

← THE NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF ARROW ROCK, INC. →

# HISTORIC ARROW ROCK™

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**IN 1959,** many of the buildings in Arrow Rock, though historic, were ramshackle and in imminent danger of passing into history. A group of people who recognized the value in those old buildings organized themselves into the Friends of Arrow Rock, and remarkable things started to happen here in the Village. What must have been countless hours of meetings, phone calls, bake sales, parties, sewing, cooking, entertaining, costumed appearances and country auctions were converted into new bones and paint for the Village's historic buildings which were in such dire need of help—and the Village had a spark of new life. Today, the Friends of Arrow Rock own and carefully maintain 13 historic properties and a huge collection of documents and other artifacts, all of which form the environment for our story-telling about Arrow Rock and our wider history.

This was remarkable for many reasons, not the least of which was that the folks who started the restoration process in Arrow Rock began with few resources. There was no big bank account for their use; they were ordinary people making the most of what they had. And what they had turned out to be the most important thing of all: a shared vision and mutual dedication to the task of bringing the Village back from what must have seemed like inevitable decay, and to telling its story to present and future generations. As it turned out, they were wildly successful, and I think it was because they believed they could be, not focusing on the problems they faced but rolling up their sleeves and digging into the task with creativity and energy.

Today, we are in a new time, with new challenges, but also a lot of the old ones. Old buildings still require constant maintenance, and resources of people, time and money are still needed to do our job well. But the pandemic we're

still wrestling with, and other world events truly have changed things for us. People spend their time and money in different ways right now, and it's unclear whether old patterns will return. We face shortages of basic commodities like building materials and human labor that are essential to our mission. Costs of doing the business of the Friends have risen sharply and continue to rise, sparked by things like supply chains which we'd barely heard of before now, and other world events which are largely or completely beyond our control. The cost of fulfilling our mission now dwarfs what was needed in 1959. In a way, this is the cost of our founders' success, so it's a nice problem to have and we'll figure out ways to address it.

However, we will need new ways of doing some of the things we do. Today, our challenge is to take the best parts of our organization—our traditions of mission, commitment and friendship—and find the wisdom to save the best of our old ways of doing

*“Change is the law of life, and those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future.”—John F. Kennedy*

things and then make smart changes as needed. When you think about it, this is what the people of Arrow Rock have always done: adapt to the changes brought to their door by the passage of time and by world events.

I'm confident we're up to the task, though I'm also sure we'll have lots of lively discussions as we choose the best way forward, just as I'm sure those who came before us did. But I have every confidence that we'll meet the challenges we face and continue to progress. And we'll have fun doing it! I'm looking forward to the coming months and the work ahead of us. Thank you for your confidence in me, and for giving me the opportunity to serve the place and the organization we all love, alongside so many Friends.

**Toni Blackwood,**  
President, Board of Trustees

# Persimmon Creek Delights and Enlightens...Again

The Persimmon Creek Writers and Artists Residency, an initiative designed to bring emerging and established African American writers, artists and musicians to live and work in the historic Village of Arrow Rock, had its second successful season of residency and public presentations in May and June.



In May, renowned contemporary fabric artist, fabric designer, author, lecturer, and independent curator **Sonié Joi Thompson-Ruffin** exhibited her fiber art at Brown's Chapel and the historic Christian Church. Afterwards, Sonié discussed her art and career during a Q&A at the Christian Church, which also featured a bag show from recent attendees of Sonié's Tote Bag® workshops. A performance by J Love Band followed the Q&A.

In June, **Hermine Pinson**, poet, author, and William & Mary Professor of English & Africana Studies read her poetry and prose work at Arrow Rock's historic Christian Church. Afterwards, Hermine discussed her craft during a Q&A. A performance by J Love Band followed the Q&A—Hermine was a special guest vocalist on "God Bless the Child."

Friends of Arrow Rock offered its facilities and promotional support for this innovative and ongoing celebration of the diversity, artistry, and history of this place. This annual event is so characteristic of the way in which we in Arrow Rock thoughtfully observe our past, create meaningful experiences for the present, and look to the preservation of our stories for generations to come.



ABOVE: The one-of-a-kind textile creations of Persimmon Creek visiting artist Sonié Joi Thompson-Ruffin brought color, craft—and wisdom—to the Juneteenth observation.

