

THE HISTORY CURRENT

News & highlights from the Bossier Parish Libraries History Center

Preserving the history and memories of Bossier Parish, Louisiana

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Fall Back into the Past

BY PAM CARLISLE, OUTREACH HISTORIAN

Fall has arrived, and we are settling into our new building. As the History Center's Outreach Historian, I'm looking forward to the building's history programming potential. Our research room is a quiet place for local or family history research or perusing our collection of local history books. The room also contains drawings of historic buildings in old downtown Bossier City done by our work-study student John Fox. Read more about our new location on page 3 of this newsletter.

Also, review the latest book releases for fascinating history and historical fiction. Read Curator's Corner to learn about a case of mistaken identity involving a device in the History Center archives. So have a scary good time falling back into the past.

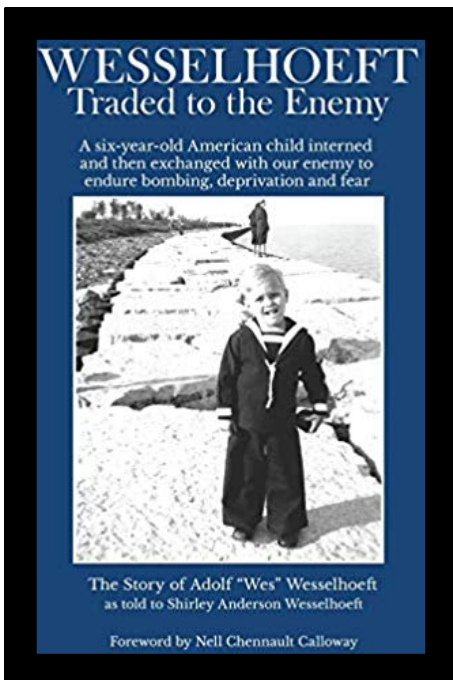
October is Louisiana Archaeology Month. While we'd love for you to visit us in our new building, you could also come visit us, and our replicas of Caddo Indian tools and hunting weapons, at the outreach events we will be attending: Pioneer Heritage Day on Saturday, October 12th from 10am-3pm at the Pioneer Heritage Center at LSU-Shreveport and Saturday, October 19th from 10am-2pm at the Red River National Wildlife Refuge off the Arthur Ray Teague Parkway in Bossier City.



WORLD WAR II's Day

The classroom in the new building is now home to our monthly World War II's Day coffee and discussion group, with spacious seating, a great setup for viewing our historic World War II photos projected as slides, and a wonderful place to welcome and visit with guest speakers. We were so pleased to have Tim Sherman, retired aviator, aviation artist, and board member of the Chennault Military Museum in Monroe, speak in September.

Tuesday, October 8th, at 10:30 am, Shirley Wesselhoeft, friend of Mr. Sherman and a fellow Chennault Museum volunteer, will speak on the book she wrote titled "Wesselhoeft: Traded to the Enemy" about the wartime and life experiences of her late husband, Adolf "Wes" Wesselhoeft.



Wes was born in the U.S. to German immigrant parents, who were living the American dream in Chicago until World War II broke out. The family was deported to Germany as a trade for other Americans awaiting repatriation to the U.S. and found themselves in a warzone targeted by Allied bombings. Wes dreamt of returning to the United States, and finally, in his early twenties, he made the journey back alone, arriving in New York with twenty dollars in his pocket. His other dream was to become a pilot, which led him to join the U.S. Air Force, ultimately retiring after 22 years as a Lt. Colonel.

Ms. Wesselhoeft will have copies of the book with her available for purchase. See you then!

WORLD WAR II'S DAY MEETS @ 10:30 ON 10/8,
11/12 AND 12/10 AT 10:30 AM



History Center Makes Move to New Facility in Central Library Complex on City Hall Drive

by Kevin Flowers

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

The Bossier Parish Libraries History Center has a new home. In early July, the center "packed its bags" and relocated to space inside the Bossier Central Library Complex at 850 City Hall Drive. Although there is still some unpacking of those bags to be done, the center is open for visitors.

Since 1999, the History Center has been documenting and preserving the story of Bossier Parish and its people, and through those 25 years, the center has amassed quite a collection of everything from documents and photographs to furniture and clothing, thanks to the generosity of those who've donated items. A letter sent home by a soldier serving on the Korean War battlefield to his worried mom, a pair of devices that were the predecessors of today's GPS, and a cotton gin that, to our knowledge, is one of only a few of its type left in existence, are just some of the artifacts that the center is honored to have in its collection.



