

# BEARD *envy*



Fifty-nine-year-old blacksmith Wayne Rice sports a beard authentic to the time period when blacksmithing was a more common career. He says he also keeps his beard to help fight the cold of winter.

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Meet the most  
epic beards of  
Silver Dollar City.

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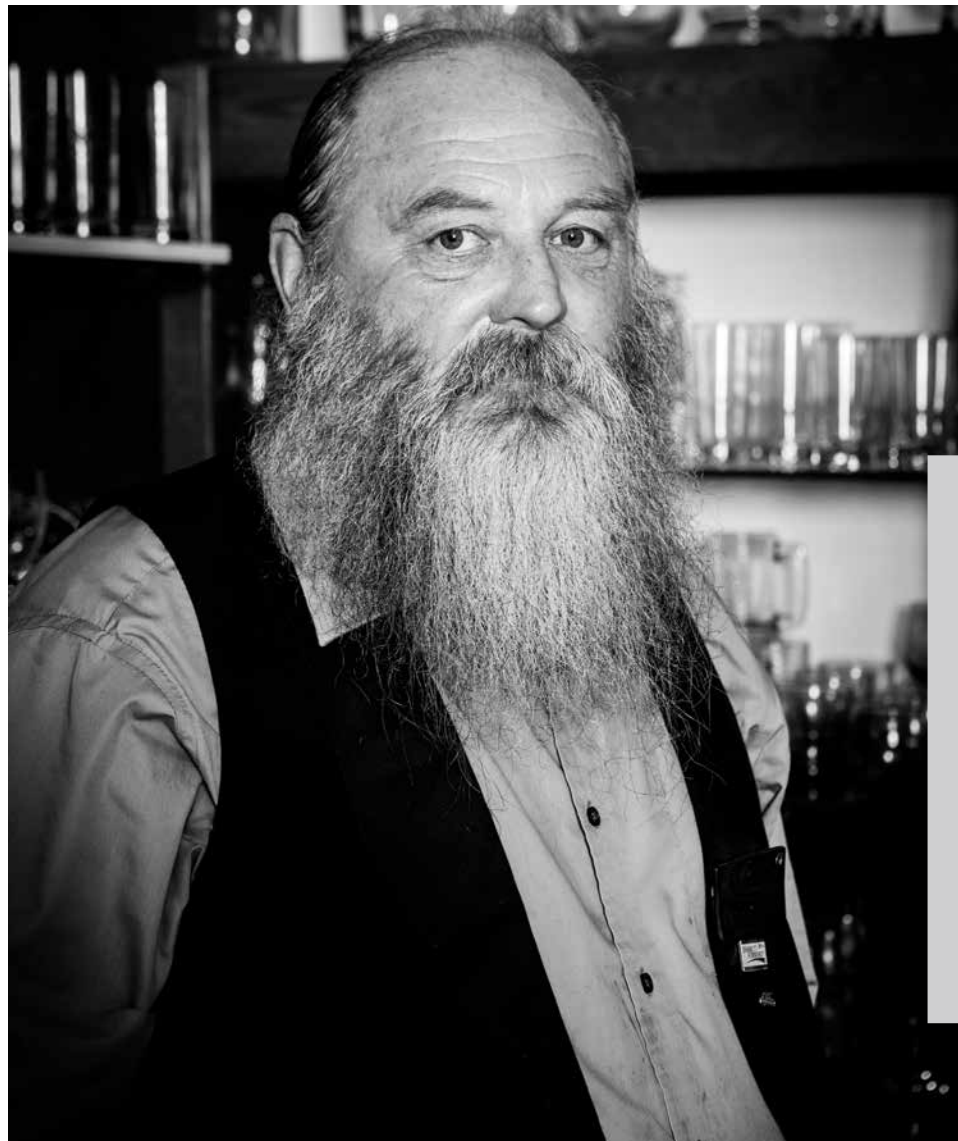
PHOTOS BY HARRY KATZ

STORY BY JONAS WEIR

WEARING A BEARD is no new trend. The first Europeans to explore Missouri, Louis Joliet and Jacque Marquette, both kept long whiskers, and it seems nearly every other Civil War general rocked facial hair of some sort. However, after the beard's popularity peaked—arguably with the Ulysses S. Grant administration—it didn't make a comeback until the counterculture movement of the 1960s. Since then, it has slowly made its way back into the mainstream. Today, beards are common, whether grown for utility, like warmth in the winter, or for fashion.

