

# THE HISTORY CURRENT

News & highlights from the Bossier Parish Libraries History Center

*Preserving the history and memories of Bossier Parish, Louisiana*

## This issue:

Historian's Note

PAGE 1

Curator's Corner  
Louisiana's Official  
State Painting

PAGE 2

Bossier West  
of the Red River  
PAGES 3 & 6

Book Releases -  
Nonfiction

PAGE 4

Book Releases -  
Historical Fiction

PAGE 5

Monthly Event

PAGE 7

History Center  
Presentations & Contact Us

PAGE 8



## Autumn Is Upon Us

BY PAM CARLISLE, OUTREACH HISTORIAN

Fall has arrived and with it has come shorter days, cooler weather (we can hope), fall festivals and holidays, and football. The change in season has also brought a new History Center exhibit titled, "Bossier Parish Through the Years." It features items such as a paddle-wheel steamboat model and a Civil War cannonball on loan from Mike and Mark Mangham of Twin Blends Northwest Louisiana History Hunters.

Fall is our outreach season! Kevin Flowers and I thoroughly enjoyed taking our collection of replica Caddo Indian tools and hunting weapons to Archaeology Day at the Louisiana State Exhibit Museum earlier this month. If you missed us, you can catch us on Saturdays October 11<sup>th</sup> or 18<sup>th</sup> at Pioneer Heritage Day at LSUS or the annual Celebration of Wildlife at the Red River Wildlife Refuge. [See page 7](#) for more details. I've also been inspired during recent school visits, talking to some young future historians, archaeologists and knowledgeable citizens! [See page 8](#) if you'd like to schedule a visit in your classroom.

Be sure to look at the book releases for some fascinating history reads. Learn in the Curator's Corner about the artist behind Louisiana's official state painting, and find out why some areas of Bossier Parish actually extend west of the Red River. Enjoy your Fall and discover some history!



# CURATOR'S CORNER

by Jaylie Rester

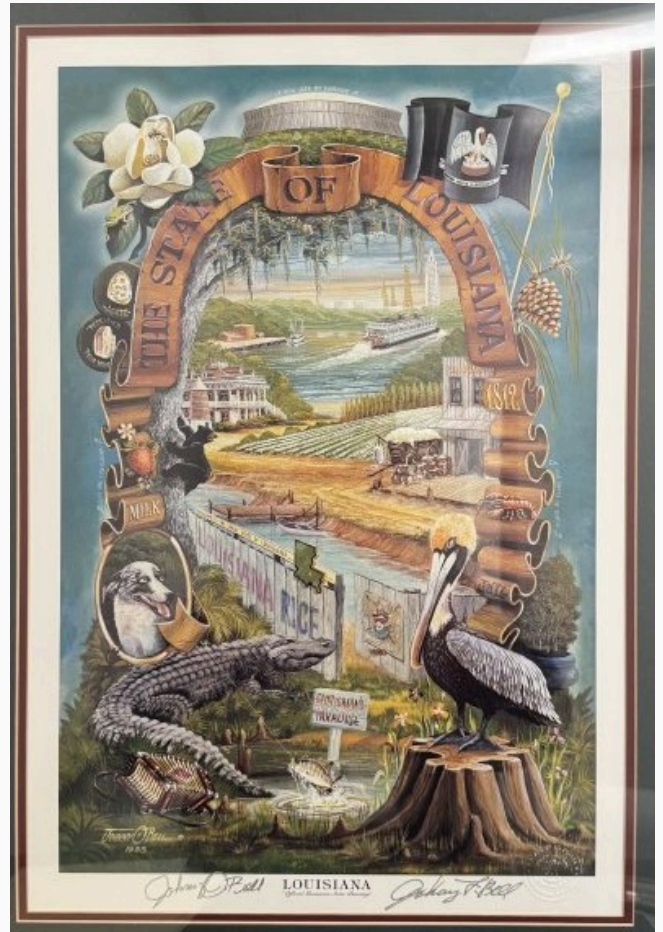
Louisiana is no stranger to the arts. From jazz music to George Rodrigue's Blue Dog paintings to the stories of William Joyce, the state has been the launching point of several artists and styles that have gone on to achieve worldwide fame while remaining inextricably linked to their home. With such an extensive artistic legacy, it is no wonder that Louisiana would eventually adopt an official state painting, a signed print of which is now housed within the History Center's collection. This painting, titled simply "Louisiana," is a collaboration between father and son, Johnny Oats Bell and Johnny Floyd Bell.

