

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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SUMMER IS HERE, AND THE HEAT IS ON

BY PAM CARLISLE, OUTREACH HISTORIAN

Come beat the heat in the Bossier Central Library Complex. In the History Center research area, you'll find books on local history, archaeology, culture, and books by local authors. Some of our books circulate, but if they're especially unique (rare, fragile, or hard to replace) then they are reference books.

Stay cool and learn something new in our history programs. World War Tuesdays continue each month (see page 7). July's WWII's day is July 8th, and August's is Aug. 12th, both at 10:30 a.m. We have some special events this summer, too: Dr. Cheryl White of the LSU-S Dept. of History and the Spring Street Museum, will speak about Mary Cane, The "Mother" of Shreveport (and the "Grandmother" of Bossier City) on Wednesday, July 16th from 6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. Author Brad Dison will talk about his new book, "The Trap: The Untold Story of Sheriff Henderson Jordan and the Final Pursuit of Bonnie and Clyde," Tuesday, August 19th, from 11:00 a.m.– noon. Both events will be in the large meeting room in the Central Library Complex. Also, check out the Summer Reading programming and reading incentives happening for all ages throughout the complex!



CURATOR'S CORNER

by Pam Carlisle

I am writing this Curator's Corner to introduce you to our new History Center Curator, Jaylie Rester. Jaylie grew up in the Shreveport-Bossier area and graduated from Caddo Magnet High school. She then received a BA in history and a Master's degree in Library and Information Science from LSU-Shreveport. She started working part-time for Bossier Parish Libraries in 2019, while earning her graduate degree, beginning at the Henry L. Aulds branch in South Bossier. Later she took a full-time position at BPL's Tooke branch in Elm Grove, and then returned to Aulds to take the night supervisor position. At LSUS, she took a lot of archives classes, intrigued by the university's Noel Memorial Archives. These classes provided a good combination of libraries and history. She is looking forward to learning more about her home. Knowing local history helps you connect to a place, and find your purpose in it!

In this column we feature new or notable collections in the History Center. With the exception of books, we rely on donations to expand our collection of items that represent change over time for the people and places of Bossier Parish. In May, I received a phone call from Robert Marco of Miami, Florida asking about donating items from his father, also Robert Marco, Bossier High School class of 1940. Trying to find them a good home, he called Bossier High School, eventually reaching one of the school counselors, Ms. Copes, who passed along my name and the History Center contact information.

Mr. Marco knew that a "good home" for the items would include a secure, climate controlled environment, and one that, while protecting the items, could also make the information contained within them accessible to the public. To reassure him that the Bossier Parish Libraries History Center fit that bill, I sent him some links to "explore" the History Center from Miami.

One of these links was for our collections database. <https://bossier.pastperfectonline.com/> The curator (Jaylie) assigns an Object ID number to each item, and if it's something we can scan, especially a photograph, we scan it and attach it to the record so that researchers can see it no matter where in the world they are.

Another link I forwarded to Mr. Marco was to the History Center blog where we post articles and related photographs on a wide variety of Bossier history topics. Many are based on information gleaned from our donations, such as Jonah Daigle's recent article on "Beef Week" which was based on a recent donation of scrapbooks. <https://bpl-hc.blogspot.com/> We also sent a link to our Acquisitions Policy, which outlines what kinds of items we collect. We assured Mr. Marco that his dad's Bossier High School photographs and other items would definitely fit within our scope of collections!

We were delighted that Mr. Marco agreed the History Center was the right place to house these items. The collection, sent via FedEx, included a 1940 Bossier City High School graduation invitation for Robert A. Marco, with a wonderful raised-relief image of the then-new international style BHS building, Bossier City High School report cards from 1937-1940, and school photographs, including images of the BHS boxing team in the late 1930's. Since these items are from the time before BHS had a yearbook, they're especially valuable to our collection.



Items now part of the History Center's Bossier High School collection. Above is a letter earned for boxing, and to the right is a photo of the school boxing team in the late 1930s.

Robert Marco is front row, second from left.



As curator, Jaylie will accession the items into our collection, catalog each one (making them searchable and viewable, even from home), house them in archival-safe sleeves, folders and boxes, and preserve them in our climate-controlled archives room. We are so glad Mr. Marco found us.

