



# Wornall/Majors Columns

The newsletter of the Wornall/Majors House Museums

Volume II, Issue 3 | Fall/Winter 2016

## Wornall/Majors Spring & Summer 2016 Programs



*Top Left* Campers at our Toys & Games day camp enjoy dressing up in period clothing at the Majors House.

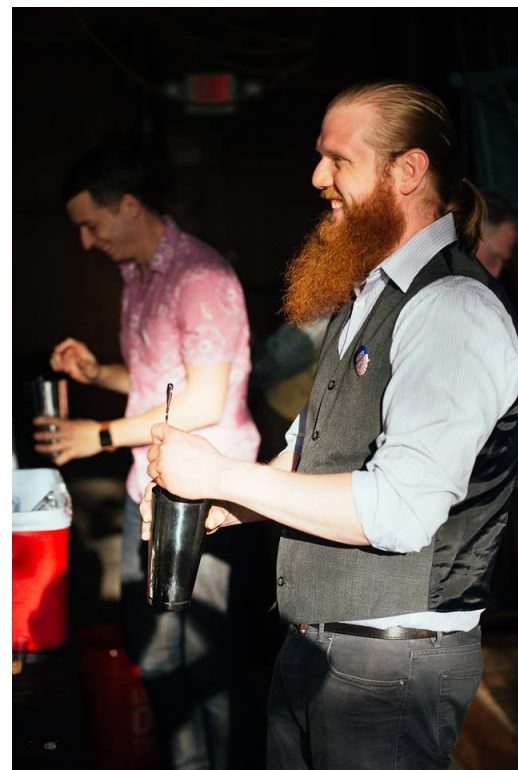


*Top Center* Students learn all about the Underground Railroad from volunteer Connie Jones during a field trip.



*Center* Chefs Lon & Stewart Lane discuss growing & cooking with herbs at the Herb Cooking Demo, April 24.

*Far Right* Mixologists from the US Bartender's Guild make drinks for attendees of the April 28 Herb Cocktail Party.



## Garden Tour Showcases Beautiful Local Gardens

**T**he weather on June 4, 2016 was beautiful and sunny, perfect for touring six lovely and inspirational local gardens. Over 950 attendees visited gardens in the Crestwood, Brookside, Southmoreland, and Rosedale neighborhoods, and were delighted to find gardens both meticulously manicured, and eclectic and surprising. The Garden Tour is the Wornall/Majors House Museums' largest biennial fundraising event.

Brand new to the 2016 Garden Tour was a partnership with the Strawberry Swing Indie Craft Fair, with garden-themed vendors to welcome guests to the Wornall lawn, and food and drink available through local food trucks.

We are pleased to announce that this was a record-setting year for Garden Tour attendance and look forward to bringing even more amazing gardens to the public in 2018!



# How Can a House Museum be Relevant Today?

## Letter from Program Director Sarah Bader-King

**W**hat makes a historic house museum worth supporting? What gives it value to the community? Unfortunately, for many, a house museum is simply a house with old stuff in it. Once you've seen it once, you've seen all there is to see. But what if a house museum was a place to see, touch, and taste things you've never experienced before? What if it was where you went to drink innovative cocktails from local mixologists? What if it is was where you sent your children to understand history in a way that they can't get from textbooks? What if it was where you brought your family for holiday programs that become beloved traditions?

The Wornall/Majors House Museums seek to bring you innovative programs for all: young and old, fans of both the traditional and the modern, both history buffs and those just dipping their toe into local history. I think you will be excited and surprised by some of the programs that we are currently working hard to bring you in 2017. Your favorite programs aren't going anywhere—you won't want to miss out on annual traditions like the Herb Cocktail Party, Herb Sale, Summer Camp, Ghost Tours, and holiday Candlelight Tours. But 2017 will also bring exciting new exhibits to the Houses, a trivia night, food trucks at the Majors House, cocktail events, an herb luncheon, and other fun surprises to be revealed soon!

History isn't just in the past at the Wornall and Majors Houses. We're living it every day, bringing it to you in ways that are both accessible and fun. And it's not just programs. Haven't been to the houses for a normal public tour in a while? We are constantly making changes to our tours, as new research becomes available and new objects are added to our collection.