## Juneteenth in Arrow Rock

In collaboration with Friends of Arrow Rock, the Arrow Rock State Historic Site, Missouri River Bird Observatory and the Study Circle in Arrow Rock on Racism (SCARR), on Sunday, June 19th, 2022, Experience Arrow Rock welcomed residents and visitors to join in a celebration of Juneteenth as a national holiday.

The celebration began at 2:00 pm in Brown's Chapel Free Will Baptist Church at 710 High Street. There, a symbolic "wrapping of trees" with colorful one-of-a-kind textile surrounds created by Persimmon Creek visiting artist Sonié Joi Thompson-Ruffin was accompanied by comments from Paige Witek of MRBO.



## ARROW ROCK CELEBRATION

Moving inside, Friends of Arrow Rock Executive Director Jeff Kurtti spoke about the history of Brown's Chapel, its recently-completed renovation, and acknowledged those who participated in the project.

At 3:00 pm Gary Kremer, Executive Director of the State Historical Society of Missouri and noted scholar on race in Missouri, delivered a remarkable lecture about why August 4th was historically more

important to Black Missourians than Juneteenth, and the importance of Juneteenth as a national holiday to all Missourians today.

The afternoon's observations were followed by a potluck supper on the grounds of Brown's Chapel. Renowned folk musician Lem Sheppard shared his historical folk music and unique storytelling as the sun set on another remarkable day in Arrow Rock.

# The Friends Renews a Pledge to Brown's Chapel

**THERE WAS A TIME NOT SO LONG AGO** when a visitor to Arrow Rock might never know that our collective history has strong African American roots and important Black residents.

*We told a lot of stories of the Santa Fe Trail and the Missouri Frontier—but whose frontier was that? Certainly not the Osage, to whom this was just “home”...and were the people who came here in chains, without choice or autonomy, truly “pioneers”?*

*As stewards of the story of this remarkable village, Friends of Arrow Rock has worked unceasingly, creating what Kathy Borgman called “a microcosm of the Preservation movement,” over time and subject matter. We began with our most well-known and prominent histories and personalities, and over the decades and through steadfast stewardship, have broadened our storytelling, so that the famous now share the narrative with the faceless.*

*Brown's Chapel Free Will Baptist Church was Arrow Rock's first African American church. It was built in 1869 on land just north of here. According to stories that have been passed down, **Reverend John Brown** was the church's first minister, and the church likely got its name in his honor. Oral tradition also tells of a man named **Zack Bush**, who used a team of mules to move the church building to this location in 1883. In addition to its function as a house of worship, the building served as the town's first schoolhouse for the African American community, from 1869 until 1892.*

*By the 1930s, church membership at this and all churches in Arrow Rock was on the decline. Brown's Chapel held its last regular service in 1988. Then, as often happens here—a groundswell occurred. Private citizens began a movement and nudged organizations such as the Friends of Arrow Rock and the State of Missouri to address the vanishing and endangered African American properties and histories that dwelled here.*

*The Free Will Baptist Church trustees sold this property to **Ted and Virginia Fisher**, who in 1996 donated this building to the Friends of Arrow Rock. Through the generosity, perseverance, and just plain hard work of a small but dedicated group—**Teresa Habernal** and **Sue Hall** in particular—the Fishers' commitment has been rewarded in many ways. You're currently witnessing the evidence of that commitment and reward.*

*Through the efforts of our Trustees and the Properties Committee, and generous donations from the Sunderland Foundation, we have just completed another facility renovation here, including structural repairs, an updated kitchen and Fellowship Room, and the never-ending need for fresh paint. More importantly, Friends of Arrow Rock is examining and upgrading the interpretive story we tell here; of the builders, parishioners, leaders, and just plain everyday Arrow Rock citizens who brought their lives, their faith, and their commitment to community to this special place for more than a century. It's their collective legacy that will inform our work here going forward, and it is to them that we dedicate and pledge our efforts to maintaining that legacy in the decades that lie before us.*

*Author and preservationist William J. Murtagh wrote, “It has been said that, at its best, preservation engages the past in a conversation with the present over a mutual concern for the future.” It is to that philosophy that the Friends of Arrow consecrates our commitment today to Brown's Chapel Free Will Baptist Church.*

—Remarks by Friends of Arrow Rock Executive Director Jeff Kurtti  
At the Rededication of Brown's Chapel, June 19, 2022

## ARROW ROCK'S AFRICAN-AMERICAN HISTORY

**A**t first glance, there doesn't seem to be anything in Arrow Rock that hints of its rich African-American history. But a visit to the Arrow Rock State Historic Site Museum soon reveals an Arrow Rock whose early economic wealth was fueled by enslaved African Americans. Much of Arrow Rock's built environment was the result of slave labor. Arrow Rock's unique stone gutters, built of large stones placed on end approximately 16 inches deep, were built by slaves. The work of African-American hands is all around us.