History Center Uncovers Story Behind Flea Market Find for Vietnam Veteran

by Kevin Flowers

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

Sharing stories from history is part of why I so enjoy being a staff member of the History Center. Researching and writing about people and events from the past is interesting to me. One recent opportunity to research military history reminded me that sometimes the most extraordinary stories can come from the most unlikely places.

In 1970, a student-led organization called Voices in Vital America introduced POW/MIA bracelets to ensure that service members who were prisoners of war or missing in action in Vietnam not be forgotten. Each bracelet, made of nickel or copper, contained the service member's name and date of capture or disappearance and would be worn until he returned home. It was just such a bracelet that I had the chance to investigate early last month after taking a phone call at the History Center from a gentleman in Florida.

Retired Marine Kermit McNeal was seeking answers to questions he had about a POW/MIA bracelet that he bought approximately two years prior while visiting a flea market. He wanted to know if the person named on the bracelet - Arthur Black - had survived the war, and if Black or his family would like to have the bracelet. Unfortunately, Mr. McNeal's efforts to learn about the bracelet had been futile. "No one wanted to help me," he said. After receiving no assistance from some other history organizations, he found the Bossier Parish History Center online and reached out.

His reasons for buying the bracelet were both noble and personal. As a Vietnam veteran, he thought it "undignified" to leave the bracelet behind. "I simply couldn't walk away and leave it there," he told me. But an incident on the home-front during the war also played a role in his decision. During his time of service, someone attempted to swindle money from his mother by

claiming that he had been captured, and saying they could affect his release for a fee. Thankfully, the ruse didn't succeed. "I was never captured, but just hadn't written home in a while," he said. "This bracelet represented someone who had been captured or was missing."



Arthur N. Black/ photo courtesy U.S. Air Force

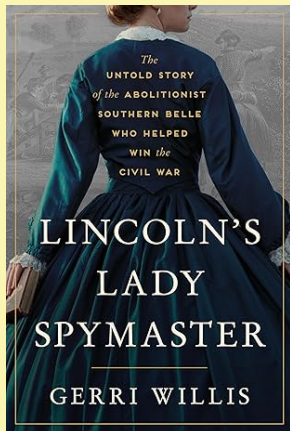
The History Center is privileged to have a POW/MIA bracelet in its archive collection. It bears the name William Butler, an Air Force pilot who spent nearly six years as a prisoner after being shot down over North Vietnam in 1967. In a column published a year ago, History Center Public Historian Pam Carlisle shared how his bracelet impacted the lives of a Bossier City couple by creating an opportunity to learn his story. Similarly, the bracelet purchased by Mr. McNeal would open an avenue for him to learn Arthur Black's story. (article continued on pg. 6)



William Butler's POW/MIA bracelet/ History Center collection



NEWLY RELEASED HISTORY READS



Lincoln's Lady Spymaster: The Untold Story of the Abolitionist Southern Belle Who Helped Win the Civil War

by Gerri Willis

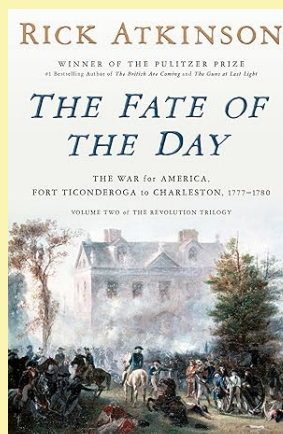
Wealthy Southern belle Elizabeth Van Lew had it all. So why risk everything to become a Union spy? The answer was simple: freedom. Right in the heart of the Confederate capital, Elizabeth played the society lady while building a secret espionage network. With extensive and fresh research, Gerri Willis uncovers the Southern abolitionist heroine that the Lost Cause buried—an unbelievable tale of one woman's courage, resistance, and liberation.

The Fate of the Day: The War for America, Fort Ticonderoga to Charleston, 1777-1780

by Rick Atkinson

In the second volume of the landmark American Revolution trilogy, George Washington's army fights on the knife edge between victory and defeat. Prize-winning historian Rick Atkinson provides a riveting narrative covering the middle years of the Revolution.