The Houses are living, breathing, vital parts of Kansas City. I hope you see their value and become part of our community by attending programs, touring the Houses, volunteering, or becoming a member. Make history with us!



## 2017 Calendar of Events



Details and tickets to be announced as the dates approach. To receive updates on these and other

Wornall/Majors events, register for our email list on our website at [www.wornallmajors.org](http://www.wornallmajors.org), or send your email to [programs@wornallmajors.org](mailto:programs@wornallmajors.org). You can also follow our events on Facebook ([facebook.com/wornallmajors](https://facebook.com/wornallmajors)) or Twitter ([@historyalivekc](https://twitter.com/historyalivekc)).

**January-March:** "Hunting Freedom" exhibit (Wornall)

**April-June:** "Hunting Freedom" exhibit (Majors)

**April-October:** Food Truck Fridays (Majors Parking Lot)

**April:** Civil War Field Day (Wornall)

**April 23:** Herb Luncheon (Majors)

**April 27:** Herb Cocktail Party (Majors)

**April 29:** Herb & Wildflower Sale (Wornall)

**May:** Kansas City History Trivia Night (Majors)

**May-August:** "Wornalls after the Civil War" Exhibit (Wornall)

**Summer TBD:** Eat, Drink, Preserves! Festival (Majors)

**June-July:** Camp Wornall/Majors (Wornall & Majors)

**September:** Cemetery Crawl

**October 20, 21, 27, 28:** Ghost Tours (Wornall)

**December 8-9:** Holiday Candlelight Tours (Wornall)

...and other events to be announced!



# Volunteer Spotlight: Margaret Lyddon

**M**argaret Lyddon has been a popular and active docent at the John Wornall House Museum since the 1970s. You'd never believe that she recently celebrated her 90th birthday. She's in excellent shape, with perfect posture and eyes that twinkle with playful humor.

"I especially enjoy talking to the children on the tours," says Margaret. "They simply cannot comprehend the fact that there was neither electricity nor bathrooms in the house. I emphasize how much hard work the children had to do back then, such as filling wood boxes and trimming candles."



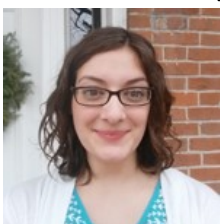
The daughter of a civil engineer named Frank L. Carswell, Margaret relocated to Kansas City from Denver in 1927. Developer J.C. Nichols had recruited Margaret's father, enlisting him to pave the original cobblestone streets of the Country Club Plaza. After attending Southwest High School, she enrolled at the University of Colorado, where she studied chemistry and mathematics. World War II was raging at the time, and Margaret aimed to become a WAVE (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service). But the war ended, and she soon met her husband, James, at the university. Returning to Kansas City, the couple would become the parents of four girls and one boy. She now boasts 13 grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

The remarkable nonagenarian keeps a notebook that overflows with clippings and brochures pertaining to the era represented by the Wornall House—many of the sheets contain handwritten notes in the margins. Ribbon-tied pioneer recipes and newspaper articles about people and places of interest are carefully preserved.

Multitalented Margaret continues to lead a full and productive life. She reads two newspapers each day, and she plays a mean game of Sudoku. She has written and edited her high school newsletter for some 40 years. She once served as a docent in historic Arrow Rock, Mo., where she gave monthly tours. She and three of her high school chums traveled throughout the world, experiencing nearly every country but India.

The John Wornall House is fortunate to have included Margaret among its volunteers. Although she is retiring from regular service, she will certainly continue to lend her expertise and unflagging energy to our museum. "I think Kansas City has a great history, but very few residents are aware of it," says Margaret. We appreciate her years of service in helping us share that history!

# Staff Spotlight: Leah Palmer to Curate New Exhibit



**L**eah Palmer, volunteer manager and Wornall weekend manager, is the public face of the Wornall House on Friday-Sunday. She leads both public and private tours, and trains and coordinates docents and volunteers.