Arrow Rock was founded in 1829, predominantly by southerners from Virginia, Kentucky, & Tennessee. They brought with them their plantation way of life, including slavery. In 1860, Saline County, where Arrow Rock is located, had a population of 15,000.

Of those, 5,000 or fully one-third were enslaved African Americans. Nearby plantations were raising food crops such as corn, wheat, oats and potatoes; hemp as a cash crop. Hemp was shipped south from the Arrow Rock wharfs to be used for roping and bagging of cotton. Even food crops were sent south, tying our economies together.

The Civil War was a tumultuous time in Missouri, bringing vast changes. Following the emancipation of slaves, some, exercising their new-found freedom, left. Others remained, working as farm laborers, some still living on plantations. Through census records, it becomes clear that as freed slaves gained income, they began to move to Arrow Rock. By 1900, one-third of Arrow Rock's population of 358 was African-Americans, most owning their own homes.

The Friends of Arrow Rock's

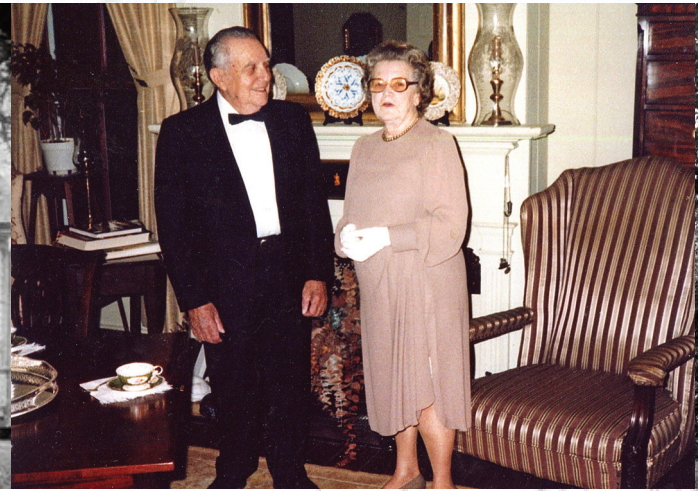
African-American Museum, located in the restored Brown Lodge No. 22 at 601 Morgan Street, tells the story of Arrow Rock's African-American community during this time. It was a period of a vibrant, albeit segregated, community with African-American churches, lodges and a school.

Two events contributed to the movement of African-Americans out of Arrow Rock. War efforts following the Great Depression provided newly-integrated job opportunities, while at the same time, the mechanization of farming meant fewer laborers were needed on the farms. Gradually Arrow Rock's African-American population declined.

Today, Arrow Rock has but a single African American resident, yet, every day we honor and remember all our African American citizens and their legacy in Arrow Rock.



*LEFT: Brown's Church congregation in the early 20th century. Black churches were described as "the mother of our culture, the champion of our freedom, and the hallmark of our civilization."*



# A(nother) New Life for the

Originally a modest home built by Samuel Miller, c. 1839, the house at 517 Main Street in Arrow Rock was enlarged in 1841 by Dr. Charles M. Bradford and his young bride, Lavinia. The Bradfords added rooms to the back and attached the basement kitchen to the house, which was originally populated and worked by the family's slaves. It later served as the temporary living quarters of the Millers while they performed initial repairs and renovations to the house.

The house remained in the Bradford family until 1898, then passed through several other owners, including the Gilpin family. The Gilpin patriarch, John Gilpin, owned the saloon where the devastating fire of 1872 originated. Their one known addition was a room off the rear balcony, now known as the "brother's room," which afforded son Ed a separate entrance and solitary quarters.

By the mid-1950s, the Miller-Bradford house was deserted

and in a state of disrepair. In 1957, Bill and Cora Lee Miller purchased the property and began restoring it for their home. When someone asked Cora Lee if there was a place to buy antiques in town, she set out a card table in the front yard, sold an item, and was in business! Soon the reputation of Miller's Antiques was known far and wide.

When the Millers passed away in 1994, they left the Miller-Bradford House and the contents of Miller's Antiques to the Friends of Arrow Rock (FAR). In 1995, Karen Murray began operating Arrow Rock Antiques out of the Miller-Bradford House.