This past fall featured both of Missouri's beloved baseball teams sporting plenty of facial hair in the post-season, and the much-maligned urban hipster has become the archetype of ironic facial hair. In the Show-Me State, though, our cities are, perhaps, not the best place to find an admirable beard. We look to the Ozarks, and where better than Silver Dollar City?

This Branson vacation destination is home to bluegrass musicians, burly craftsmen, Ozark woodsmen, and by default, some of the most wicked whiskers this side of the Mississippi. We traveled there recently to find what we deem to be the best beards of Silver Dollar City.



A twenty-eight-year veteran of Silver Dollar City, glass-cutter George Stiverson has put a little more time into growing his beard than he has etching designs into glasses at the amusement park.

“The last day I shaved was the day I got married,” says the sixty-one-year-old. “That was thirty-eight years ago.”

In fact, his children, who are as old as thirty-seven, have never seen him clean-shaven.

The red-turned-gray, chest-length beard is surely impressive, but George doesn't glorify it, or beards at all for that matter.

“It's just a bunch of hair on your face,” he says. “You don't want to style them; just let them grow.”



When Gene Bortner decided he was going to retire and move to the Ozarks after working in Kansas City for twenty-five years, he decided he needed a style change.

“I wanted to become a hillbilly like everyone else, so I just let my beard grow,” the eighty-nine year-old says.

That was 1978, and he hasn't looked back. Now Gene and his beard greet visitors as they enter the park, where he's worked for twenty-five years.

With a direct family lineage to Scotland, performer David Wallace sports European-style facial hair, with a sloped mustache and a coarse, tightly trimmed beard. Although he admits that his wife's penchant for his fuzzy face is a major factor in his decision to wear a beard, it also serves a much more practical purpose.

“When I shave, I still get carded,” says the baby-faced thirty-five-year-old. “Having the beard helps distinguish my age.”

The beard no doubt adds to his stage persona, too. Stop by the Saloon during the day to catch David in some Vaudevillian antics, or venture to Echo Hollow Amphitheater at night to see him perform in a country revue.



A member of Sons of the Silver Dollar, Tom Johnson first grew his beard to portray a disciple of Jesus in a Branson show called *The Promise* and was encouraged to keep it for a Civil War show at Silver Dollar City. He's maintained the unshaven look, though, to match his style while he performs everything from gospel to bluegrass.

“Being sixty-years old, I do resort to chemicals to maintain a more youthful look,” he says.

To see these beards and many others, visit Silver Dollar City during its 2016 season, which runs from March 12 to December 30. Visit [silverdollarcity.com](http://silverdollarcity.com) for more information.

# Missouri's **Prettiest** *small* Towns

Explore ten tiny towns that are among the state's most beautiful.

By Jonas Weir

**MISSOURI IS DEFINED** by its small towns as much as anything else. Between our state's two great metropolises lies our state's heart—where tiny towns populate great plains and small communities dot the rugged landscape of the Ozark hollows. Some sit high above the Missouri on great river bluffs; some are tucked away in the woods.

From border to border, we looked for the most quaint, charming, and frankly, prettiest small towns. Although there is no official definition of a small town, we decided to look only at villages and towns with populations under one thousand. Yes, places like Jefferson City have been nationally recognized among the beautiful small towns in the country, but places that large are not nearly as tiny as the towns on this list. Jefferson City's population is more than forty thousand, and a few of the towns here have populations of less than a hundred.

Here, the beauty comes from many things. Some places have quaint downtowns with thriving business districts; others are defined by historic buildings and sublime natural landscapes. Regardless, each of these ten towns is worth the trip and represents one of the best ways to get a slice of small town America.

Residential homes are interspersed among restaurants and bed-and-breakfasts in Rocheport's small business district—less than twenty miles from Columbia.