Timed to coincide with the 250th anniversary of the beginning of the Revolution, Atkinson's brilliant account of the lethal conflict between the Americans and the British offers not only deeply researched and spectacularly dramatic history, but also a new perspective on the demands that a democracy makes on its citizens.

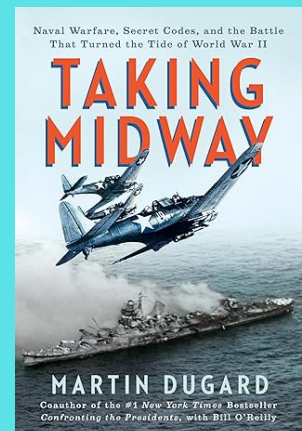
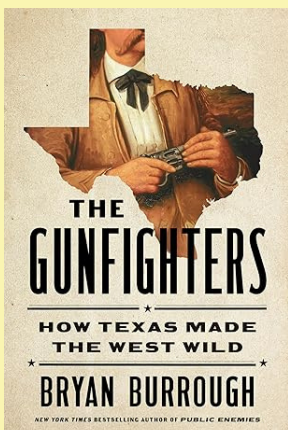


The Gunfighters: How Texas Made the West Wild

by Bryan Burrough

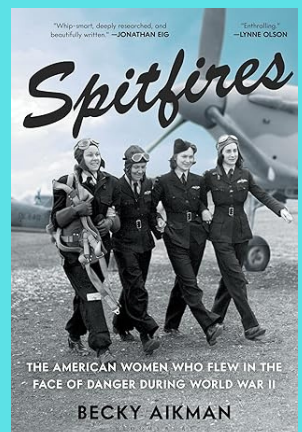
From the New York Times bestselling author of *The Big Rich* and *Forget the Alamo* comes an epic reconsideration of the time and place that spawned America's most legendary gunfighters, from Jesse James and Billy the Kid to Butch and Sundance.

The "Wild West" gunfighter is such a stock figure in our popular culture that some dismiss it all as a corny myth, more a product of dime novels and B movies than a genuinely important American history. In fact, as Bryan Burrough shows us in his dazzling and fast-paced new book, there's much more below the surface.



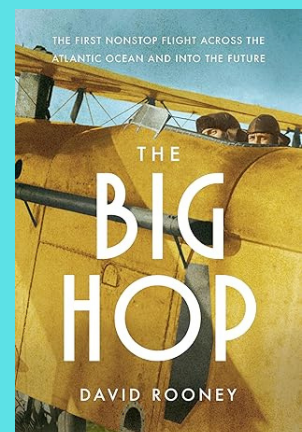
Taking Midway

by Martin Dugard



Spitfires: The American Women Who Flew in the Face of Danger During World War II

by Becky Aikman



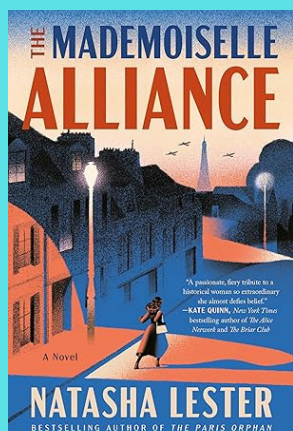
The Big Hop: The First Non-stop Flight Across the Atlantic Ocean and Into the Future

by David Rooney



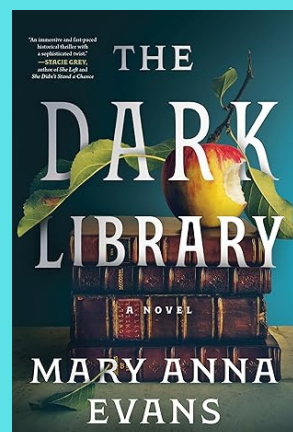
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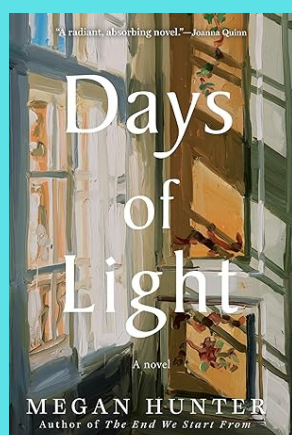
The Mademoiselle Alliance
by Natasha Lester

