



THE HISTORY CURRENT

News and highlights from the Bossier Parish Libraries History Center
Preserving the history and memories of Bossier Parish, Louisiana

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Rumely tractor used for road building c 1912-1914

1997.054.120 Findley Collection

HISTORY CENTER NEWS

by Marisa Richardson

Exciting things are happening at the History Center! We've been awarded two grants from the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities. The first grant is for a project called "Bossier's Virtual History Tour" and gives us the opportunity to let our patrons learn about the history of some fascinating places in our parish through a series of videos.

The second grant is for a virtual series called "Who Gets to Vote?" This is a thoughtful reading and scholar-led discussion series that explores how voting rights history intersects with the challenges we face today. If you've enjoyed our previous Read & React reading series, please be sure to register. We have Dr. Rose Harris, Associate Professor of Political Science at Grambling State University, returning to facilitate our discussions.

All branches of the Bossier Parish Libraries are open to the public. Here at the History Center, we have some new exhibits for you to see. Stop by to view the "Treasures in the Attic" showcasing artifacts that have been in storage. Included is a rare video of a 1956 Dogwood Parade in Plain Dealing. If you're curious about the early days of the oil industry in Bossier, we have a wonderful new exhibit featuring original oil surveying equipment. Come visit and discover Bossier's past!

SPOTLIGHT: BARKSDALE FIRE HEROICS RECOUNTED

by Amy Robertson

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

Barksdale Field, now Barksdale Air Force Base, battled its "worst fire disaster in Barksdale's history" during the winter of 1945. Barksdale personnel detected the fire at 3:03 a.m. on a Tuesday, and it raged on for four hours. Before firefighters could extinguish the fire, it leveled hangars one and two along with two twin-engine airplanes. Firefighters remained on the scene as they continued to apply water to the smoldering embers until 10 a.m.

Barksdale firefighters, soldier volunteers, and two Shreveport crews fought the blaze. Col. Garrison, Lt. Col. Grover Wilcox, and Capt. George Booth organized teams of enlisted men and moved planes and equipment from hangar one. "Col. Wilcox and Capt. Booth entered one ship and manned the controls while volunteer soldiers towed it out on the runway. By the time the men reached the plane, it was partially damaged. Capt. Booth's hands were burned in handling the controls of the plane and Col. Wilcox's clothing was scorched [sic]."



Fire at Barksdale Field, 16 Jan 1945

Photo from *Barksdale Bark* newspaper

The selfless and quick actions of Pvt. Franklin J. Hines made their efforts possible. He single-handedly manned the fire hose's nozzle while perched on a ladder leaning against the burning building when others were driven away by the intense heat. He kept a steady stream of water along the rescue party's path, making it possible for the men to pull the plane from the fire. Also, making it possible for another group of men to remove several gasoline-filled railroad cars sitting nearby.

Hines remained perched precariously on the ladder until he was driven back by the intense heat and smoke. Col. Wilcox and Capt. Booth taxied two planes from the parking area facing the fire while enlisted men towed four other aircraft out of the danger zone. Lt. Lucien G. Edwards submitted a commendation letter to the 380th headquarters for Hines' heroic actions.

Base Commander, Col. William B. Wright, Jr., gave a commendation to Maj. Earle K. Knauer, Assistant Chief of the Supply Division, III TAC, "for superior supervision. He had the gasoline tanks removed and expended great effort with a raging fire about him in an effort to extinguish the fire." Capt. Emile Greenleaf, QM supply office, also received a commendation.

MSgt. James J. Flanagan, Sgt. Maj., 331st Base Unit received a commendation "for issuing orders alerting the Base Headquarters staff, and then proceeded to the fire where he assembled approximately 100 enlisted men to move a heavy gasoline truck from the fire area."

TSgt. Seth T. Fritz of III TAC received a commendation for "disregarding his own safety, and in the face of imminent danger of exploding gas tanks, he entered a fiercely burning hangar with a fire hose in order to extinguish flames, holding property loss to a minimum. Col. Wright made special mention of the saving made to the government by his gallant action."

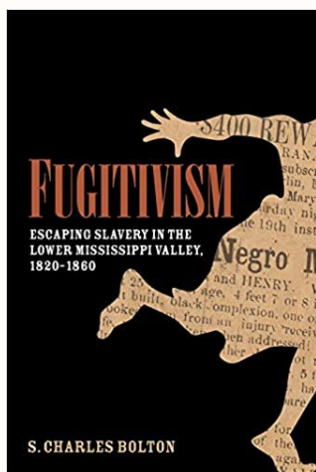
The exploding gasoline tanks shot flames into hangar one's roof shortly after the soldiers had rescued the airplane. "Under the intense heat the 3-inch ceilings sagged 14-feet in great bulges before they [sic] crashed to the floor, dragging large portions of the concrete and steel walls with them." Another plane was pulled to safety just as the roof and hangar doors collapsed. Firefighting is always dangerous, but this fire was made more hazardous by machine gun shells exploding within.