Johnny Oats Bell was born in Massachusetts on May 14, 1916, and was raised in Michigan. He served in the South Pacific during World War II, becoming the "artist in residence" for his company. In 1943, after being discharged from the military, he married Margaret Thompson, and the couple settled first in Mississippi, then in Louisiana in 1955. In both of their homes, Johnny Oats worked as a graphic and mural artist, with his own sign company. The Bells had three children together, their eldest being Johnny Floyd Bell.

Born in 1944, Johnny Floyd Bell began working in his father's sign shop as soon as he was old enough to help out. He quickly proved to be every bit the artist that his father was, learning art first from his father, then at Louisiana State College in Pineville. Though he experimented with various styles and techniques, he always considered himself a mural and graphic artist first and foremost, like his father before him. Indeed, he emulated his father so well that at one point, Johnny Oats Bell mistook his son's work as his own, and was left puzzled by the fact that he could not remember painting it.

Eventually, father and son decided to combine their talents to pay tribute to their beloved home, in the form of an oil painting. Completed in 1985, after 10 years of collaborative effort, "Louisiana" managed to incorporate all of Louisiana's state symbols that existed at the time, its history as an agricultural and transportation giant, and its current designation as a "Sportsman's Paradise," all into one stunning work of art. Johnny Oats and Johnny Floyd's styles blended perfectly, so much so that they decided to sign the painting with one "Johnny Bell" signature, with the center containing the father's "O" with the son's "F" nestled within it.

"Louisiana" would eventually catch the attention of Louisiana lawmakers, and on June 29, 1995, Governor Edwin W. Edwards signed Act 981, designating "Louisiana" as the official state painting (though the copyright privileges would remain with the artists). Johnny Floyd Bell would go on to be appointed as "Louisiana's Artist Laureate" by Governor Mike Foster in 1997, a title he held until 2009.



"Louisiana," designated as the official state painting in 1995 by Governor Edwin Edwards.

Today, the original "Louisiana" hangs at the State Capital in Baton Rouge, in a gilded frame. The History Center's print of "Louisiana" is in a much plainer wooden frame, but it is no less of a treasure. It stands not just as a testament of the Bells' incredible craftsmanship and synergism, but as a reminder of the unique beauty and history of Louisiana.