NOTLEY HAWKINS

The Arrow Rock Lyceum Theatre is one of many benefits in this town with a population under fifty. With a season that runs from March until December each year, the Arrow Rock Lyceum draws in visitors from all over the country.



COURTESY OF MISSOURI DIVISION OF TOURISM

Aside from drawing in tourists to try the town's two destination bakeries, Kimmswick brings the biker crowd to town with the C&S Cycle Harley-Davidson dealer.



### ARROW ROCK

No place in the state is quite like Arrow Rock.

Sitting on bluffs above the Missouri River, Arrow Rock has been a place of significance since well before the first Europeans visited. Archaeological evidence shows people have been here for more than ten thousand years. In the early nineteenth century, Arrow Rock became a frontier village along the Sante Fe Trail. After that, prominent Missourians, such as artist George Caleb Bingham and Dr. John Sappington, called Arrow Rock home. Before the Civil War, it reached its peak population of about a thousand.

Arrow Rock's rich history, however, is only part of the equation that has made it one of the prettiest towns in Missouri. The town's distinct look does come from the 1829 city plan, but it also would not be the same without the dedicated merchants, Friends of Arrow Rock nonprofit, and Missouri State Parks, who have lovingly preserved the

historic buildings, including George Caleb Bingham's 1837 home.

Today, the town has fewer than fifty full-time residents but has the amenities of a much larger city. Visitors from all over come to Arrow Rock to patronize the Arrow Rock Lyceum Theatre, two museums, a state historic site, seven antique and specialty gift shops, three restaurants, and five bed-and-breakfasts.

In the tiny village of Arrow Rock, history not only lives, but it also thrives. Arrow Rock sees the future in its past.

### KIMMSWICK

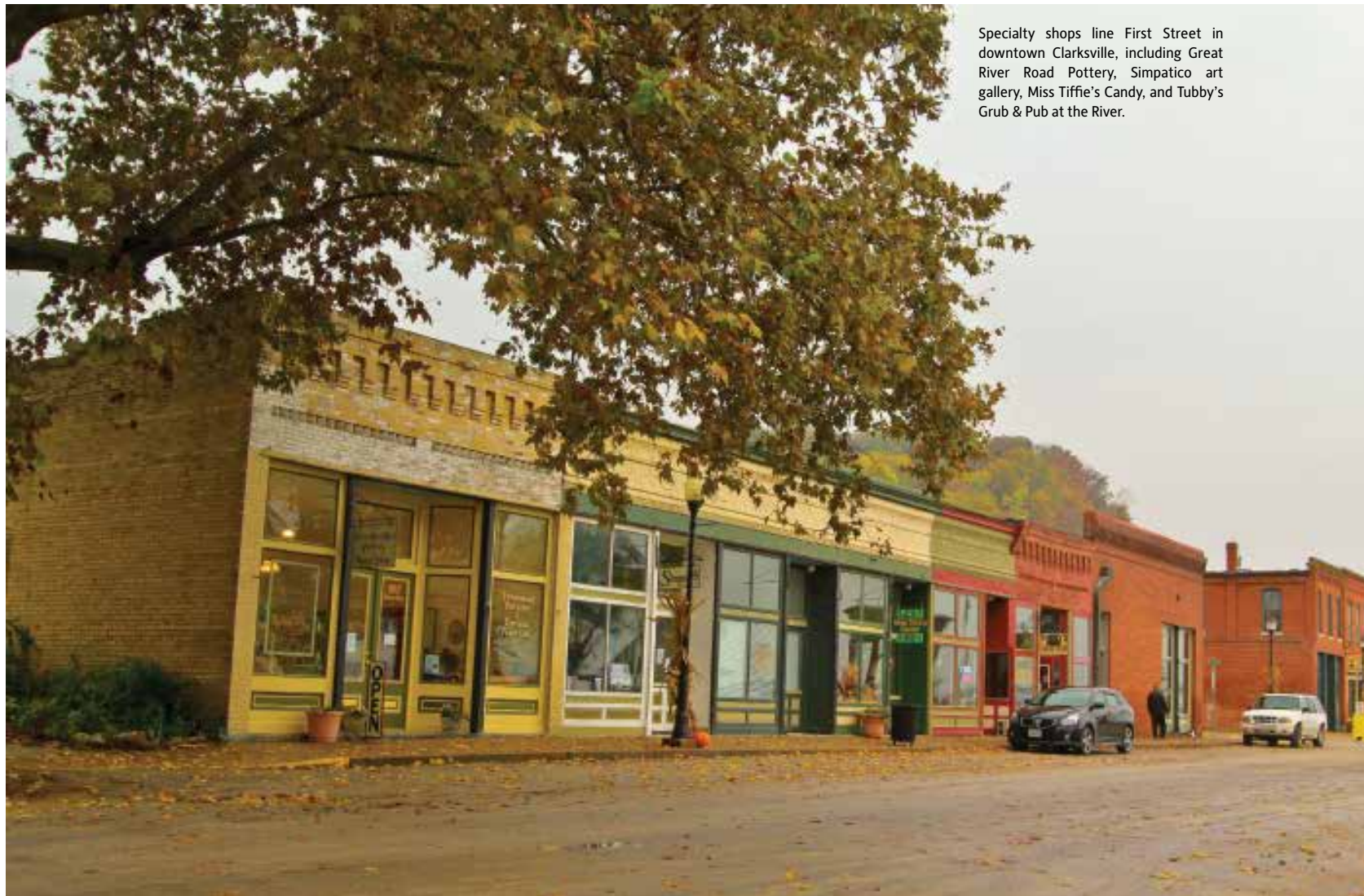
Kimmswick is an unlikely hotbed for tourism. In 2010, the US Census recorded the population at a mere 157. However, there is plenty to do in this quaint village twenty-five miles south of St. Louis. You could spend a day—or two—here.