Over the years since, the house has undergone extensive restoration and renovation, and has seen several activities and use proposals. Most recently, in August 2019, the Missouri Folk Art Shop & Gallery opened, featuring curated items from some of the most talented artists and artisans in the region, later adding antiques to the merchandise mix.

With the dissolution of the Missouri Folk Art Shop & Gallery in January 2022, a reconstituted FAR Miller-Bradford Committee began an effort to find a new use for the esteemed building.

"The dilemma we have always faced in Arrow Rock is creating a balance between properly honoring the past while addressing current need," FAR Board of Trustees President Toni Blackwood explains. "We can't just hang a 'For Rent' sign up. The tenant of one of our historic properties must be a 'fit.' Creating a 'fit' in Arrow Rock isn't a simple task."

After six months of effort, including advertising the property, many discussions, and a couple of false starts, a confluence of events occurred that won't surprise Arrow Rock aficionados. Magic often happens here.

When Ken Martinez and his family relocated here last year, he had hoped to open a coffee house in the shop building on



# The Miller-Bradford House

the corner of his property at Third and High Streets. Ken is a familiar face here already from his numerous volunteer efforts, as well as his work onstage and backstage at the Lyceum Theatre. Unfortunately, his planned coffee shop wasn't working out, and he had all but given up on the idea when Toni asked him to take a look at the Miller-Bradford House. Ken saw immediately that a sensitive re-use of the kitchen and dining room would make a perfect intimate coffee shop, with a feel wonderfully suited to Arrow Rock.

"I think that to be able to have that remarkable house open to our visitors and to our community again is one of the best results of this idea," Ken says.

Discussions with Ken, Toni, and FAR Executive Director Jeff Kurtti led to a further idea: the remaining room in front of the kitchen and dining room could be repurposed as an extension of the existing Arrow Rock 1829

Shop on Main Street, focused on local product, and themed to kitchen, cooking, and home wares.

"That got us halfway there with the Miller-Bradford House," FAR Trustee and Miller-Bradford Committee Chair Judy Smith says, "Then the last element just aligned. FAR Trustee Nancy Blossom stopped by Jeff's office on Main Street, and asked him if the remaining inventory of her yarn business could be donated to FAR. So, with this generous and remarkable gift, another retail opportunity for the Friends just 'appeared.'"

The Friends of Arrow Rock Board of Trustees, upon the recommendation of the Miller-Bradford House Committee, unanimously agreed to an unusual—but somehow perfect—multi-use habitation of the beloved Miller-Bradford House. The new occupants will be the Arrow Rock Coffee Company, an Arrow Rock 1829: Home shop, and an Arrow Rock 1829: Fiber Arts shop.

The rear east side bedroom will

be a public use meeting room, with a fundamental purpose as a destination work and meeting space for the various textile arts guilds in the region. In the future, plans also call for offering classes in the various arts and crafts that are so popular and prevalent in the area.

The work of local artists and artisans will also be on display and for sale throughout the house and coffee shop areas. The rear brick terrace area has recently been renovated and restored, and will be an outdoor seating area for the coffee shop, and event space for FAR and community uses.

"Arrow Rock has become somewhat used to these wonderful things that seem to just happen," Toni says. "When we all come together, looking out for the best interests of our village, our history, our experience, our visitors, and our citizens, we've seen these little miracles time and again."





# Start the Presses!

Letterpress Enthusiasts See a New Future for Print Shop Museum



Missouri Press Association's Print Shop Museum in Arrow Rock was dedicated 56 years ago this month. Now, a group of letterpress printing enthusiasts think the equipment that was once critical to the newspaper industry could find new life as a working exhibition.

Eric Woods, owner of Firecracker Press in St. Louis, was traveling through Arrow Rock with his family during the winter—a time of year when not much in the historic village is really open. But if you get lucky, someone might be around to unlock the doors, like Friends of Arrow Rock Executive Director Jeff Kurtti, who helped Woods get inside the Print Shop Museum in the former Odd Fellows Lodge.

While that was his introduction to the museum, Woods was excited to return one weekend in late May with a group of four other letterpress operators and mechanics. During that visit, the group went through each of the pieces, making an inventory of what's on display, getting a sense of the overall condition of each piece and trying to determine what is needed to get some of the machines working again.

"To find this place in the middle of Missouri, it's a really great collection and a testament to the foresight of the press association to preserve it," Woods said in an interview after the visit. "The machines in that collection are production machines. They were the machines that were used to make

the things people were reading."

