

# Wornall-Majors Columns



ALEXANDER MAJORS  
HISTORIC HOUSE AND MUSEUM

Volume I, Issue XXV

Summer 2011

## *A Doctor in the House*

Several novels and major films are set in the Civil War period. There is often a handsome, dashing military officer who rescues and then falls in love with a beautiful woman in distress. While these are great stories there is much real action that doesn't get shown.

The Battle of Westport was fought a bit too close for comfort to Eliza and Frank Wornall. After taking shelter in the cellar when the artillery opened fire they came up to find their home being used as a hospital to treat military personnel. But did you know it was a field hospital for both the Confederates and the Union armies? Partnering with the Clendening History of Medical Museum and the Missouri Humanities Council, the John Wornall House was set up as a hospital in the midst of a major battle.

Several new medical procedures were initiated during the war that are now commonplace. Some of the tools used haven't changed that much. Visitors were able to see actors portraying doctors, nurses, civilians and wounded soldiers. Visitors saw demonstrations of life saving procedures. The medical tools used were exhibited, and experts were available to answer questions.

*We want to thank the Clendening History of Medicine Museum and Library, the KU Endowment Fund, the Missouri Humanities Council, and the Plaza Library for their support of this event.*



*Doctor waiting for patients*



*Removing a bullet*



*Nurses washing bandages*

## **You're Invited! Help Us Light the Fire and Burn the Mortgage!**

Thirty years ago, the John Wornall House Museum formed a new Board of Directors and bought the Museum from the Jackson County Historical Society. On Friday, Sept. 30<sup>th</sup>, we'll finally pay off the mortgage and you're invited to come help us celebrate!

Join us at the Alexander Majors Barn at 6:30 for cocktails and dinner will be served at 7:30. Live music will be provided by the New Red Onion Jazz Babies and tickets are \$100 each. RSVP and pay by credit card at [www.WornallHouse.org](http://www.WornallHouse.org).

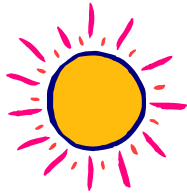
*For more information, call us at [816-444-1858](tel:816-444-1858).*



## Summer Camp Fun!

Camp Wornall/Majors was a great success! There was nothing ordinary or boring about our summer camp. Where else do you get to learn how to dip candles, throw a spear or make ink? Both boys and girls discovered what life was like back in a *Little House on the Prairie* setting. Each day we had special guests who might demonstrate shearing sheep, work in the blacksmith job or the wood working shop. Story tellers shared Uncle Remus stories, American Indian stories and stories with puppets. Everyone has an amazingly good time and the best part is – no homework!

Camp was held four days at the Alexander Majors Home and Fridays at the John Wornall House. A lunch meal was supervised by Helen Miller with hot dogs, a favorite frontier treat! Young minds are kept busy with learning new things and the excitement in their eyes when they accomplish such a task was infectious! The kids had some great stories to share with their families at the end of each day.



## Book Lovers Unite!

Even 200 years after the writing of *Sense and Sensibility*, Jane Austen is still a popular writer. The John Wornall House welcomed the Jane Austen Society of North America to hold their spring meeting on the lawn.

Part of the festivities included an informal tea and a performance by members of the group. Four scenes from *Sense and Sensibility* were chosen. The first act was Mrs. Jennings trying to pry information from the Dashwood women about “Mr. F.”. Everyone held their breath in the second scene as Willoughby rescues Marianne from her reckless behavior. Colonel Brandon reveals to Miss Elinor Dashwood the true nature of Willoughby in the third scene. The mood is lifted in the fourth act when Edward proposes and marries Marianne.

After the performers took their final bow, everyone was treated to iced tea and enjoyed refreshment such as shortbread, trifle, and a rum cake among other things. Those who wanted to experience even more history, were able to take a tour of the Wornall House and its herb garden.