Image showing upcoming History Center exhibits.
Image by Prevot Design

Actually, the accumulation of items dates back to the early 1960s, when the Bossier Parish Library began compiling information and items related to the history of the parish. As the number of items grew, so too did the need for a dedicated place to house them. A proposal was made to construct a history center for the parish, and in late 1997, ground was broken. A year and two months later, construction was completed and a grand opening was held January 24, 1999. Visitors could see sights such as a diorama depicting life in a Caddo Indian village, and a cabin showing how early parish settlers would have lived.

Educational programs also became available at the History Center. Presentations focusing on genealogy research and highlighting various aspects of local history were offered. Currently, there are approximately 28 different presentations that can be scheduled at or away from the History Center.



Image showing upcoming History Center exhibits.
Image by Prevot Design

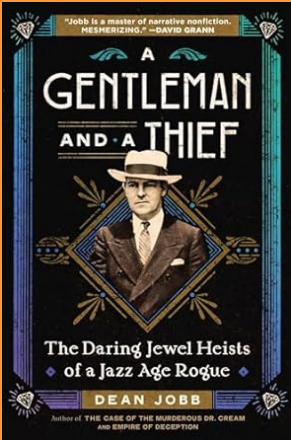
A research area is open in the new location to those who may be looking into their family history or simply want to know more about Bossier Parish. Computers are available for research projects, and History Center staff can provide assistance when needed. Books are also available on many different topics of local and national history.

One exciting change still to come is the addition of interactive displays, which will allow visitors to experience history in a unique way. Being able to walk through an example of Bossier's old Shed Road or enter a Caddo Indian hut are just two of the means by which visitors will be transported back in time to better understand what our parish was like more than a century ago and many centuries ago. These displays are scheduled to be in place sometime this fall or early next year.

Using photos, videos, displays, presentations, oral histories and more, the History Center will continue to tell the narrative unique to the place we call home. As Historian David McCullough said, "History is who we are and why we are the way we are." Sharing this truth will remain a focus of the History Center, bridging the gap between past and present.



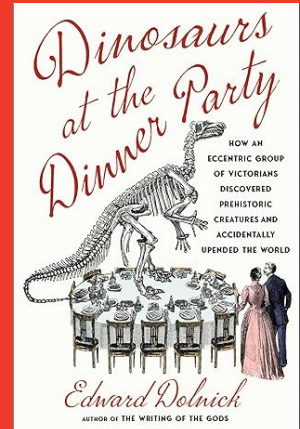
NEWLY RELEASED HISTORY READS



A Gentleman and a Thief: The Daring Jewel Heists of a Jazz Age Rogue

by Dean Jobs

A captivating Jazz Age true-crime caper about "the greatest jewel thief who ever lived" (Life Magazine), Arthur Barry, who charmed everyone from Rockefellers to members of the royal family while simultaneously planning and executing the most audacious and lucrative heists of the 1920s. In a span of seven years, Barry stole diamonds, pearls, and other gems worth almost \$60 million today.



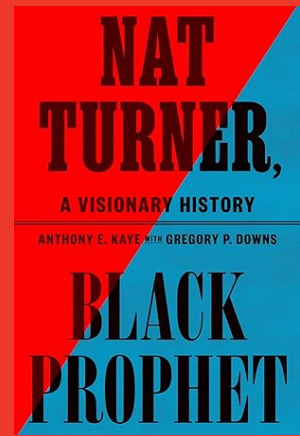
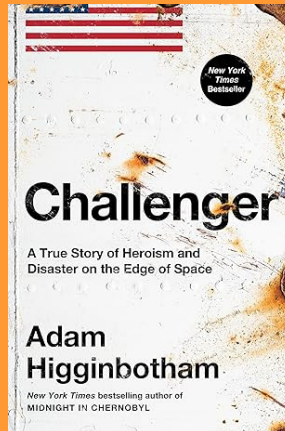
Dinosaurs at the Dinner Party: How an Eccentric Group of Victorians Discovered Prehistoric Creatures and Accidentally Upended the World

by Edward Dolnick

Challenger: A True Story of Heroism and Disaster on the Edge of Space

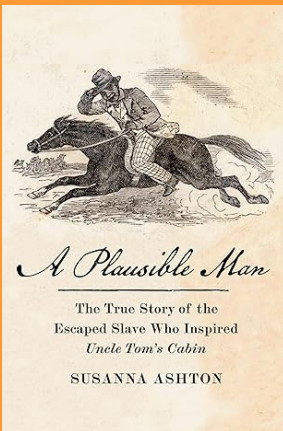
by Adam Higginbotham

Based on extensive archival research and meticulous, original reporting, **Challenger: A True Story of Heroism and Disaster on the Edge of Space** follows a handful of central protagonists—including each of the seven members of the doomed crew—through the years leading up to the accident, and offers a detailed account of the tragedy itself and the investigation afterward. Higginbotham reveals the history of the shuttle program and the lives of men and women whose stories have been overshadowed by the disaster, as well as the designers, engineers, and test pilots who struggled against the odds to get the first shuttle into space.