# Bossier West of the Red

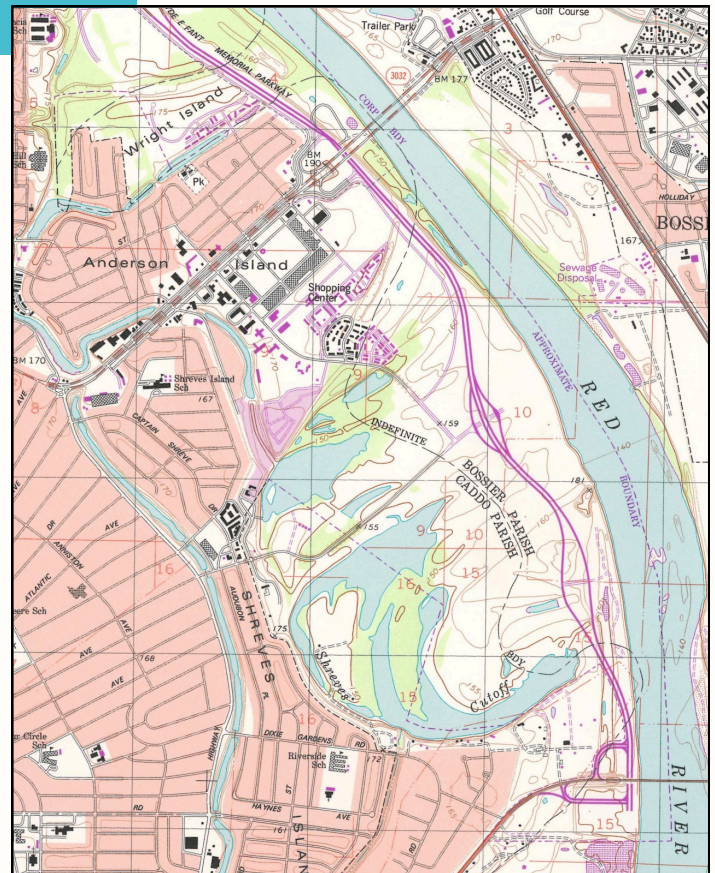
by Jonah Daigle

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

When looking at the bounds of Bossier Parish, one would be forgiven for believing that the western bank of the Red River was entirely Caddo Parish, and the eastern bank was entirely Bossier Parish. One would also be quite wrong. Several portions of the traditional Caddo Parish side of the river are in fact Bossier Parish, leading to several instances of disconnected parish land. The reason for all this is due to the language used on the founding of Bossier Parish, as well as physical geographical changes over the past 182 years.

When the borders of Bossier Parish were first drawn, the area that would become Bossier was still Claiborne Parish (which in turn had once been a portion of the greater Natchitoches Parish). The official wording of the act states: "That all that portion or tract of Country in the Parish of Claiborne bordering on Red River and bounded as follows to wit." The document then goes into detail about official bounds, following Loggy Bayou through Lake Bisteneau, then following Bayou Dorcheat up to the Arkansas state line before turning back west and following the state line until meeting the Red River. The observant might notice that much of the above description does not match the current eastern bounds of Bossier Parish. This is due to Webster, and how it was founded out of three separate Parishes: Bossier, Claiborne, and Beinville. On the western bound, it is important to remember, however, that the river has shifted since the 1843 founding, as well as the fact that Caddo Parish was founded before either Bossier or Clairborne Parish. With Caddo Parish's eastern bound set as the Red River, this created a situation where the bounds for Bossier Parish needed to be drawn in relation to Caddo Parish as well, not just the geographical bounds of the Red River.

First, there is Wright Island, one of the smaller portions of Bossier Parish across the Red River. The residential area has been annexed into the



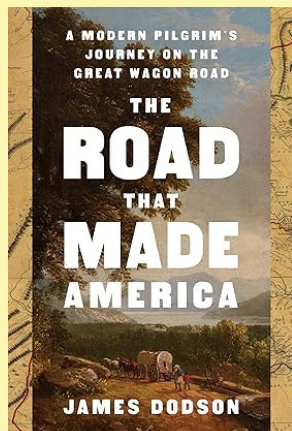
MAP OF BOSSIER PARISH  
WEST OF RED RIVER

Shreveport municipal area, receiving things like fire, police, and sewage from Shreveport, while things like education are carried out by Bossier Parish. Indeed, according to the August 5th, 1961, edition of the Shreveport Journal, Caddo Parish School Board was approached about accepting the students of Wright Island, but the deal never came to fruition, seemingly due to another orphaned part of Bossier Parish, the Free State Park area. To the east, the Coates Bluff Apartments are the largest section of residential buildings on Wright Island, accompanied by a small number of homes to the west. Another, the Champion Lake area closest to the Red River, south of Anderson Island and Westgate Bridge, is also included on the Bossier side of the boundary line. This includes things like the YMCA, the Loyola Athletic Complex, and the Champion Lake Apartments, to name a few. (continued on page 6)





## NEWLY RELEASED HISTORY READS



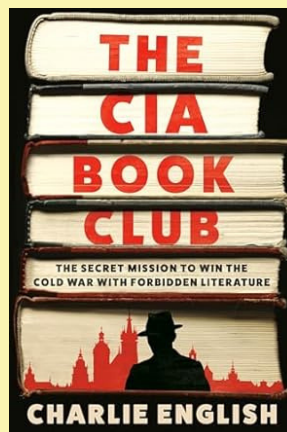
### **The Road that Made America: A Modern Pilgrim's Journey on the Great Wagon Road** by James Dodson

A lively, epic account of one of the greatest untold stories in our nation's history—the eight-hundred-mile long Great Wagon Road that 18th-century American settlers forged from Philadelphia to Georgia that expanded the country dramatically in the decades before we ventured west. Drawing on years of fieldwork and scholarship by an army of archeologists, academics, archivists, preservationists, and passionate history lovers, James Dodson sets out to follow the road's original path from Philadelphia to Georgia.

