefully chosen linens for the tables. Her "vision" having gone up in flames, she descended into tears and despair. Everything had now indeed gone wrong.

Four days before the wedding: The bride consented to a new "much-altered vision," and the groom's mother and I scurried to find a source to make it reality. But surely ...

The Wedding Day: And we were right. Absolutely nothing went wrong. The young couple filled the lawn with summer blossoms and wildflowers—and with happiness and love. Heaven gifted the bride and groom with a day of ideal weather, neither too hot, nor too cold, with nary a drop of rain, and delivered it with a gentle breeze. The spread of old trees over the yard beside the farmhouse—now minus the low-hanging electric wire—provided a natural canopy so beautiful that the bride and groom canceled the rented, commercial tent to save money. When evening came and the celebration began, the newlyweds glowed as brightly as the candles on the tables, the bride beautiful, the groom handsome. The guests laughed and made merry and danced barefoot on the grass under the stars on our Kentucky patch of Eden.

## The People & Place of *Aggin*

I'm not sure I believe in ghosts, but I'm pretty sure the Early Ones joined us that night of celebration at the old farm, and maybe a few Shawnees. Of course, all my great-great-grandparents and my parents and grandparents were there. It was quite a party! We agreed that we could not predict the future for the young couple, and certainly, we know all that might go wrong in a lifetime, as it can in planning a wedding. But if they carry with them the persistence and endurance that has forever defined this ancient place and the people who have loved it, along with the joy of this night—oh, never forget joy—that should be enough to anchor them wherever they wander.

*"... love, I remembered, is more like light than sound. It keeps moving though time and space long after it leaves its point of origin, nurturing one generation after another ..."*

— from *Small Acreages*

## About the Author

Georgia Green Stamper is a Kentucky writer whose published works include *Butter in the Morning* and *You Can Go Anywhere*. Her newest book, *Small Acreages*, available from Shadelandhouse Modern Press, was Longlisted for the 2023 PENAmerica Art of the Essay Award.



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