

SUMMER 2022

THE HISTORY CURRENT

News & highlights from the Bossier Parish Libraries History Center

Preserving the history and memories of Bossier Parish, Louisiana



Diving into Summertime

BY MARISA RICHARDSON

Summer is fast approaching, bringing the return of Summer Experience for Bossier Parish Libraries! History Center programming will follow along with this year's theme of "Oceans of Possibilities" - although we are going to be swimming through the lakes, rivers, and bayous of our local Bossier history. Find details on our two Summer Experience programs on the last page of this newsletter. When you visit the History Center, look for our new tablecase display about Bossier Parish summers past.

Our popular Read & React series is back in June!! We're excited to welcome archaeologist Jeff Girard as our host for "Native Americans of Louisiana." He served as regional archaeologist for the Louisiana Division of Archaeology for more than 25 years.

Please stop by and visit with us to learn about your local history.



Swimming at Bodcau Lake, circa 1915

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CURATOR'S CORNER

by Randall Palmer



MAYOR MCCRANIE'S SOAP BOX DERBY

In May of last year the History Center received a donation from Tommie McCranie Brooks, daughter of former Bossier City Mayor Burgess E. McCranie. The collection contains documents and photographs from his time as Police Chief through his time as Mayor. It is the largest donation ever given to the History Center, and we are now only halfway finished processing the over 2,000 items. It is a fascinating look at the world of 1950s Bossier City, as well as a small glimpse behind the municipal curtain of local politics at the time.

Born in Plain Dealing in 1905, Burgess McCranie was a resident of Bossier Parish his entire life. He served as a Bossier Parish Sheriff's deputy, Bossier City Marshal, and Bossier City Police Chief before being elected

Bossier City Mayor in 1953. After leaving the Mayor's office, McCranie briefly spent time on the Bossier Parish Police Jury, owned a local furniture company, and served as executive director of the Bossier City Housing Authority. He died on December 31, 1977.

The photograph for this month's article took place during the 1952 Shreveport Soap Box Derby. Before the main derby, a special race was held between Police Chief McCranie and Shreveport Police Chief E.G. Huckaby, with the winner receiving the "cap pistol trophy", a toy six-shooter attached to a metal and wooden plaque. This was the second soap box race between the police chiefs, with the 1951 winner being Chief Huckaby. Huckaby again successfully defeated Chief McCranie in the 1952 race.



SHREVEPORT SOAP BOX DERBY

This would be the final race between the two men. The next year, Chief McCranie would take office as Bossier City's seventh Mayor. Chief Huckabay would again defend his trophy in 1953 against new Bossier City Police Chief James L. Cathey. It would be the last Soap Box Derby held locally, and in 1954, Chief Huckabay would be fatally wounded in the line of duty.

The All American Soap Box Derby in Akron, Ohio began in 1933 and still takes place every year. It consists of winners from soapbox races around the country. The Shreveport Soap Box Derby first began in 1934, and was sponsored by the Shreveport Times and other local businesses. The Derby's were held in multiple areas around Shreveport over the years, with this one taking place on East Stoner Hill in front of the Veterans Hospital.

A short clip of the 1952 race between McCranie and Huckabay is available for viewing on YouTube.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tyuIMluAln4>

Hey Gang!
let's start building
now!

FOR
Fun! Fame! Prizes!

The new easy-to-use Official Soap Box Derby Rule Book is yours for the asking . . . ABSOLUTELY FREE! In it you'll find all the dope you need to build and race your car in the 1952

**SHREVEPORT
SOAP BOX DERBY**

Sunday, July 20, 1952 THE SHREVEPORT TIMES



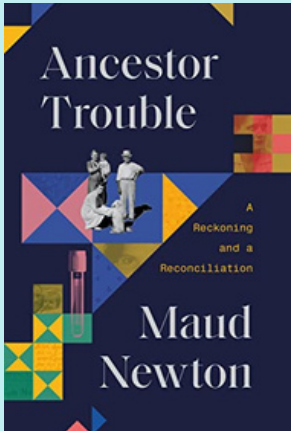
SPEEDING ACROSS the finish line, 1952 Shreveport Soap Box Derby Champion Alton C. Straughan, Jr., 13, waves spectators out of his way as he beats out John B. Parker, 11, of Haughton. Alton, who took second place in class "b" competition last year, rebuilt his racer, using a papier mache body. (Photos by Langston McEachern).