### **The CIA Book Club: The Secret Mission to Win the Cold War with Forbidden Literature**

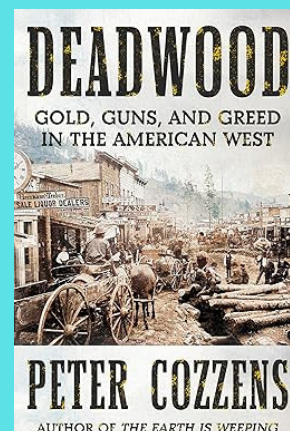
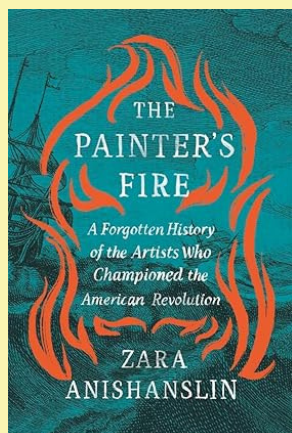
by Charlie English

For nearly five decades after WWII, the Iron Curtain divided Europe, forming the longest and most heavily guarded border on earth. No physical combat would take place along this frontier: the risk of nuclear annihilation was too high for that. Instead, the war was fought psychologically. It was a battle for hearts, minds, and intellects. Few understood this more clearly than George Minden, head of a covert intelligence operation known as the "CIA book program," which aimed to undermine Soviet censorship and inspire revolt by offering different visions of thought and culture. Charlie English narrates this tale of Cold War spycraft, smuggling, and secret printing operations for the first time, highlighting the work of a handful of extraordinary people who fought for intellectual freedom.

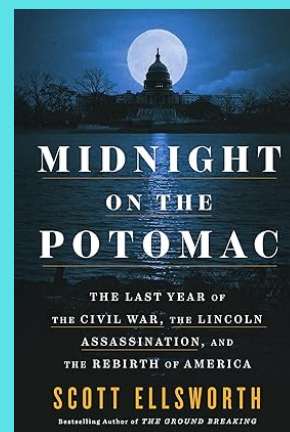


### **The Painter's Fire: A Forgotten History of the Artists Who Championed the American Revolution** by Zara Anishanslin

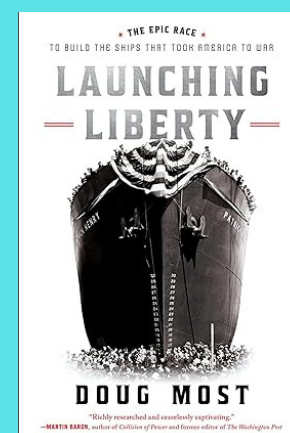
The war that we now call the American Revolution was not only fought in the colonies with muskets and bayonets. On both sides of the Atlantic, artists armed with paint, canvas, and wax played an integral role in forging revolutionary ideals. Illuminating a transatlantic and cosmopolitan world of revolutionary fervor, *The Painter's Fire* reveals an extraordinary cohort whose experiences testify to both the promise and the limits of liberty in the founding era.



### **Deadwood: Gold, Guns, and Greed in the American West** by Peter Cozzens



### **Midnight on the Potomac: The Last Year of the Civil War, The Lincoln Assassination, and the Rebirth of America** by Scott Ellsworth



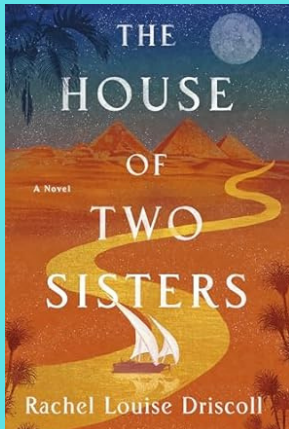
### **Launching Liberty: The Epic Race to Build the Ships that Took America to War** by Doug Most