Nat Turner, Black Prophet: A Visionary History

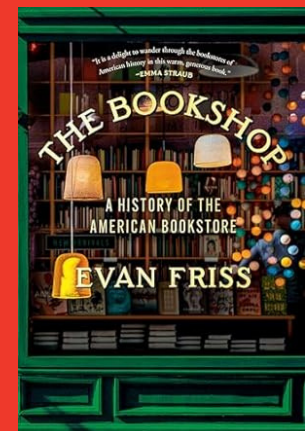
by Anthony E. Kaye and Gregory P. Downs



A Plausible Man: The True Story of the Escaped Slave Who Inspired Uncle Tom's Cabin

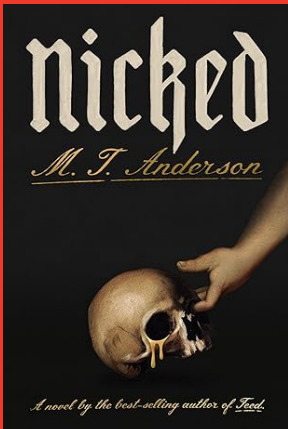
by Susanna Ashton

In December of 1850, Harriet Beecher Stowe hid a fugitive slave in her house. While John Andrew Jackson stayed for only one night, he made a lasting impression: drawing from this experience, Stowe began to write Uncle Tom's Cabin, one of the most influential books in American history and the novel that helped inspire the overthrow of slavery in the United States. **A Plausible Man** unfolds as a historical detective story, as Susanna Ashton combs obscure records for evidence of Jackson's remarkable flight from slavery to freedom, his quest to liberate his enslaved family, and his emergence as an international advocate for abolition.



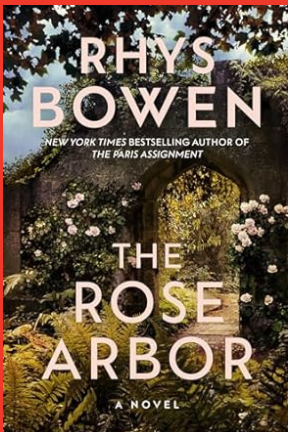
The Bookshop: A History of the American Bookstore

by Evan Friss



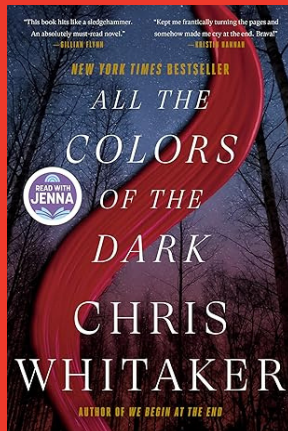
Nicked by M.T. Anderson

Based on a bizarre but true quest to steal the mystical corpse of a long-dead saint



The Rose Arbor by Rhys Bowen

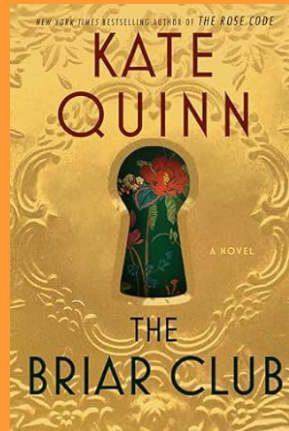
An investigation into a girl's disappearance uncovers a mystery dating back to World War II



All the Colors of the Dark by Chris Whitaker

Children disappear in 1975 small-town Missouri

HISTORICAL FICTION RELEASES



The Briar Club

by Kate Quinn

The New York Times bestselling author of **The Diamond Eye** and **The Rose Code** returns with a haunting and powerful story of female friendships and secrets in a Washington, DC, boardinghouse during the McCarthy era. Capturing the paranoia of the McCarthy era and evoking the changing roles for women in postwar America, **The Briar Club** is an intimate and thrilling novel of secrets and loyalty put to the test.