REPEATING HIS VICTORY of last year, Shreveport Police Chief E. G. Huckabay (second from right) won the 1952 "cap pistol trophy" in a match race preceding the first heat of yesterday's race. He defeated Bossier City Police Chief Burgess E. McCranie. At left is Dick Johnson of Red River Motor company, who presents the trophy, and at right is Jim Reeder of Howard Crumley Chevrolet company.



NEWLY RELEASED HISTORY READS



Ancestor Trouble: A Reckoning and a Reconciliation
by Maud Newton

Maud Newton's ancestors have vexed and fascinated her since she was a girl. Searching, moving, and inspiring, **Ancestor Trouble** is one writer's attempt to use genealogy – a once-niche hobby that has grown into a multi-billion-dollar industry – to expose the secrets and contradictions of her own ancestors, and to argue for the transformational possibilities that reckoning with our ancestors has for all of us.

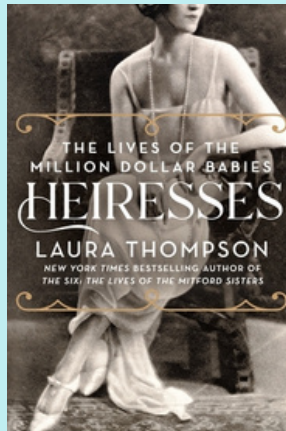
Find your own ancestors using History Center resources! Ask how we can help with your family tree research.



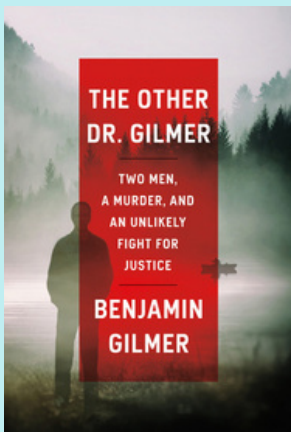
Heiresses: The Lives of the Million Dollar Babies
by Laura Thompson

New York Times bestselling author Laura Thompson returns with **Heiresses**, a fascinating look at the lives of heiresses throughout history and the often tragic truth beneath the gilded surface.

Heiresses is about the lives of the rich, who—as F. Scott Fitzgerald said—are 'different'. But it is also a bigger story about how all women fought their way to equality, and sometimes even found autonomy and fulfillment.



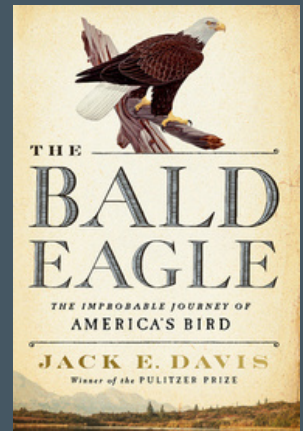
Visit us to discover the lives of the "Women Who Made a Difference" in Bossier Parish.



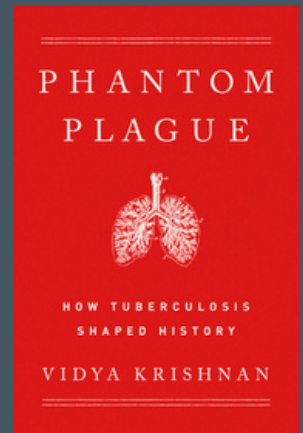
The Other Dr. Gilmer: Two Men, a Murder, and an Unlikely Fight for Justice
by Benjamin Gilmer

A powerful true story about a shocking crime and a mysterious illness that will forever change your notions of how we punish and how we heal—an expansion on one of the most popular This American Life episodes of all time.