The investigation board concluded that an explosion of two gas heaters caused the early morning fire. Similar heaters in other hangars were removed and replaced with a different type of heating equipment. The concrete slabs where the hangars once stood became a large wash rack—equipped with a large water tank, a solvent solution tank, and pressure hoses. Barksdale used this wash rack to clean B-29s and B-17s. The destroyed airplanes had a value of \$758,000 and the hangars had a value of \$63,000. The cost would have been far greater without everyone's fast and heroic actions in moving equipment while fighting the fire that night.

READ ABOUT HISTORY!

Our History Center staff recommends these nonfiction reads.

These selections are available for checkout at the History Center.
Place a hold or come in to browse.

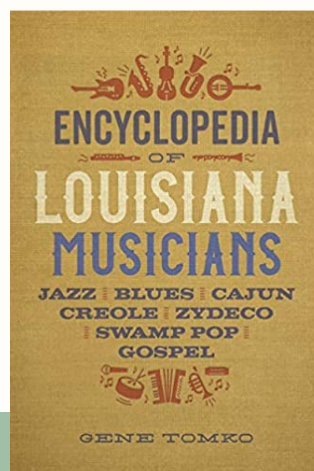


Fugitivism: Escaping Slavery in the Lower Mississippi Valley, 1820-1860 by S. Charles Bolton

Fugitivism provides a wealth of new information taken from advertisements, newspaper accounts, and court records. It explains how escapees made use of steamboat transportation, how urban runaways differed from their rural counterparts, how enslaved people were victimized by slave stealers, how conflicts between black fugitives and the white people who tried to capture them encouraged a culture of violence in the South, and how runaway slaves from the Lower Mississippi Valley influenced the abolitionist movement in the North. Readers will discover that along with an end to oppression, freedom-seeking slaves wanted the same opportunities afforded to most Americans.

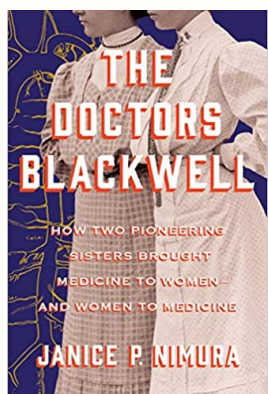
Encyclopedia of Louisiana Musicians by Gene Tomko

Louisiana's unique multicultural history has led to the development of more styles of American music than anywhere else in the country. *Encyclopedia of Louisiana Musicians* compiles over 1,600 native creators, performers, and recorders of the state's indigenous musical genres. The culmination of years of exhaustive research, Gene Tomko's comprehensive volume not only reviews major and influential artists but also documents for the first time hundreds of lesser-known notable musicians.



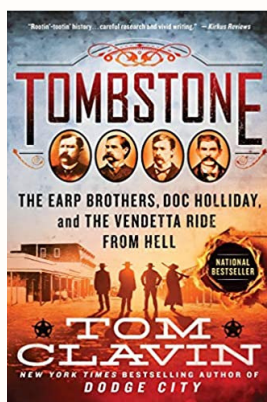
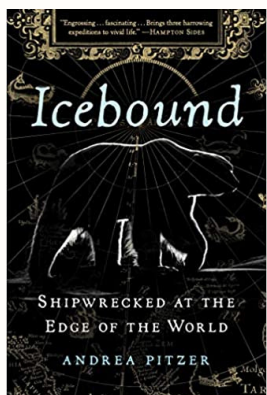
NEW RELEASES

Need a new book for your cozy winter reading?



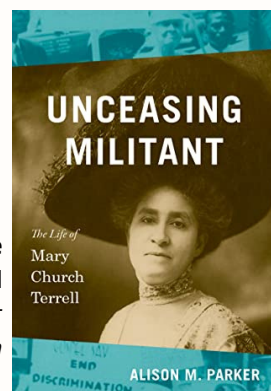
The Doctors Blackwell: How Two Pioneering Sisters Brought Medicine to Women and Women to Medicine by Janice P. Nimura

Icebound: Shipwrecked at the Edge of the World
by Andrea Pitzer
Available as an eBook on Libby



Tombstone: The Earp Brothers, Doc Holliday, and the Vendetta Ride From Hell by Tom Clavin *Available as an eBook and audiobook on Libby*

Unceasing Militant: The Life of Mary Church Terrell
by Alison M. Parker
Available as an eBook on Hoopla



CURATOR'S CORNER

by Randall Palmer

Question: What board game was created to benefit Cystic Fibrosis patients?

Answer: The Shreveport/Bossier Trivia Game.



As a trivia buff, this month I chose to highlight the only board game in the History Center's collection. In 1984, a local group, "Concerned Friends of Cystic Fibrosis", planned to purchase a house where patients and their families could stay while in town receiving treatment. The house was to be named Hilman House, after Dr. Bettina Hilman, the former director of the Shreveport Cystic Fibrosis Center. They decided to create a Trivial Pursuit-style board game that focused on Shreveport and Bossier. Local residents and students contributed questions. Local artist Michael Williams designed the game board and cover. Local organizations and businesses advertised by purchasing blocks on the board or spots on the question cards.