The annual Strawberry Festival in June and the Apple Butter Festival in October are the town's two biggest attractions, drawing thousands of visi-

tors that come to indulge in the fruits of the season. The Strawberry Festival overlaps with the town's bluegrass festival, so visitors can enjoy music and fresh berries at the same time. Although those two weekends are the highlights, the town hosts events throughout the year, including Halloween festivities in the fall and Christmas celebrations during the winter.

Kimmswick is worth the trip any time of the year, though. Founded more than 150 years ago, the historic downtown is now home to many homegrown boutiques, art galleries, gift shops, and antique stores.

The town is also a destination for those with a sweet tooth. The town's two bakeries—the Dough Depot and the Blue Owl—are both required visits. Our recommendation is getting lunch at the Dough Depot and dessert at the Blue Owl, or vice-versa. Or better yet, get a full meal and dessert at one bakery on Saturday, and try the next on Sunday.



Specialty shops line First Street in downtown Clarksville, including Great River Road Pottery, Simpatico art gallery, Miss Tiffie's Candy, and Tubby's Grub & Pub at the River.



Les Bourgeois Vineyard is the largest tourist attraction in Rocheport. The vineyard offers outstanding views of the Missouri River and easy access to the KATY Trail.

## CLARKSVILLE

Seventy-five miles northwest of St. Louis, Clarksville has become a day-trip destination for residents of the Gateway City. The town is no more than eight blocks long, but its business district is thriving with antique shops, artisan shops, speciality stores, and restaurants.

Founded on the banks of the Mississippi River in 1819, Clarksville was named after Corps of Discovery explorer and governor of the Missouri territory William Clark. In 1880, the population hit its peak at 1,600. With a current population of about a third of that, it's not the population center it once was, but that adds to the small town charm.

Clarksville's quaint storefronts, restaurants, and bed-and-breakfasts aren't the only things that attract visitors. In the winter, Clarksville is one of the best places in the state to see bald eagles. Riv-

er Front Park is only one of the places to spot the majestic birds. Just outside of town, Overlook Farm restaurant and resort is the place to take in the beautiful northern Missouri countryside.

## ROCHEPORT

Not quite twenty miles from Columbia, Rocheport, population 239, is the town that proves that Mid-Missouri is just as beautiful as any other part of the state.

Taking its name from the French words for rocky and port, Rocheport sits on the jagged bluffs of the Missouri. The town was established as a trading post in the early nineteenth century and became a full-fledged town in 1825. Today, the town still offers the same vistas that Lewis and Clark saw when they traveled through the area more than two hundred years ago, though I-70 pierces through the landscape to the southeast.