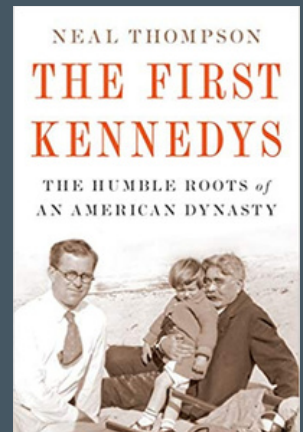
The Other Dr. Gilmer takes readers on a riveting and heart-wrenching journey through our shared human fallibility, made worse by a prison system that is failing our most vulnerable citizens.



The Bald Eagle: The Improbable Journey of America's Bird
by Jack Emerson Davis



Phantom Plague
How Tuberculosis Shaped History
by Vidya Krishnan



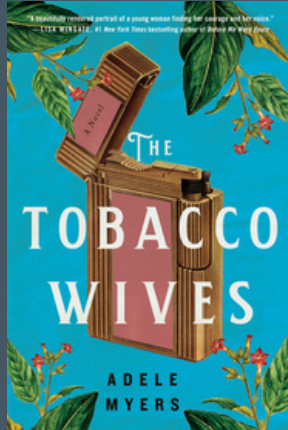
The First Kennedys: The Humble Roots of an American Dynasty
by Neal Thompson



HISTORICAL FICTION RELEASES



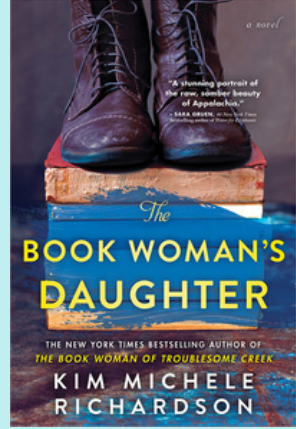
The Diamond Eye by Kate Quinn
World War II tale of a quiet bookworm who becomes history's deadliest female sniper



The Tobacco Wives by Adele Myers
In 1946 North Carolina, a seamstress uncovers dangerous truths about a Big Tobacco empire



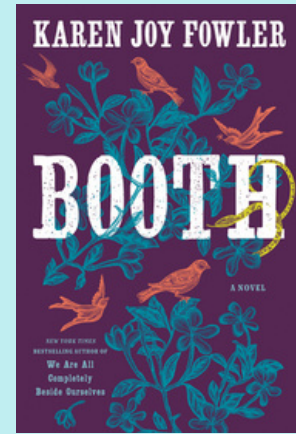
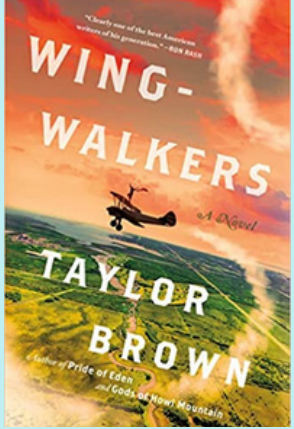
Peach Blossom Spring by Melissa Fu
Three generations of a Chinese family search for a place to call home



The Book Woman's Daughter
by Kim Michele Richardson
From the **New York Times** bestselling author of **The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek!** Historical fiction author Kim Michele Richardson is back with the perfect book club read following Honey Mary Angeline Lovett, the daughter of the beloved Troublesome book woman, who must fight for her own independence with the help of the women who guide her and the books that set her free.

← Check Libby for both the ebook and the audiobook!

Wingwalkers
by Taylor Brown
A former WWI ace pilot and his wingwalker wife barnstorm across Depression-era America, performing acts of aerial daring. Wingwalkers is one-part epic adventure, one-part love story, and, as is the signature for critically-acclaimed author Taylor Brown, one large part American history. The novel follows the adventures of Della and Zeno Marigold, a pair of Great Depression barnstormers who are funding their journey west by performing death-defying aerial stunts from town to town, and braids them with the real-life exploits of author (and thwarted fighter pilot) William Faulkner.