Missouri Press Association friends and publishers donated the equipment and items on display in the museum in 1966, during MPA's 100th anniversary. In the museum is a variety of letterpress printing equipment, including Linotype, a newspaper flatbed press, job presses, Washington hand presses, hand-set type, and other tools of the printing trade.

The desk belonging to famous country editor H.J. Blanton of the Monroe County Appeal in Paris, Mo., is also in the museum.

Woods himself has a background in newspaper graphic design, working early on in his career for the Southeast Missourian, which is where his enchantment with the printing process really started to develop.

"The most fascinating aspect of working there, and a small reason for starting The Firecracker Press, was that I loved designing something in the morning and walking across the street to see it printed that afternoon.

"Being able to design something and take it to the press is magic, which is what we do every day," Woods said.

While he now operates his own print shop, and rescues a fair bit of equipment himself to maintain and use, Woods' passion for letter-

press printing means he wants to find ways to share it with the wider world.

"Everywhere we go, I sniff out printing presses, it's like a joke in our family, because everything links back to printing. It's such a big part of our daily life, it's like breathing," Woods said. "But looking at history, physical printing pops up everywhere, it's always there if information is being disseminated. Having a collection that celebrates that, it's really important to understanding where the printing industry came from."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



*In May, a group of volunteer experts, using type and presses in the Missouri Press Association Museum, created a print to commemorate their efforts.*

START THE PRESSES

For now, Woods is working on developing a budget for what it would cost to get many of the machines in the Print Shop Museum in working order. Some of them, he said, are not too far off from being useable in a regular capacity.

“The technology is far enough removed that I think most people look at these machines and think they’re supposed to be museum pieces, but with a little bit of elbow grease and love, and a few parts, they can be operational again,” he said.

During their visit in May, the group was even able to make a few prints on one of the hand-presses with equipment that is part of the museum display.

“I think it’s possible to get a work-

ing print shop going. Some things are more difficult, some machines need a few more parts and new rubber, but I think this has the potential to be a working print shop that people could visit, that workshops could be regularly held at, or that artists from around the world would be interested in coming to,” Woods said.

He and the other members of the group who visited in May, as well as like-minded enthusiasts are excited about returning to Arrow Rock and the Print Shop Museum.

“We all had such a fun time and the collection there really is quite fascinating, we’re all very excited to return, hopefully later this year,” Woods said.

Photos Courtesy of Eric Woods, Firecracker Press, St. Louis.

Reprinted with permission from the August 2022 issue of *Missouri Press News*, courtesy of the Missouri Press Association.

*MATTHEW BARBA is Editor at the Missouri Press Association, where he supervises the Missouri Press News Magazine, Bulletin, the MPA Press Release Service, and the Better Newspaper Contest.*



**ABOVE:** A cylinder press was cleaned and repaired.

**BELOW:** A team of passionate experts including Bob Atkins, Benjamin Jones, Kim & Rob Miller, and Eric Woods brought new life to the old shop.



# Leaving a Legacy

WHAT WE LEAVE BEHIND INFLUENCES WHAT WILL BECOME

The fundamental purpose of the Friends of Arrow Rock is rooted in recording and retaining the rich narrative of the places, people, and events of our area—but that is only a component of our larger purpose. The Friends of Arrow Rock legacy is not just our buildings and people and history—without a strategy for making that history important to a contemporary audience, we'll have no means to carry our valuable stories into the future.

Members of the Friends of Arrow Rock Legacy Society are passionate about the organization's past, present, and future, and thus have made a pledge to a method of moving the FAR history forward in their estate plans. If you would like to become a member of the Friends of Arrow Rock Legacy Society, simply let us know that you have included the organization in your estate plan—we do not ask you to share the specific details of those plans.

## MEMBERS OF THE LEGACY SOCIETY

Leo Andrade	Steven & Anita Byers	Mary Kay & Charles Horner	Kenneth Martinez	Carol & Richard Pemberton	Marty & Sandy Selby
Barbara Armstrong	Charles & Pat Cooper	John S. Hull	Donna McBurney	Zemula Pierce Fleming	Mrs. Marilyn Shutz
Jim & Marcia Atkinson	Kathy Digges	John & Donna Huston	Blaine & Stephanie McBurney	Al & Marjo Price	Wicky & Hadley Sleight
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Elizabeth (Ibby) Barrett	Margaret & Tom Hall	Grayson Kabler	Lloyd Parker	Jane Ratcliffe-Coakley	Davoren & Bill Tempel
Toni Blackwood	Henry H. Harris IV	Day & Whitney Kerr	Pam Parsons	Sarah & John Riddick	Irene Thomas
Kathy Borgman	Dale & Jan Hinnah	Jeff Kurtti		Kevin & Pam Riggs	Jennifer & Bill True
Chet Breitwieser	Steve Horman			Wilda Sandy	Jean Gaddy Wilson