"I especially like that moment on a tour when someone says, 'Oh wow, I had no idea about that,'" says Leah. "I really enjoy exposing people to this period of regional history. I think a house museum offers people a great opportunity to come in and have a discussion with someone."

Leah is currently working towards her MA in Public History at UMKC. Her work at the Museums is directly related to her research on emancipation, the topic of her master's thesis. She will have the opportunity to share her work with guests of both the Wornall and Majors Houses, as her research will be displayed in a special exhibit entitled "Hunting Freedom: The Many Paths to Emancipation in Civil War Missouri." The exhibit will be on display at the Wornall House January-March 2017 and at the Majors House in April-June 2017. It explores emancipation in western Missouri, providing a diverse interpretation of our region's history.

The exhibit is generously funded by a grant from Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area. "Thanks to Freedom's Frontier, we have the opportunity to tell a really compelling story. There was a window of opportunity here in western Missouri in which enslaved people were able to reach freedom in large numbers. These are the stories we are going to tell with this exhibit," says Leah.

# Majors House Wood Restoration

## Preserving an Antebellum Landmark

**L**ocated at 8201 State Line Road, the Alexander Majors House stands in stark contrast to the bustling business corridor along the busy thoroughfare. Built in 1856, it is one of the few remaining antebellum structures in our community today. Had it not been for the efforts of a tenacious lady named Louisa Johnston (also the great granddaughter of Alexander Majors), this historically significant structure and the land surrounding it would have been absorbed as another commodity not to withstand the test of time!

Today, curious guests stop in unaware of the significance of the structure, what it represents to our community and the nation, and of the persistent woman who rallied then-senator and future president, Harry S. Truman, to place the structure on the National Register. Visitors quickly learn that this landmark is a place that not only preserves our early history but seeks to help us all feel and create our own sense of place.

So, it is in the spirit of Louisa Johnston that we invite you to help us continue to share that history through the preservation of place. Your contribution to support the critically needed exterior wood restoration of the Majors House will not only help us maintain the integrity of one of Kansas City's most historic landmarks for years to come, it will also ensure this landmark continues to be an enduring place that embodies the hopes and ideals of the community, and its ongoing efforts to live up to them!



**Louisa Johnston**, great granddaughter of Alexander Majors, who saved the Majors House by purchasing the then-vacant house using only her modest teacher's salary.

### Funders to-date include:

**The Sunderland Foundation**  
**Kearney Wornall Foundation, UMB Bank, trustee**  
**The Taylor S. Abernathy & Patti Harding Abernathy Charitable Trust, Bank of America**  
**Lynn Mackle**

To donate to the wood restoration process at Majors, please contact Kerrie Nichols at [director@wornallmajors.org](mailto:director@wornallmajors.org) or 816-444-1858 or visit [www.wornallmajors.org/donations](http://www.wornallmajors.org/donations).



Pishny Restoration Services (far left) have already performed emergency repairs on some boards of the Majors House siding that were beginning to badly deteriorate. These repairs stabilized the House's exterior to mitigate future damage until a full restoration is funded.

The Wornall/Majors House Museums strives to restore the House in an authentic way to preserve the historic architectural elements of the home.

Perhaps its most distinct feature is the stark white wood siding, shown above in a photograph dated from 1933.

# History Corner

## Roma Wornall: “Early Memories of Kansas City”

from a speech given to the United Daughters of the Confederacy  
c. 1914–1916

...The greatest change to me has been the turning of the ground, or pasture as we called it, into Park Lane, and all the improvements all along there, the Plaza and St. Luke’s Hospital. Years ago we had to pass by this pasture that fronted on Wornall Road and I often wondered what it could be used for. It had buckbrush, rocks and all kinds of undergrowth. It was just filled with brush and undergrowth, not at all attractive and just look now at the business there. I have seen so many changes. I lived in the Wornall Homestead when it was surrounded by a 500 acre farm, now I live in it surrounded by a city.