The best place to catch a glimpse of Mother Earth's majesty might be Les Bourgeois Vineyards. Not far from the KATY Trail, the winery has indoor and outdoor spaces that look out onto the Big Muddy.

On the other hand, Les Bourgeois is not the only attraction in town. The small downtown area has shops, galleries, and even a museum. No trip to this river town would be complete without stopping by the Rocheport General Store. The store has a variety of dry goods and offers breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Additionally, it often becomes the town's music venue, playing host to an eclectic variety of music acts, from bluegrass to classic rock, on weekends.

## PERRY

This year, Perry, in rural Ralls County, is celebrating its sesquicentennial—or 150th birthday.

In July 1866, a year after the Civil War had ended, the town of Perry was platted and named after Perry Crosthwaite, who owned a nearby mill. In the early days of Perry, the Crosthwaite family owned the hotel, dry goods store, market, drug stores, hardware store, lumberyard, mills, livery stables, wagon and blacksmith shop, and opera house. Since then, the town has grown, but not too much. The population currently hovers around 700—compared to the 147 recorded in the 1880 Census.

Today, Perry touts itself as the southern gateway to Mark Twain Lake, and its residents preach that it's small town living at its best.

The charming, historic downtown evokes Main Street USA, and the nearby waters at Mark Twain Lake are perfect for Andy Griffith's favorite pastime—fishing.