A young Parisian mother leads the largest spy network in occupied France



The Dark Library by Mary Anna Evans

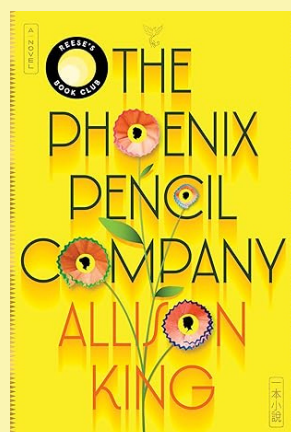
A compelling tale of mystery, family secrets, and the quest for truth in the WWII home front



Days of Light by Megan Hunter

A sweeping, sensual historical novel of art, desire, and faith set against the backdrop of a changing England

HISTORICAL FICTION RELEASES



The Phoenix Pencil Company

by Allison King

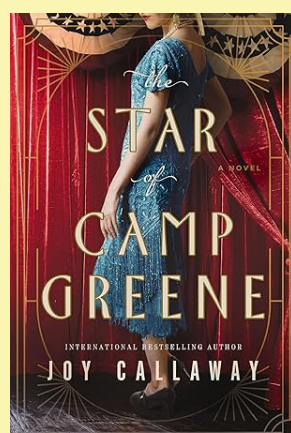
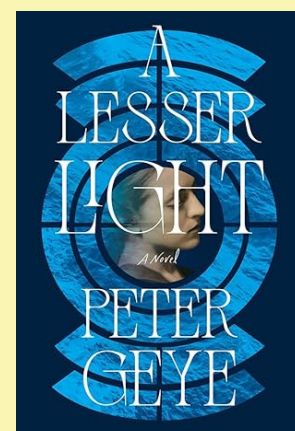
In this dazzling debut novel, a hidden and nearly forgotten magic—of reforging pencils, bringing the memories they contain back to life—holds the power to transform a young woman's relationship with her grandmother, and to mend long-lost connections across time and space.

King asks: who owns and inherits our stories? The answers and secrets that surface on the page may have the unerasable power to reconnect a family and restore a legacy.

A Lesser Light

by Peter Geye

A lighthouse keeper on Lake Superior in 1910 is in an ill-suited arranged marriage. Set against a brooding and beautiful landscape, *A Lesser Light* is a story about industry and calamity, science versus superstition, inner desire countered with societal expectations—and the consequences when these forces collide in the wilderness of rapid social change.



The Star of Camp Greene: A Novel of WWI

by Joy Callaway

Charlotte, NC. 1918. Broadway darling Calla Connolly had it all: a rising career on the stage and a loving fiancé, a fellow stage actor. But after his tragic death early in the war, Calla is touring the American training camps, hoping to convince General Pershing to let her tour the French front to cheer the men and honor her fiancé's memory. But her hopes are dashed when she contracts Spanish flu while performing at Camp Greene.



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As I began researching Mr. Black and the date of September 20, 1965 shown on his bracelet, I was surprised by the amount of information available. He served as an Air Force pararescuer, sometimes called a PJ (for parajumper). His job was extremely dangerous. The National Museum of the United States Air Force describes it this way: "The PJ's unique mission in Vietnam was to ride into a combat zone aboard a slow, vulnerable helicopter, and descend into jungles, swamps, mountains and forests on a cable and winch. On the ground, they stabilized and helped hoist the injured to safety, often under fire."

According to the museum's website, pararescuemen wore flight crew helmets and armored "flak" jackets for protection and carried weapons such as .38-caliber pistols, M-16 rifles and survival knives. Basic medical kits were used to tend the wounded. The website states that because of the heroic work done by Black and other PJs in Vietnam, more than 4,000 lives were saved.

It was while attempting to recover a pilot whose plane had gone down that Black's helicopter crashed after being fired upon by enemy troops. He and three others aboard were immediately captured, beginning nearly eight years of beatings, torture and other abuse. In a recent interview with the Times of San Diego newspaper, he talked about how the ordeal caused him to review his life. "I thought about the past, all the things that I had done good and bad. I considered ... what my parents were going through. And I figure they were having a harder time than me."