## My, How Times have Changed

Nowadays, Paris and New York are top-ranked for having the runways to showcase the newest styles of clothing. Modern age models strut down catwalks wearing high heels and high dollar fashion. The up-to-date clothing articles are nothing like what people wore 150 years ago.

Kandice Walker, Director of the Wornall and Majors Homes, with microphone in hand led us all back to a simpler time. That doesn’t mean it was any easier to get dressed! Even on hot summer days, a proper lady didn’t dare step out of her home without making sure she was decently covered. Corsets, bloomers, petticoats had to be donned and let’s not forget the all important hoop to give the women the desired shape before adding the dress. Shoes had to be fastened with a tool. Then there was the ever present problem of what to do with the hair. Every respectable young lady wore her hair up and hidden under a dust cap or a bonnet if she was going out in public.

Men had it easier than the women did. However, there were fashion tips the fellows had to follow also. No man would want to be caught without a shine on his shoes. The look wasn’t finished until a hat was perched on top of the head.

The Civil War Fashion Show was held at the Kansas City Public Library at the Plaza location. The audience gathered around afterwards and marveled at the different steps and how much time it took to get dressed back in the “old days”. What a price our ancestors paid for being well dressed!

## Okee Dokee Brothers

It's not very often when parents enjoy the same songs and music as their kids. But everyone in the family from little kiddies to the big kids (also known as adults) like the Okee Dokee Brothers duo. This singing sensation came to the Wornall House recently and was a big hit.

Joe Mailander and his childhood best friend Justin Lansing grew up in Denver Colorado. Always dreaming of becoming famous for writing their own songs and performing, the fellows toured around the Midwest area playing bluegrass music. They remembered how much fun a childhood imagination can be so they decided to stick with their down home roots and write music to entertain the entire family. Kids are encouraged to wiggle and even some grown ups have the urge to join them. No matter who hears their songs, everyone has a great time.



In fact, their album "Take It Outside" is a Parents Choice Award for 2010 and also won a NAPPA Gold Award in 2010. This same album is the 6<sup>th</sup> best selling album of the year. That is quite an honor, and we look forward to having them back in the future.

## We've Got Rhythm

One of the favored pastimes is going to musical concerts. If you attend many of these events, there is usually a ticket to purchase or a cover charge. That wasn't the case for those attending the free concert at the John Wornall House on June 25.

Chambers Music is a talented bluegrass family band that performed for a group of Wornall House visitors. With such instruments as a mandolin, a good banjo, a fiddle (known as a violin in more cultured musical settings), and some good rhythm, everyone had a great time. Anyone looking closely would have noticed some heads nodding to the beat as well as a bit of toe tapping, finger-snapping, and even the slightest shimmy of the shoulders.

More free concerts are on the horizon so keep watch for upcoming details. Be sure and mark your calendar so you don't miss another "note"-able performance!



## A Musical Evening

Once again, the John Wornall House was host for the Music on the Lawn held on Friday, August 26. The entertainment was "An Evening with Stephen Foster" who gave us such epic favorites such as "Camp Town Races", "Oh! Susanna", and "My Old Kentucky Home".

Stephen Foster, portrayed by our own Carl Anderton, was known as the Father of American Music. When Stephen was 18, his first song, "Open Thy Lattice Love", was published, but his first big hit was "Oh! Susanna". By the age of 24, he already had 12 compositions in print. His intention was to write the people's music, using images and a musical vocabulary that would be widely understood by all groups

Families brought their blankets and lawn chairs to relax to the music of a different time. Several enjoyed a picnic supper and watching the children dancing to the rhythm of these long ago popular songs.



## Smile Pretty Now

The Heugh-Edmondson Conservation of Art receives a huge round of applause and thanks for restoring John and Eliza Wornall's wedding photo. The daguerreotype photo was also reframed at no cost and now sits in an ideal location back in its original home.