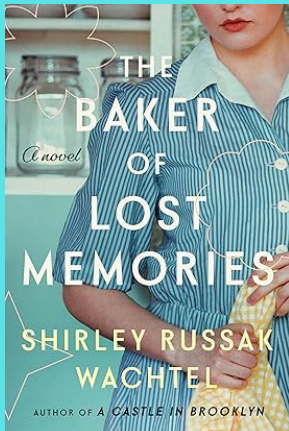


## HISTORICAL FICTION RELEASES



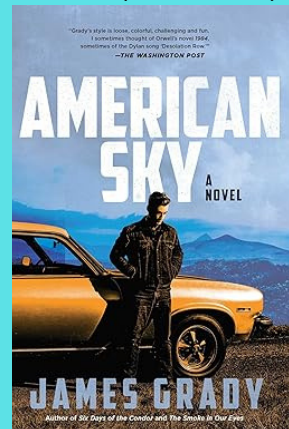
**The House of Two Sisters**  
by Rachel Louise Driscoll

A Victorian Egyptologist traverses the Nile River on a mission to undo a family curse



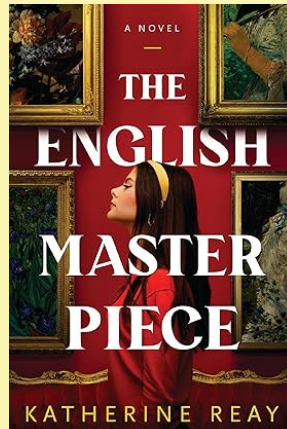
**The Baker of Lost Memories**  
by Shirley Russak Wachtel

An epic novel spanning decades about the broken bonds of family, memories of war, and redemption and hope.



**American Sky** by James Grady

Set in mid-century Montana, a young man is caught in the nexus of vast social change

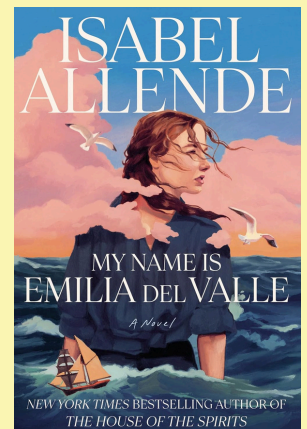


**The English Masterpiece**  
by Rachel Louise Driscoll

Set in the art world of 1970s London, *The English Masterpiece* is a fast-paced read to the end, full of glamour and secrets, tensions and lies, as one young woman races against the clock to uncover the truth about a Picasso masterpiece. As the recently promoted assistant to the Tate's Modern Collections keeper, Lily helps plan a world-class Picasso exhibit to honor the passing of the great artist—and she's waited her whole life for this moment. The opening is beyond anyone's expectations—the lighting, the champagne, the glittering crowd, and the international acclaim—until Lily does the unthinkable. She stops in front of a masterpiece and hears her own voice say, "It's a forgery."

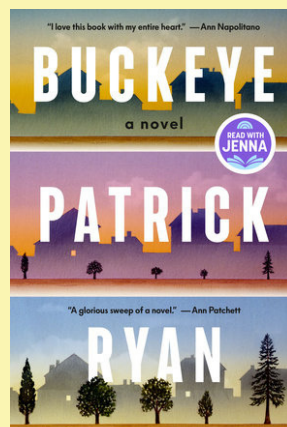
**My Name is Emilia Del Valle**  
by Isabel Allende

In this spellbinding historical novel from the *New York Times* bestselling author of *A Long Petal of the Sea* and *The Wind Knows My Name*, a young writer journeys to South America to uncover the truth about her father—and herself. A riveting tale of self-discovery and love from one of the most masterful storytellers of our time, *My Name Is Emilia del Valle* introduces a character who will never let hold of your heart.



**Buckeye**  
by Patrick Ryan

This captivating story weaves the intimate lives of two midwestern families across generations, from World War II to the late twentieth century. Sweeping yet intimate, rich with piercing observation and the warmth that comes from profound understanding of the human spirit, *Buckeye* captures the universal longing for love and for goodness.





Due to both areas being within Bossier Parish, as well as the East 70th Street Bridge (Jimmie Davis Bridge) area, most of southern Clyde Fant Memorial Parkway lies within Bossier Parish, not Caddo.