Booth
by Karen Joy Fowler
An epic and intimate novel about the family behind one of the most infamous figures in American history: John Wilkes Booth. Booth is a startling portrait of a country in the throes of change and a vivid exploration of the ties that make, and break, a family.

PROGRAMMING: READ & REACT WITH HISTORY

Please call the History Center at 318-746-7717 to reserve your spot.

NATIVE AMERICANS OF LOUISIANA

READING & DISCUSSION SERIES



Archaeologist
Jeff Girard will
lead us on a
guided
discussion of
four books.

MONDAYS IN JUNE

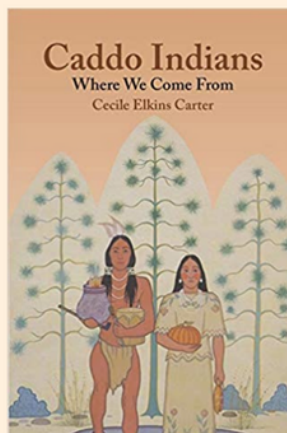
JUNE 6 JUNE 13

JUNE 20 JUNE 27

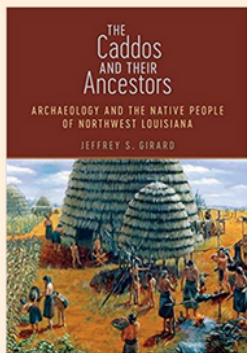
6PM TO 7PM

Join us for a four-night series of talks showcasing Native American history, art, and culture local to the state of Louisiana. Books are available for pickup at the History Center.

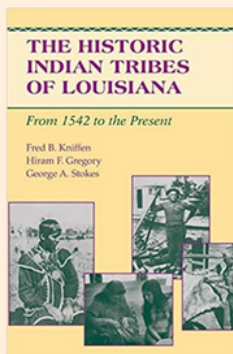
BOOK SELECTIONS



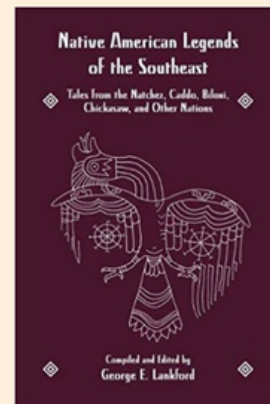
Caddo Indians: Where We Come From
by Cecile Elkins Carter



The Caddos and Their Ancestors:
Archaeology and the Native People of
Northwest Louisiana
by Jeffrey S. Girard



The Historic Indian Tribes of Louisiana:
From 1542 to the Present
by Fred B. Kniffen, Hiram F. Gregory,
George A. Stokes



Native American Legends of the Southeast:
Tales from the Natchez, Caddo, Biloxi,
Chickasaw, and Other Nations
by George E. Lankford



UPHILL BOTH WAYS: GOING TO SCHOOL IN "THE BOTTOMS" OF WARDVIEW

by Pam Carlisle

Look for Pam's weekly column in the *Bossier Press-Tribune* newspaper every Wednesday!

Have you ever heard the stories about having to walk 20 miles to school uphill both ways? Some early residents of Wardview, a remote farming community as far northwest as you can go in Bossier Parish, actually had those stories beat! And, unlike "uphill both ways," they weren't telling tall tales, they were telling local history of life in "The Bottoms."

Wardview is directly bordered by the Red River to the west, Arkansas to the north and Plain Dealing to its southeast. As described by local resident Jack Gore, who wrote a column for the former Plain Dealing Progress newspaper, the heart of the area was where Highway 537 met "the road to Arkansas" and "the road to the river." With its proximity on the eastern side of Red River, the area was also known as "the River Bottoms" or just "the Bottoms." The rich soil meant it was once a thriving farming community for cotton and food crops. Nowadays, the community of Wardview lives largely in memories, newspaper clippings, scrapbooks, and oral histories, including several from the History Center collection.