Now you're probably asking what is a daguerreotype photo. It's a big word and not used in everyday conversation these days. However, in 1839 this type of photography was introduced first in Paris and then in New York City that same year. Famous photographers such as Robert Cornelius and Matthew Brady were among the first to use this method. By 1850, there were over 70 daguerreotype studios in New York City alone. Its popularity declined in the 1850s.

Making these types of photos took great care and was very tricky. The silver-plated copper plate first had to be cleaned and polished until the surface looked like a mirror. Next, the plate was sensitized in a closed box over iodine until it took on a yellow-rose appearance. The plate, held in a light-proof holder, was then transferred to the camera. After exposure to light, the plate was developed over hot mercury until an image appeared. To fix the image, the plate was immersed in a solution of sodium thiosulfate or salt and then toned with gold chloride.

That is a lot of work! The earliest daguerreotypes ranged from three to fifteen minutes to process making it nearly impractical for portraits. Modifications soon reduced the exposure time to less than a minute.

To the staff at Heugh-Edmondson Conservation – we salute you! You've restored a priceless heirloom so that others can enjoy it.



## Home Sweet Home

The Kansas City Public Library continues with their educational program on architecture. One recent program was on antebellum homes in Kansas City. The library is hosting these presentations in honor of the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Civil War.

One of our board members Tom Taylor gave a well-attended program this summer. In his audience as he spoke and shared a power point presentation on the Wornall and Majors Homes were descendants of both John Wornall and Alexander Majors. The John Wornall House was built in 1858 and was used as a field hospital during the Battle of Westport. The Alexander Majors Home was built in 1856. Mr. Majors was instrumental in developing the Kansas City stockyard and also a substantial freighting business which later gave birth to the Pony Express. Both homes are of the Greek revival style which was popular in the early to mid-1800s. This manner of building can still be found in homes today on a much smaller scale.

## Have a Seat

We can't thank Hayden Wylie enough for providing the really nice benches at the Alexander Majors House.

What? You haven't heard of Hayden?

Hayden has been working at becoming an Eagle Scout in a local Boy Scout troop. He became involved with the scouts when he was in fifth grade. Participating in the hiking, camping, and their other adventures is among his favorite activities. He has also kept busy with the scout camps during the summer. Because of his all ready full and hectic schedule, his plans were a bit delayed in working on his Eagle Scout badge. Hayden chose to build several benches for the Alexander Majors House as his project to earn the highly coveted honor.

The well constructed seating is a wonderful addition to the grounds. Along with being nice looking, they will be well used and appreciated by everyone who attends events.

Thank you, Hayden, on your perseverance and contributing such a much needed and appreciated item. We wish you well in all of your future endeavors!

## It's Not an Easy Job

If you watch just about any western show, you may hear the clank of a hammer hitting an anvil in the background. That's because blacksmiths were an integral part of the pioneer life.

There was more to being a blacksmith than just shoeing horses. Often times they were called to be horse dealers, veterinarians, and even an occasional dentist. They also made axes, plows, nails and hoops for barrels. All of these essential items were in huge demand as the new country moved west, building houses and wagons predominantly out of wood. Blacksmiths were also in great demand to make the hardware used in 18th century sailing ships. The craft was passed on from master blacksmiths to boy apprentices, who began learning the trade when they were six or seven years old. The work was strenuous and physically demanding.

The earliest blacksmiths created conical stone furnaces called "bloomeries" in which they burned charcoal to heat iron ore. To make the fire hot, they used bellows to pump in air. When the furnace reached 2,800 degrees F, the iron would be malleable enough to be shaped into plow blades, axes, etc.

When blacksmiths hammer and fold the hot iron, they are working in wrought iron. When they pour the molten iron into molds, they are working in cast iron. Until the 18th century, blacksmiths used charcoal as fuel, and later coal became the fuel of choice because it burned hotter longer for a longer time.