View from Mill Creek Park, 1925, looking northwest from the south end of the park. Shows Parklane apartments under construction and Saint Luke’s Hospital can be seen in the background. *Courtesy of Missouri Valley Special Collections.*

## The Alexander Majors Oath

To work for one of Alexander Majors’ companies, employees were required to agree to a code of conduct. As he recalls in his memoirs, “I do not remember a single instance of a man...being discharged without his pay...I found that an ounce of dignity on the plains was worth more than a pound at home or in organized society.” During the Civil War, his employees also were bound to “true allegiance” to the government of the United States.

## Artifact Fact

The beautiful, canopied child’s bed in the upstairs bedroom of the Majors House is a visitor favorite and also one of the most important pieces in our collection. The bed was donated to the House in 1988 by Mary Majors Dunn of Omaha, Nebraska, descended from Andrew Dorsey Majors (born 1882), and who slept in the bed as a child in Peru, Nebraska. He was the fourth child of Olive and Wilson E. Majors, and a relative of Alexander Majors. This bed is the only piece in the collection of furnishings at the Majors House that has a direct connection to the Majors family.

The four-poster bed is made of walnut, and probably dates to the period when the House was built, just before the Civil War. The last Majors descendants to sleep in the bed as children were the donor, her sister, Betty Majors Kozak, and her daughter, Karen Kozak.

The coverlet currently displayed on the bed is made from cotton and wool in an overshot, bow-knot pattern and also dates to the mid-nineteenth century. The coverlet was donated by board member Libby Gessley.



“ While I am in the employ of A. Majors, I agree not to use profane language, not to get drunk, not to gamble, not to treat animals cruelly, and not to do anything else that is incompatible with the conduct of a gentleman. And I agree, if I violate any of the above conditions, to accept my discharge without any pay for my services. ”



# Children Welcome at the Wornall & Majors Houses!

Spring at the Wornall and Majors Houses was full of the chatter of children, as record numbers of youth visited the museums for field trips and Scout trips. To date in 2016, Wornall/Majors has engaged over 1,000 students in hands-on learning about the past with still more youth field trips scheduled before the year is out.

Field trips typically consist of a tour of either the Wornall or Majors House, plus fun and interactive add-on activities. Students might be delighted to see a Civil War soldier or surgeon in front of them, or they might participate in making a craft to take home, like a corn husk doll or other traditional nineteenth century toy. Or they might enjoy tasting hard tack or butter they've made themselves.

School trips aren't the only way to expose youth to local history, however. The Museums also offer periodic family fun days for crafts and child-friendly house tours, a monthly Saturday Storytime at the Barn for pre-K children, and summer camp for ages 5-12. Children of all ages can also volunteer at the Museums, and we are grateful of the contributions of our youth volunteers who help us at holiday events, train to give museum tours, and serve as camp assistants.



Above Youth volunteers Cooper Most and Garrett Stephens have fun volunteering at Candlelight Tours. Ten youth volunteers under 16 helped at the tours in 2015.  
Left Field trip students view authentic Civil War soldier artifacts.

*To schedule a field trip for your classroom, contact Sarah Bader-King at 816-444-1858 or [programs@wornallmajors.org](mailto:programs@wornallmajors.org).*

*To learn more about youth public programs and events, visit [www.wornallmajors.org](http://www.wornallmajors.org).*

*If your child would like to volunteer at Wornall/Majors, contact Leah Palmer at 816-444-1858 or [administrator@wornallmajors.org](mailto:administrator@wornallmajors.org).*

## New at the Wornall House: Battle of Westport & Order No. 11 Banners



Thanks to a generous grant provided by Freedom's Frontier National Heritage Area, the Wornall House has two new interpretive banners with information about the Battle of Westport and Order No. 11.

The Wornall House served as a field hospital for both Confederate and Union soldiers during the Battle of Westport and saw many wounded men packed inside the farmhouse. The home was also effected by Order No. 11, as the Wornall family was forced to leave their home and live in Kansas City for a time as a result of the order. These two historic events are a crucial part of the history of the Wornall House, and we are pleased to have two new informational banners to help us explain and illustrate these important parts of local history.

# Celebrate the Holidays in Victorian Style!

**E**xperience the magic of a Victorian-inspired Christmas celebration at the Wornall House! This year, the Wornall House will be offering its annual holiday Candlelight Tours on Dec. 9-10.