The other large portion of Bossier Parish still on the Caddo side of the Red River lies north of Downtown Shreveport, known as the Free State Industrial Park. Formerly the Free State Plantation, the Free State Industrial Park is dominated by two major features, the aptly named industrial park, and the Shreveport Downtown Airport. There are a few homes within the area as well, though residential homes are in the minority of properties in the Free State Park area. One final, and personally unexpected, region of disconnected Bossier Parish sits in downtown Shreveport. The Shreveport Aquarium,

part of Riverview Hall, and the downtown fountains are all part of Bossier Parish. Thanks to the causes, natural and man-made, the Red River has been shifted to its current position. Perhaps it is no surprise, therefore, that some portions of Bossier have become disconnected from the greater whole.

If you have any photos or other information relating to the history of Bossier City or 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](mailto:history-center@bossierlibrary.org). We can also be found online at <https://www.facebook.com/BPLHistoryCenter/> and <http://bpl-hc.blogspot.com/>

---

## NEW HISTORY CENTER EXHIBIT “BOSSIER PARISH THROUGH THE YEARS”





# EVENTS AND OUTREACH



## WORLD WAR TUESDAYS COFFEE & CONVERSATION

10:30 A.M., SECOND TUESDAY OF THE MONTH

**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" (or something equally tasty.) That's WWII-speak for coffee & fixings (milk and sugar) and donuts!



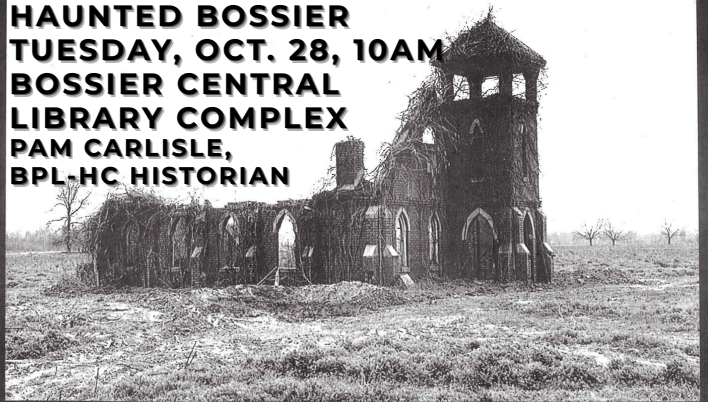
### HISTORY CENTER FALL OUTREACH

Come see our replica Caddo Indian tools and hunting weapons collection (and get some cool swag) at the following upcoming public events:

**SAT. OCT. 11, 10AM-3PM** Annual Pioneer Heritage Day at Pioneer Heritage Village on the campus of LSU-Shreveport (318) 797-5339

**SAT. OCT. 18, 10AM - 2PM** Annual Celebration of Wildlife, Red River National Wildlife Refuge 150 Eagle Bend Point, Bossier City. (318) 742-1219

**HAUNTED BOSSIER  
TUESDAY, OCT. 28, 10AM  
BOSSIER CENTRAL  
LIBRARY COMPLEX  
PAM CARLISLE,  
BPL-HC HISTORIAN**



**Local legends** abound in nearly every American town. The communities of Bossier Parish are no exception. Tales of shadowy ghosts, haunted houses, and eerie screams comprise the frightful folklore of our parish. A little investigation into the **origins of some scary stories** brings historical happenings to the surface.

## Bossier Parish Libraries History Center

7204 Hutchison Drive  
Bossier City, LA 71111



BOSSIER PARISH  
LIBRARIES

318.746.7717

history-center@bossierlibrary.org

www.bossierlibrary.org



Contact us to join our email list! You'll receive our newsletter as well as announcements of World War Tuesday topics and other History Center events,

# HISTORY CENTER PRESENTATIONS

## TOPICS INCLUDE:

- *Haunted Bossier (pictured, at right)*
- *Caddo Indians, Early Inventors*
- *The Louisiana Maneuvers: The US Army's Rehearsal for WWII*
- *Jewish Pioneers of Bossier Parish*
- *The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in Bossier Parish: How African-Americans Built-up Barksdale, Rural Roads, and Managed Natural Resources*
- *Education in Bossier Parish - A Photographic History*

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](mailto: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](http://www.bossierlibrary.org), choose **Resources** at the top of the page, then **History and Genealogy** then **Presentations List**



THE HISTORY CURRENT