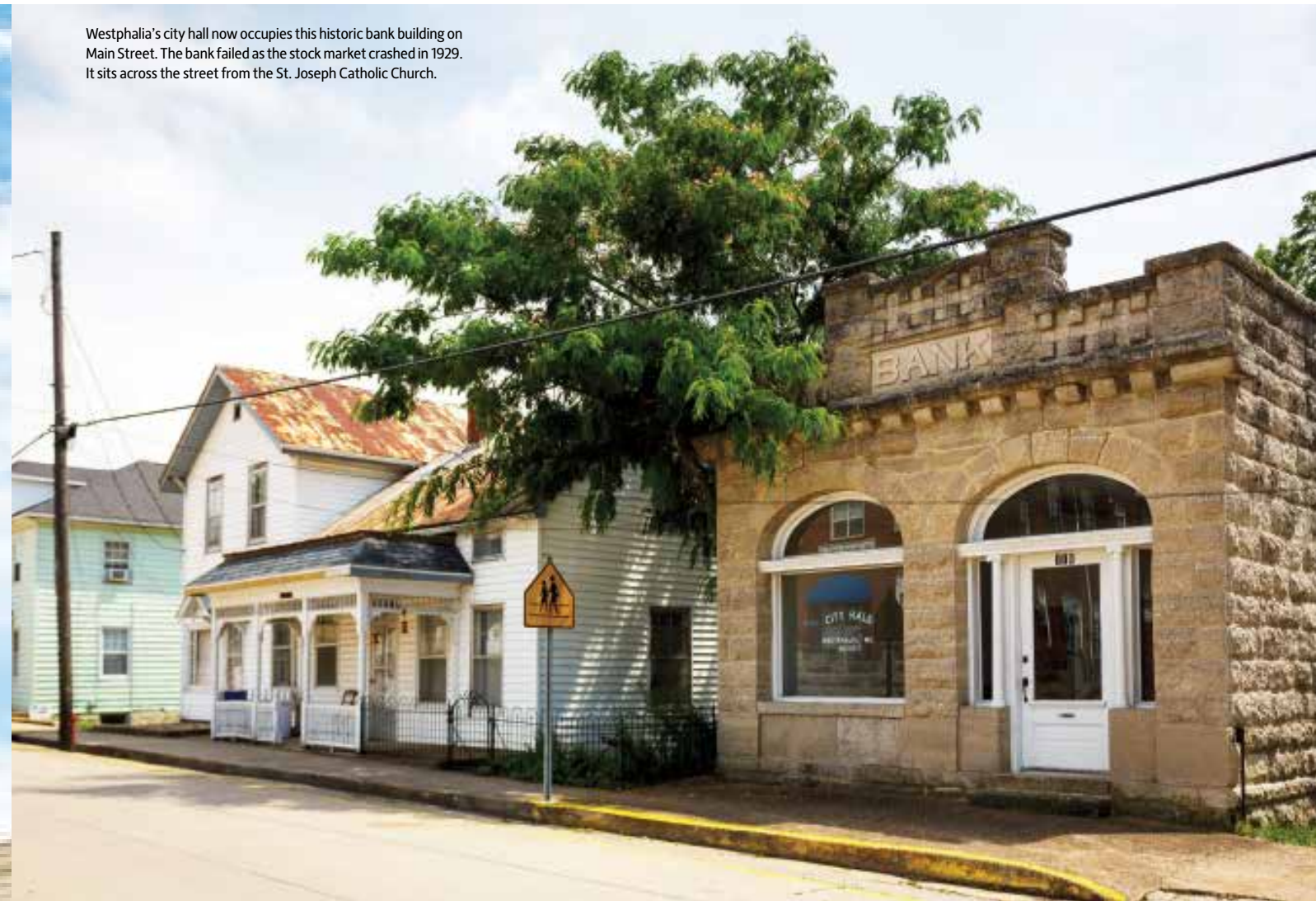


Downtown Perry is home to a thriving business district. A number of antique and gift shops line Main Street, along with a medical clinic, a bank, and more.

Open seasonally, Jolly Cone in Van Buren is a great summer hangout spot. Find the burger joint at 203 James Street, where it has stood since 1953.



Westphalia's city hall now occupies this historic bank building on Main Street. The bank failed as the stock market crashed in 1929. It sits across the street from the St. Joseph Catholic Church.



### WESTPHALIA

Less than twenty miles south of Jefferson City, the topography starts to develop into the rolling hills and jagged plateaus distinct to the Ozarks. Tucked away into the side of these hills is the tiny community of Westphalia.

With a population of less than four hundred, Westphalia is marked by a short drag of quaint, historic buildings along main street. Despite such a small population, the town has a museum dedicated to preserving and celebrating the area's rich German heritage, a restaurant in an old inn, and Westphalia Vineyards.

Built in 1848, the St. Joseph Catholic Church is one of the oldest buildings in the area. Today, it still shines like a white, stone beacon and attracts passersby to this tiny community.

### VAN BUREN

Van Buren sits on the banks of one of the most gorgeous bodies of water in the country—the Current River.

The tiny town spills right into the crystal blue waters of the Current and is, for many, the gateway to Ozark National Scenic Riverways. Founded in 1833 and named after statesman Martin Van Buren, this small community has been the county seat for Carter County for not-quite two hundred years. The town did not receive electricity until 1927, and it still serves as a destination for those who want to unplug.

Today, the town is home to a little more than eight hundred residents and sports an adorable, historic business district, along with many places to camp, hike, float, hunt, and do about anything else outdoorsy. Home to many swimming holes, summer is the best time of the year to visit Van Buren.