The game made its debut on October 25, 1985, on the 200th birthday of Captain Henry Miller Shreve, and also the year Shreveport celebrated its sesquicentennial. The birthday party included a trivia competition among city leaders at Shreveport's Municipal Auditorium, including Shreveport Mayor John Hussey and Bossier City Councilwoman Wanda Bennett. Afterward, the game went on sale at local businesses for \$19.99. Unfortunately, sales of the game didn't meet expectations, and by December game purchases had stalled, only selling roughly 5,000 of the 20,000 produced. The Concerned Friends group had placed a down payment on a house and was in jeopardy of losing it. This proved too much for the small group to handle and in April 1986, fundraising for the house was turned over to Hilman House, Inc.

Over the next two years through grants and fundraising events, Hilman House finally opened its doors in August 1988. Hilman house served over 110 cystic fibrosis patients and their families for the next twenty-seven years. In 2015, the house was donated to Community Renewal International and is now a Friendship House, focused on improving the lives of those in the Highland area.

If you'd like to hear more about collection items, you can contact Randall at 318-746-7717 or email at rpalmer@bossierlibrary.org



- R** What official of American National Bank made the first Shreveport bank loan for oil exploration in Caddo Parish?
Ray P. Oden, Sr.
- Y** What local auditorium hosts most local wrestling matches?
Municipal Auditorium
- G** Why was Shreve Town dissolved?
Because of legal proceedings against president Angus McNeel in 1843.
- B** Is the area's climate considered "tropical" or "subtropical"?
Subtropical



WHO GETS TO VOTE?

Reading & Virtual Discussion Program

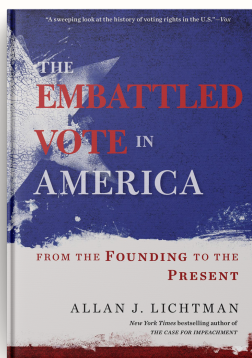
The *Who Gets to Vote?* reading and discussion program is presented by the Louisiana Endowment for the Humanities and funded through the "Why it Matters: Civic and Electoral Participation" initiative, administered by the Federation of State Humanities Councils and funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

From the nation's founding in 1776 to women's suffrage in 1919, from the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to modern-day voter ID laws, voting rights have a complicated history in America. *Who Gets to Vote?* is a thoughtful series exploring how voting rights history intersects with the present.

Our four discussions will be held virtually. Join us online **March 2nd, 9th, 16th, and 23rd at 4pm**. Registration is required and space is limited to 20 participants.

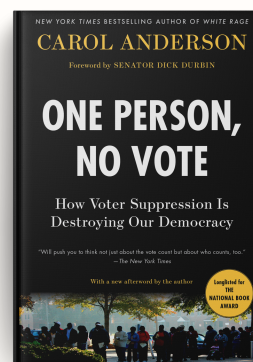
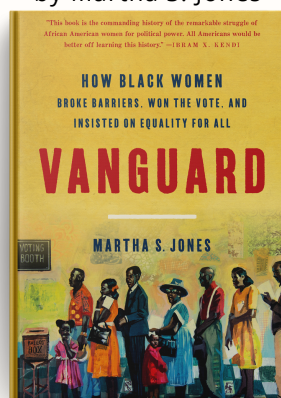
Call us at 318-746-7717 or register through our online calendar at bossierlibrary.org

Each of the four sessions will focus on one of these books. Copies of each will be provided to registrants.



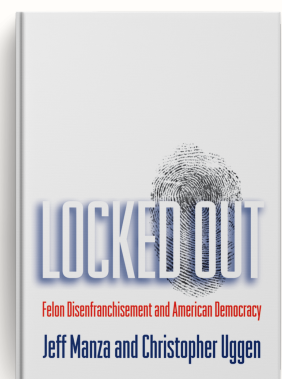
The Embattled Vote in America from the Founding to the Present
by Allan J. Lichtman

Vanguard: How Black Women Broke Barriers, Won the Vote, and Insisted on Equality for All
by Martha S. Jones



One Person, No Vote: How Voter Suppression is Destroying our Democracy
by Carol Anderson

Locked Out: Felon Disenfranchisement and American Democracy
by Jeff Manza and Christopher Uggen



Bossier Parish Libraries History Center

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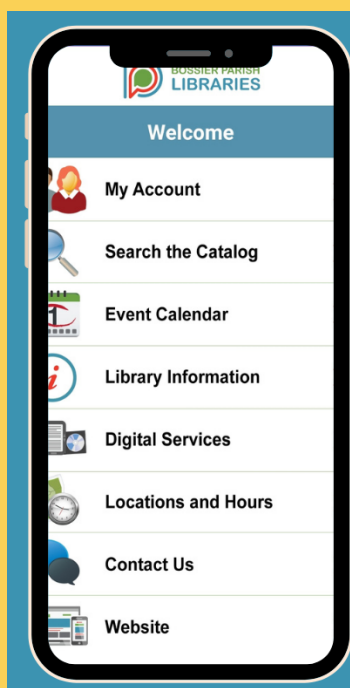
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