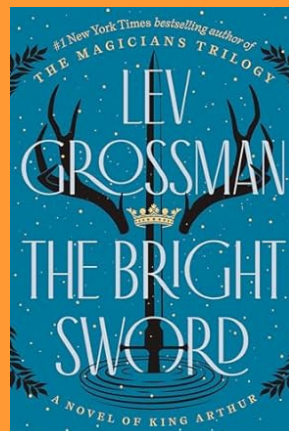
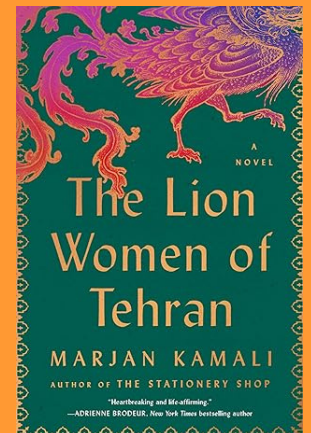


Head to the Libby app for both the ebook and the audiobook!

The Lion Women of Tehran

by Marjan Kamali

A heartfelt, epic new novel of friendship, betrayal, and redemption set against three transformative decades in Tehran, Iran. **The Lion Women of Tehran** is a sweeping exploration of how profoundly we are shaped by those we meet when we are young, and the way love and courage transforms our lives.



The Bright Sword: A Novel of King Arthur

by Lev Grossman

The first major Arthurian epic of the new millennium, **The Bright Sword** is steeped in tradition, complete with duels and quests, battles and tournaments, magic swords and Fisher Kings. It's also a story about imperfect men and women, full of strength and pain, trying to reforge a broken land in spite of being broken themselves.

A CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY

The chiropractic balance, a device invented by William M. Barret, presents a compelling case of how even well-meaning donations to museums can lead to significant historical misidentifications. Originally believed to be a geophysical tool due to Barret's extensive career as a geophysicist, the true purpose of the invention remained hidden for years. It wasn't until further research was conducted that its role in chiropractic care came to light. This misidentification highlights the challenges of preserving history and the importance of accurate documentation.

Born on May 2, 1898, in Shreveport, Louisiana, William M. Barret came from a prominent family with deep roots in the region.



His grandfather, William Walker Barret, served as a major in the Confederate Army during the Civil War. William's aunt, Mary Emily Barret, married Newton Crain Blanchard in 1873. Blanchard, a notable political figure, served as a U.S. Representative, state Senator, and ultimately as the 33rd Governor of Louisiana from 1904 to 1908. During his tenure, Blanchard made significant contributions to the state, including the incorporation of Cane City, which he renamed the Village of Bossier City, and appointed Shreveport businessman Ewald Hoyer as the first Bossier City mayor. William's father, Thomas Charles Barret, was a respected attorney and politician who served in the Louisiana Senate and as lieutenant governor.

William M. Barret's early life was marked by a strong educational foundation. He attended St. John's Academy in Shreveport, followed by studies at Columbia University and Tulane University, where he earned a Bachelor of Engineering degree in 1923. Barret's career began in the late 1920s when he entered the emerging field of geophysics, focusing on the development of new methods for prospecting mineral deposits.

In 1930, Barret founded Engineering Research Corp., followed by William M. Barret, Inc. in 1931, where he served as a consulting geophysicist. His work led to the development of the "Radoil Method," a technique using radio waves to explore the earth's subsurface for oil, ores, and other minerals. Barret's innovations in this area earned him a place in the "Who's Who of Engineering" starting in 1931, and later in the "Who's Who in America" and "Who's Who in Science." His contributions to the scientific community were recognized by various professional organizations, including the Society of Exploration Geophysicists, the American Association of Petroleum Geologists, and the American Institute of Mining and Metallurgical Engineers. Throughout his career, Barret held over 40 patents and authored numerous scientific papers, solidifying his reputation as a leading figure in the field of geophysics.

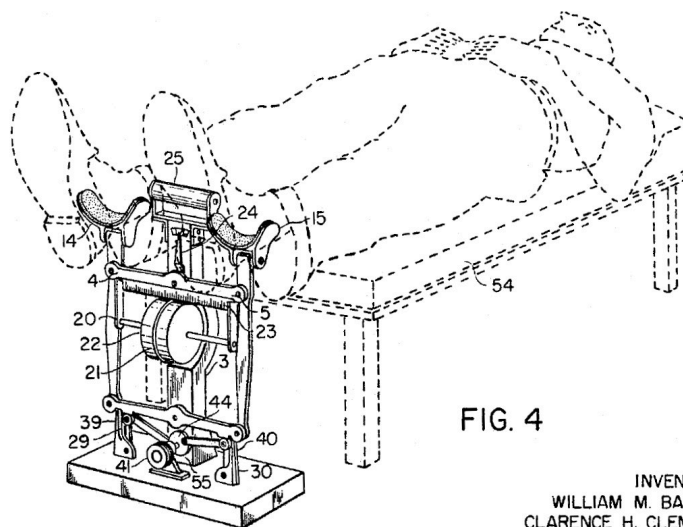
One of Barret's more intriguing inventions was the chiropractic balance, a device designed to assist chiropractors in accurately identifying and correcting spinal misalignments. (continued, page 7)

This invention stands out among his work due to its focus on health and wellness rather than geophysical exploration. It was a unique tool, reflecting Barret's ability to think beyond his primary field of expertise and contribute to the broader scientific community.