After 2,703 days in captivity, Mr. Black came home. Released in 1973, he received a presidential commission to second lieutenant and continued his Air Force career by becoming a pilot himself and retired with the rank of major in 1987. He resides in Carlsbad, California, and thanks to the assistance of Carlsbad Mayor Keith Blackburn, I was able to contact Mr. Black and share with him how Kermit McNeal had discovered his bracelet. Honored to learn of this and grateful that McNeal hadn't left it behind, Black said he was welcome to keep it.



Arthur Black as a pararescuer/
photo courtesy Arthur Black

That a flea market find could lead to uncovering such stories amazed me. That it offered the chance to interact with these two veterans was a privilege. Mr. McNeal thanked me for my efforts, saying he was certainly happy to hear that Black survived the war, and said the bracelet would remain on display in his home. Opportunities like this make working at the History Center so appealing. I may never look at flea markets the same way again.

If you have any information or items relating to the history of Bossier Parish, the History Center may be interested in adding the materials to its research collection by donation or by scanning them and returning the originals. Call or visit us to learn more. We are open M-Th 9-8, Fri 9-6, and Sat 9-5. Our phone number is (318) 746-7717 and our email is history-center@bossierlibrary.org. We can also be found online at <https://www.facebook.com/BPLHistoryCenter/> and <http://bpl-hc.blogspot.com/>



WORLD WAR *TUESDAYS*

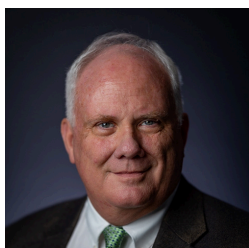
COFFEE & CONVERSATION



10:30 A.M., TUESDAYS:
JULY 8, AUGUST 12, SEPTEMBER 9,
OCTOBER 14, NOVEMBER 4, DECEMBER 9, 2025

Join us at the History Center on the second Tuesday of every month. Discuss a variety of World War II topics in a friendly and informal environment. We'll have "java and sidearms" and "sinkers" for your refreshment. That's WWII-era slang for coffee & fixings (milk and sugar) and donuts (or similar treat)!

UPCOMING TOPICS:



July 8: Guest Speaker Kevin Shannahan, *North Central Louisiana in the Great War*. Join us as Kevin Shannahan talks about life in North Central Louisiana during World War I, and makes connections between the Great War and WWII. Pam Carlisle of the History Center will also add some Bossier Parish connections. Kevin Shanahan has been a resident of Natchitoches since 1994. A former Air Force officer, he taught for four years in Red River Parish with the Troops to Teachers program and is a recently retired state employee. Kevin is also an amateur historian with an interest in archival research.



Aug. 12: Guest Speaker Wesley Harris: *German POWs at Camp Ruston*. In World War II, Camp Ruston was one of the largest prisoner of war camps in the United States. Built in 1942 on 770 acres about seven miles northwest of Ruston, Louisiana, at its peak it held 4,315 prisoners. Wesley Harris is the historian at Claiborne Parish Library and a retired law enforcement executive. He is also a writer for the Lincoln Parish Journal.

If you are on the History Center newsletter email list you will also receive emails with announcements of reminders for World War Tuesday dates and topics. If you are not on our email list and would like to be, please email Pam Carlisle at pcarlisle@bossierlibrary.org, or call 318-746-7717. You can also follow the Bossier Parish Library History Center's Facebook page for event announcements and updates.



Bossier Parish Libraries History Center

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Contact us to join our email list!

HISTORY CENTER PRESENTATIONS

TOPICS INCLUDE:

- *Genealogy and Family Reunions (pictured, below, right)*
- *Caddo Indians, Early Inventors*
- *The Louisiana Maneuvers: The US Army's Rehearsal for WWII*
- *Circus History in NW Louisiana: When the Big Top was Big Time*
- *The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in Bossier Parish: How African-Americans Built-up Barksdale, Rural Roads, and Managed Natural Resources*
- *Dog-Trot Houses of North Louisiana*

The History Center offers presentations on intriguing local history, archaeology and genealogy-related topics for a variety of age groups at the History Center or in your classroom or meeting place.

Contact Pam Carlisle, Outreach Historian at 318-746-7717 or pcarlisle@bossierlibrary.org to schedule, at least a month in advance, please.



CLICK HERE to see
the full list

OR go to www.bossierlibrary.org, choose **Resources** at the top of the page, then **History and Genealogy** then **Presentations List**



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