One very successful family blacksmithing business was owned by the Studebakers. Before they became involved in the early automobile industry, they made Conestoga wagons. Another brand that remains a household name today, John Deere, was a blacksmith who developed a steel plow in 1838. His invention was one of the first signs that the demand for things made from iron was decreasing. The shift happened with the development of the mass-produced machines that made the Industrial Revolution possible. For example, in 1800, every nail had to be hand-forged by a blacksmith, but by the 1850s, nail factories were producing cut nails for sale by the pound.

The United States military phased out blacksmiths as of 1910, the same time that factories stopped using them. So for the greater part of the twentieth century, blacksmithing was in danger of becoming a lost art. By the 1970s, however, a revival of the craft was in full swing,

Now that we are in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we were fortunate to have demonstrations throughout the summer. Thank you to David Hoops and the Kansas City RenFest Living History group for making history come alive for us! It sure makes us appreciate how hard our forefathers worked for everyday items.

## The Measure of Great Men

Greatness can be measured in many ways. Two of the most highly respected men during the turbulent times of the Civil War were Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. Both men didn't let the conditions of their birth and childhood stop them from their work to enrich humanity.

There was a standing room only crowd for a recent performance at the Majors Barn. Kansas City actors, Walter Coppage and Robert Gibby Brand, portrayed Mr. Douglass and the "Great Emancipator" President Lincoln. Using each man's own historic words they spoke of the struggle to end slavery. This was a special event that made these men come alive.

A performance by Molly Postlewait entitled "Lamp of Freedom" was also part of the evening's entertainment. Ms. Postlewait assumed the role of Georgette Tucker in describing the Underground Railroad stops along the Missouri and Kansas border.

If you were not in attendance for these performances, you missed a real treasure.



## With a Big Help from Our Friends

There are some lyrics to a famous Beatle song that goes “. . . I get by with a little help from my friends”. The situation is the same for both the Wornall and Majors Houses except it’s a BIG help from our friends!

We would like to thank the H & R Bloch Foundation for their gracious donation. With these needed funds, we are able to purchase educational supplies to help visitors – both young and old – to make a connection to our historic homes. Now we are able to keep an ample amount of materials at both of the museums.

A big thank you also goes to the William T. Kemper Foundation, Commerce Bank Trustee, for their \$25,000 donation. The money is being used for much needed repair of the windows at the Alexander Majors Home. The windows are old and time as well as extreme weather has caused rotting. With the winter months soon upon us, it is an immediate project to be undertaken.

Last but not least, we would also like to thank the Sunderland Foundation for their generous donation to replace our walkways. The old one was made from flagstone and bricks which over time had become uneven and a potential hazard. Thanks to the Sunderland Foundation, new bricks were laid in the front and the back and a ramp from the parking lot to the front has made the walk more accessible. It all looks beautiful, and we made sure to keep it historically correct.

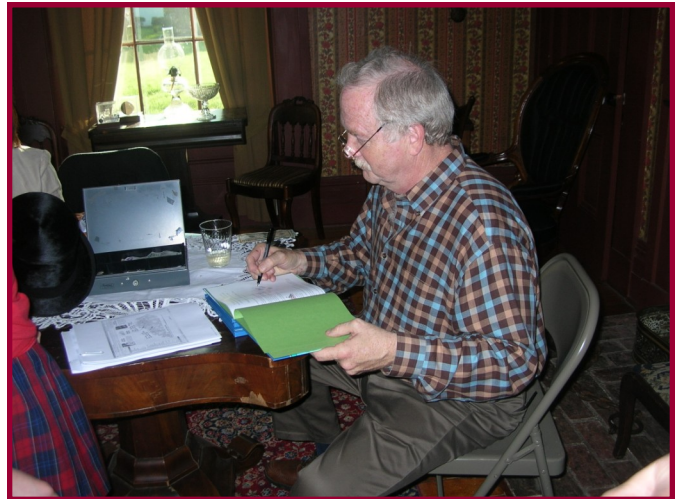


*Thank you to all of our friends for helping to keep our treasured sites looking beautiful for years to come. We would be lost without you!*

## Other News at the Wornall House

The Wornall House has started something new! If you are a member, you should have received a copy of the new membership roster in the mail.