Former Bossier Parish librarian and bookmobile driver, Billie Williams Stevens, who was born in 1928, told in one of these oral history interviews of the adventurous school bus rides when she was growing up in Wardview and attending school in Plain Dealing. At that time, Wardview consisted of a couple of stores, a cotton gin, and a church. "I remember one time we hit a bump and a nail hit my head," Mrs. Stevens said, laughing, "and I bled for a long time. Of course, I went home and Mama poured some coal oil or turpentine on it, and I didn't go to the doctor. We didn't go to the doctor back then."

"Of course, ... we've always said about Huey Long, with him getting the schools consolidated from out there, we've always said that he should have done the roads first because sometimes we would have to get off of the bus and try to push the bus up some of those slick hills, and by the time we got to school we'd be late."

Unbeknownst to young Billie, this experience would serve her well in her future library career. She was known to push the Bossier Parish Libraries bookmobile out of a ditch a time or two – or three! Even an uneventful normal ride lasted about an hour and fifteen minutes, one way, with 45 other bus mates. Of course, that was practically a shortcut compared to when there was flooding, a common occurrence in a place referred to as "the Bottoms."

"I don't remember what year it was, I was in the first grade, and we had a flood, and you could not get the bus down to Wardview. The only way to catch the bus was to take a boat out to the hills and then catch the bus." Mrs. Stevens laughed when the interviewer asked if the boat was a ferry. "No, no," she replied. "Usually, it was just the road that was under water, so people who had boats 'ferried' across with their Jon boats (a small but stable flat-bottomed utility boat)."

Mrs. Virginia Horneman Allen who grew up in Wardview reminisced in her oral history interview with her two sisters, "I had to get up early and catch the bus and walked a mile until I was in the 7th grade unless it rained and they'd take me, somebody would take me down on a horse...I had to wear overshoes all the time and pull them off and leave them down at the house down at Uncle Will's place where we caught the bus."

Virginia's sister, Mrs. Winona Horneman Authement, chimed in: "It was the only road, Old River."

Lakeport School, a two-room schoolhouse in Wardview. Photo from 1907.

"And then," interjected Mrs. Allen, "when I was in the 7th grade, Mr. Roy Bolinger was on the Police Jury...and they built a road off of the road that went on to the Arkansas line to our house." That way the bus could come right to their house on Arkansas Line Rd. when their father donated the land for it. Mrs. Allen no longer had to carry her overshoes and they didn't have to climb what all three sisters remember as a "really high levee."

If you have any information, stories, or photos about Wardview, we would love to add material to the History Center's research collection. Please come to the History Center to learn more about Wardview and other rural Bossier communities.



**Bossier Parish Libraries
History Center**

**2206 Beckett Street
Bossier City, LA 71111**



**BOSSIER PARISH
LIBRARIES**

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www.bossierlibrary.org

Contact us to join our mailing list!

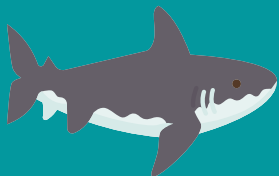
Summer Experience: Oceans of Possibilities



Dr. Gary Joiner, author and professor of History and Social Sciences at Louisiana State University - Shreveport, will present a program on the Shreveport Confederate Naval Shipyard and the possibility of Civil War-era submarines resting underneath our rivers and bayous.

Join us at the History Center on
Thursday, June 23rd at 6 pm
for this fascinating program.

Our Pages Past book club will have a special
"Shark Week" meeting to discuss Michael
Capuzzo's book, *Close to Shore: The Terrifying
Shark Attacks of 1916*.



Book club meets at the History Center on
Monday, July 11th at 6pm
Books available for check-out at the History Center.