### WEINGARTEN

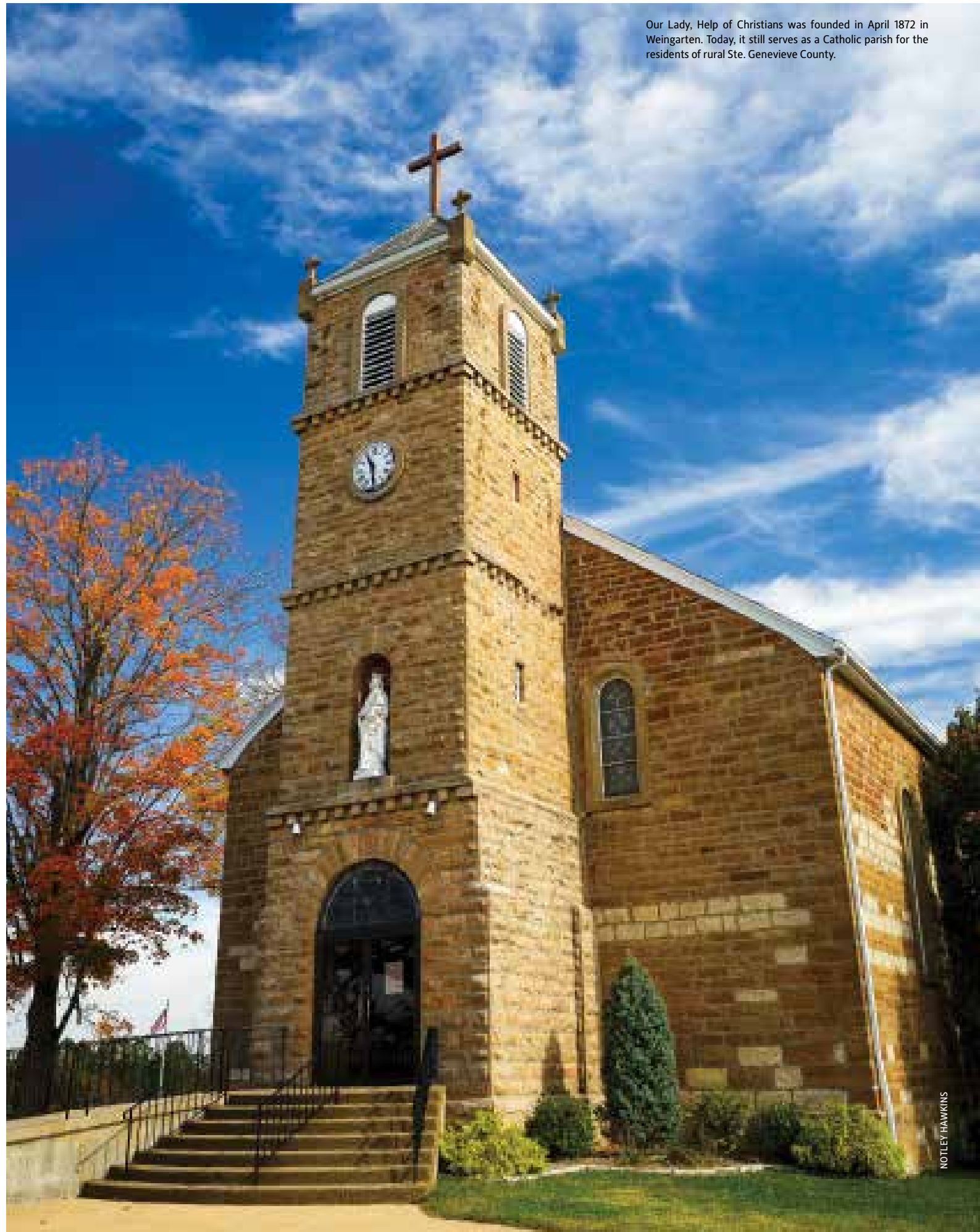
Weingarten's name sums up what the town is all about. The German settlement in Ste. Genevieve County takes its name from the German word for vineyard, and the rich landscape surrounding the tiny village is Missouri wine country at its best.

Thirteen miles from Ste. Genevieve, Weingarten was founded in 1837 by Jacob Wolf. Today, the oldest building in town is Our Lady, Help of Christians. Built in 1872, it still serves a large parish.