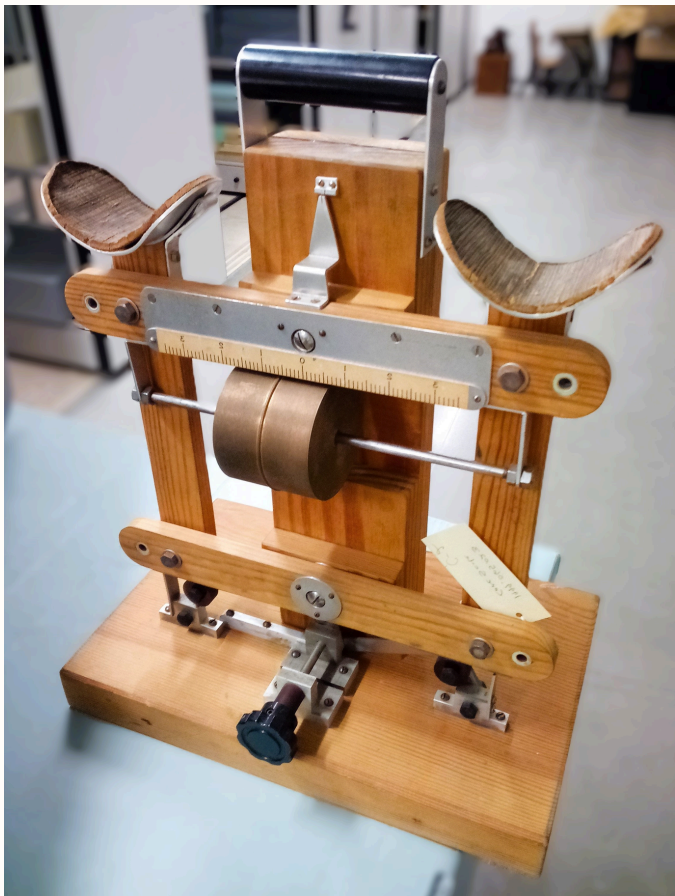
The origins of Barret's interest in chiropractic care are unknown, but it is speculated that his passion for tennis may have played a role. Barret was an avid tennis player, winning several local, state, and regional championships. It is possible that he experienced spinal issues or injuries related to his tennis activities, which may have sparked his interest in chiropractic solutions. After his death in 1986, Barret's wife, Lola Barret, honored his memory by donating a tennis court at Querbes Park in Shreveport, reflecting his love for the sport.

The chiropractic balance was initially mistaken for a geophysical tool due to Barret's prominent career as a geophysicist and his numerous contributions to the field of geophysical exploration. When the William Barret Collection was donated to the History Center by the Biomedical Research Foundation of Northwest Louisiana, the chiropractic balance was included among various tools and equipment related to his geophysical work. Without detailed information on the donation form, the curator naturally assumed the device was another of Barret's geophysical instruments. It wasn't until further research uncovered the patent for the chiropractic balance that its true purpose was revealed.

The confusion surrounding the chiropractic balance underscores the critical importance of thorough documentation when donating objects to a museum. Without clear and detailed information about each object, items can easily be misinterpreted or misclassified, as was the case with the balance. Good documentation ensures that the true significance of artifacts is preserved and accurately conveyed to future generations, allowing museums to properly catalog and present objects in their collections with the correct historical context.



chiropractic balance diagram
History Center archives



chiropractic balance image
History Center archives

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LIBRARIES

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Contact us to join our email list!

HISTORY CENTER PRESENTATIONS

The Bossier Parish Libraries History Center offers fun and informative presentations on a variety of local history, archaeology and genealogy-related topics, for a variety of age groups, here at the History Center or in your class room or meeting place.



Selections include:

- A History of Bossier Parish
- Rosenwald Schools for African-American Children
- Genealogy 101
- Haunted History of Bossier Parish
- Women Who Made a Difference in Bossier Parish
- A Bossier Celebration of Sports
- and many more...

Contact Pam Carlisle, Outreach Historian at 318-746-7717 or
pcarlois@bossierlibrary.org to schedule.
Please make request at least one month in advance.