## MEMBERS OF THE LEGACY SOCIETY IN MEMORIAM

William M. Huston, 1973	Corinne Jackson, 2001	Robert K. & Ruth E. Griffin, 2007 & 1998	Glenna S. Udre, 2013	Barbara Quinn, 2017
Dr. & Mrs. Thomas B. Hall Jr., 1982	Charles M. Buckner Jr., 2001	Bobbie True, 2009	Doris Whitlock, 2013	Marge Fletcher, 2017
Edwina M. Eubank, 1983	Jim & Kitty Smith, 2002	Jean Klein-Horman, 2010	Harvey Thomas, 2013	Hal Sandy, 2017
Isabel B. Browning, 1984	Helen M. Borgman, 2004	Helen B. Page, 2012	Kenneth & Darleen Mueller, 2014 & 2010	George Schler, 2017
William H. Hogge, 1992	Sue E. Stubbs, 2004	Diana Woods, 2012	Byron C. Shutz, 2015	Barbara Houston Pelot, 2017
Bill & Cora Lee Miller, 1994	Gladys Moehle Thomas, 2006	Page Williams, 2012	John Irvin, 2016	Jack Coakley - 2019
Mary Banks Parry, 1994	Mary D. Sheetz Riley, 2006	Janet Bohlken Crumpacker, 2012	Dr. Robert H. & Anna Mae Hodge, 2012 & 2016	Charles W. Digges Sr., 2019
Cecil Barger, 1996	Clay Marsh, 2007	W.E. Rudolf "Bud" Kruse, 2013		Janet Reeter, 2019
				Irene Thomas, 2020
				Alex McBurney, 2020



### Legacy Guardians

*Six Past Presidents of the Board of Trustees of the Friends of Arrow Rock.*

*Left to right:*

- Chet Brietwieser (2019-2022),*
- Donna Huston (2017-2019),*
- V. Paul Ratcliffe (1975-1982),*
- Day Gibson Kerr (1982-1995),*
- Toni Blackwood, J.D. (2022-2023),*
- Thomas B. Hall, M.D. (2004-2017)*

**Contact** Friends of Arrow Rock Executive Director Jeff Kurtti by email at [admin@freindsofarrowrock.org](mailto:admin@freindsofarrowrock.org) or call 660-837-3231 to let him know that you would like to become a part of the Friends of Arrow Rock Legacy Society.



➔ SHARING THE MISSOURI LEGACY



*An Invitation to Join the Friends of Arrow Rock*

As curators of historic buildings and artifacts, the Friends of Arrow Rock will preserve and display our holdings in accordance with the best practices of historic preservation. In partnership with other groups that share a passion for the history of Arrow Rock, the Friends will work for the development and promotion of local and regional cultural tourism. As stewards of a public trust, the Friends is committed to providing the financial and administrative resources needed to ensure the future of Arrow Rock for generations to come. **Please join us** to preserve these ideals, for this and future generations. *Memberships may be deductible for income tax purposes.*

SUPPORT THE FRIENDS ➔

CALL  
660-837-3231

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admin@friendsofarrowrock.org

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Chet Brietwieser 2019-2022

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Carol Pemberton

V. Paul Ratcliffe

Bill True

UPCOMING  
EVENTS

**SIP & STROLL**

*Saturday, September 24  
@ 3:30pm. Join us for the  
19th Annual Friends of  
Arrow Rock Sip & Stroll.*

**Heritage Festival**

*Saturday and Sunday,  
October 8th and 9th.  
Admission is FREE!*



**Holiday w/Friends**

*Sunday, December 4.  
There's no better way to  
celebrate the holiday  
season than to spend an  
evening with Friends!*



**VISIT** our web site at  
FriendsOfArrowRock.org  
and like us on Facebook.

**OUR MISSION:** The mission of the Friends of  
Arrow Rock is to share the rich and varied Missouri  
legacy with current and future generations.

**On the cover** Twilight on a late  
summer evening brings a handsome  
glow to Arrow Rock's beloved I.O.O.F.  
Lodge Hall (Odd Fellows No. 40).