Expect to experience traditional music, have a special holiday treat and hot drink, experience interactive games, and view the Wornall House decked out in its Christmas finery. The program is even part of the Heart of America Shakespeare Festival's "25 for the 25th Anniversary Celebration" calendar of events. Youth actors will present a very special performance of Charles Dickens during the tours.

Tours begin every 15 minutes from 6:00-7:30 PM on Friday, Dec. 9 and Saturday, Dec. 10 at the John Wornall

House—6115 Wornall Rd., KCMO. Tickets are \$15 and can be purchased at [wornallmajors.org/candlelighttours](http://wornallmajors.org/candlelighttours).

A pop-up gift shop will also be available in the Carriage House, with stocking stuffers and gifts for the history lovers in your family. Books, Wornall House mugs, traditional children's toys, and our special Wornall/Majors blend of Roasterie coffee all make great holiday gifts!

If you are unable to make it to the Wornall House for Candlelight Tours, both the Wornall and Majors Houses will be decorated for Christmas through the end of the year during public tours.



Scenes from a Victorian Christmas: Candlelight Tours in 2015 were a festive affair, with stories, games, music, and of course, traditional decorations. This year's tours will be no different!



## December 3: Wornall Holiday Open House

### Member Appreciation & Family Fun!

The Wornall House will host a Holiday Open House on Saturday, December 3 from 10AM-noon, open to both members and the general public. This family-friendly event will include open house tours, a holiday snack, open hearth cooking demonstration, music, and a craft the entire family can participate in. The House will also be decorated for the holidays. Free for Wornall/Majors members and \$5 for the public. Wornall/Majors members who RSVP to [administrator@wornallmajors.org](mailto:administrator@wornallmajors.org) or 816-444-1858 by December 2 will receive a special holiday gift at the event!





# Rent the Alexander Majors Barn for your wedding, party, or meeting!

The Alexander Majors Barn is available for event rentals! Impress your guests with rustic elegance in the middle of Kansas City. The barn is perfect for weddings, corporate events, fundraisers, holiday parties, graduation parties, and more. Visit [www.wornallmajors.org/weddings](http://www.wornallmajors.org/weddings) for rates and other details. Or contact 816-444-1858 or [rentals@wornallmajors.org](mailto:rentals@wornallmajors.org) to schedule a time to tour the barn and discuss your event.



## Thank you, Master Gardeners of Kansas City!

**T**hanks to the hard work of the Master Gardeners of Kansas City, as well as our dedicated Herb Garden volunteers, the Wornall House herb garden has been looking beautiful through the growing season.

As weather changes and the garden goes dormant for the season, the Master Gardeners are already looking forward to 2017 in the garden! Expect great things next year as we reorganize the herb garden and add even more interesting and historic plants. The garden is open to the public—feel free to stop by any time!

For more information about the Master Gardeners, visit [www.mggkc.org](http://www.mggkc.org).



## Intern with Wornall/Majors!

The Wornall/Majors House Museums is currently seeking a college student to serve as Educational Outreach Intern and Summer Camp Director. This position would begin as an unpaid internship that would transition into a stipend-supported summer position.

Basic job responsibilities include bringing field trips to the House Museums, fostering new and existing relationships with schools and community groups, developing summer camp curriculum, and running day-to-day logistics of Camp Wornall/Majors.

**Time Commitment:** Educational Outreach Internship runs from January/February-May and is expected to work 5-10 hours per week. Summer Camp Director position runs from June-July and is expected to work 100-125 hours total.

**Compensation:** \$1200 stipend, with first half paid at beginning of summer camp session and last half payable upon successful completion of final session.

**Apply:** Contact Sarah Bader-King at [programs@wornallmajors.org](mailto:programs@wornallmajors.org) or 816-444-1858 for full job description or for other questions.

### John Wornall House Museum

6115 Wornall Road; Kansas City, MO 64113

### Alexander Majors House Museum

8201 State Line Road; Kansas City, MO 64114



### Contact Us:

816-444-1858; [administrator@wornallmajors.org](mailto:administrator@wornallmajors.org)

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