We hope for this to be a prototype, and plan to update it every two years. The blank pages in the back are to update as you need. We hope this booklet will be of benefit to you.



*The Wornall House recently hosted a book signing featuring Bob Bloch and his new book “My Best Friend Abe Lincoln”.*

A big “Thank You” to Debbie Postal, Sharon Cassity, and Kate Gleeson who have assisted us greatly by writing all of the articles in our newsletter! We appreciate your hard work!

*Thank You*

# Thank You for Your Generosity!

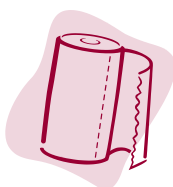
Thanks to Helen Miller for her generous donation of a cord of wood to be used for our open hearth cooking demonstrations. Helen also generously donated a hand-made candlewick quilt for a raffle to benefit the Wornall House. Stop by the Wornall House Gift Shop any time before Oct. 31<sup>st</sup> to purchase a raffle ticket and to see the beautiful quilt. Raffle tickets are \$2 each or 3 for \$5.

Thank you also to Penny Jones for her wonderful gift of her antique doll quilt that was made for her when she was a girl by her aunt.

## Wish Lists

### Wornall House:

- ◆ Used candles for candle dipping
- ◆ Clean, small jars (baby food sized)
- ◆ Paper towels
- ◆ Toilet paper
- ◆ Cleaning Supplies
- ◆ Reams of copy paper



### Majors House:

- ◆ Paper towels
- ◆ Toilet paper
- ◆ Cleaning supplies
- ◆ Fall decorations



Did you know that the Wornall House survives entirely on donations, admissions, and memberships? If you are not a member, we hope that you will consider joining now. Members receive free guided tours, discounts in the gift shop, free or discounted admissions to selected special events, and the satisfaction of helping to preserve and interpret one of Kansas City's important historical landmarks. You may download a membership form from our website, or fill out and send in the membership coupon below.

**Yes,** I (we) would like to support the John Wornall House Museum by becoming a new member!

- \_\_\_\_\_ \$25.00 Student or Senior
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$35.00 Individual
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$50.00 Family
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$\_\_\_\_\_ contribution for memorial or honorary

- Society of 1858
- \_\_\_\_\_ \$100.00 Contributing
  - \_\_\_\_\_ \$250.00 Sponsoring
  - \_\_\_\_\_ \$500.00 Sustaining
  - \_\_\_\_\_ \$1,000.00 and above Benefactor

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Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (    ) \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

For credit card use: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Total

MC/Visa/Discover # \_\_\_\_\_

Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

## Upcoming Events!

The Wornall House will soon pay off its mortgage and be completely self-owned! Join us for a...

### *Mortgage Burning Party*

When: Friday, September 30, 2011

Time: Cocktails at 6:30, Dinner at 7:30

Where: The Alexander Majors Barn

Cost: \$100 per plate

*Featuring live music from the New Red Onion Jazz Babies*

For more information on this event, or to purchase tickets, visit our website!

## Wornall House Ghost Tours

October 14, 15, 21, & 22

6pm-9pm

\$15 per Person

*One of our most popular events—Get your reservations now!*



*Don't miss out on exciting events at both the Wornall House and the Majors House!*

*Visit [www.wornallhouse.org](http://www.wornallhouse.org) or [alexandermajors.com](http://alexandermajors.com) for information on upcoming activities.*

**Museum Staff**  
Kandice Walker, Director  
Elizabeth Dwyer, Assistant to Director  
Marguerite Milliken, Assistant  
Kate Gleeson, Weekend Staff  
Doreen Disbrow, Weekend Staff  
Jeanne Gilbert, Weekend Staff  
Sharon Cassity, Weekend Staff

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