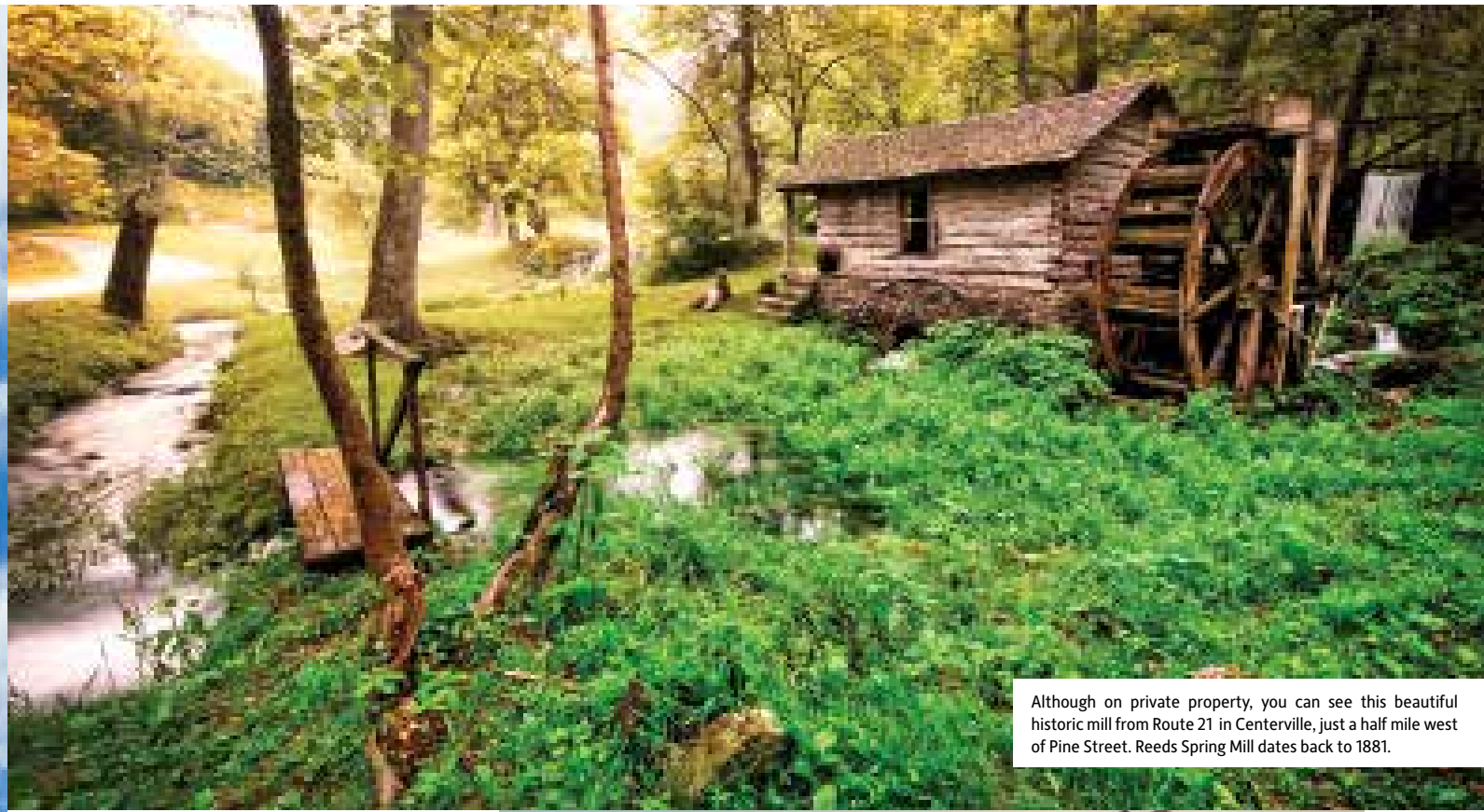
Although Weingarten is technically unincorporated and was absorbed into the total Ste. Genevieve County for the 2010 Census, the population hangs around one hundred. The biggest attraction in town is Weingarten Vineyard, which might sound silly when translated to German but is seriously worth visiting. Dinner at the Garten Haus restaurant is the perfect way to end a day visiting southeast Missouri.

COURTESY OF MISSOURI DIVISION OF TOURISM

Our Lady, Help of Christians was founded in April 1872 in Weingarten. Today, it still serves as a Catholic parish for the residents of rural Ste. Genevieve County.



NOTLEY HAWKINS



Although on private property, you can see this beautiful historic mill from Route 21 in Centerville, just a half mile west of Pine Street. Reeds Spring Mill dates back to 1881.

### CENTERVILLE

As a part of the Arcadia Valley region, Centerville sits on the west fork of the Black River and is a historic mining town.

The Black River and surrounding St. Francis Mountains mark this region with natural beauty, and Centerville adds to the charm by sporting several historic buildings that deliver the nostalgic feel of yesteryear. Reeds Spring Mill and the old Reynolds County courthouse are just a few.

With a population of about two hundred, Centerville is among the smallest towns in the state, but it also stands out as one of the prettiest.

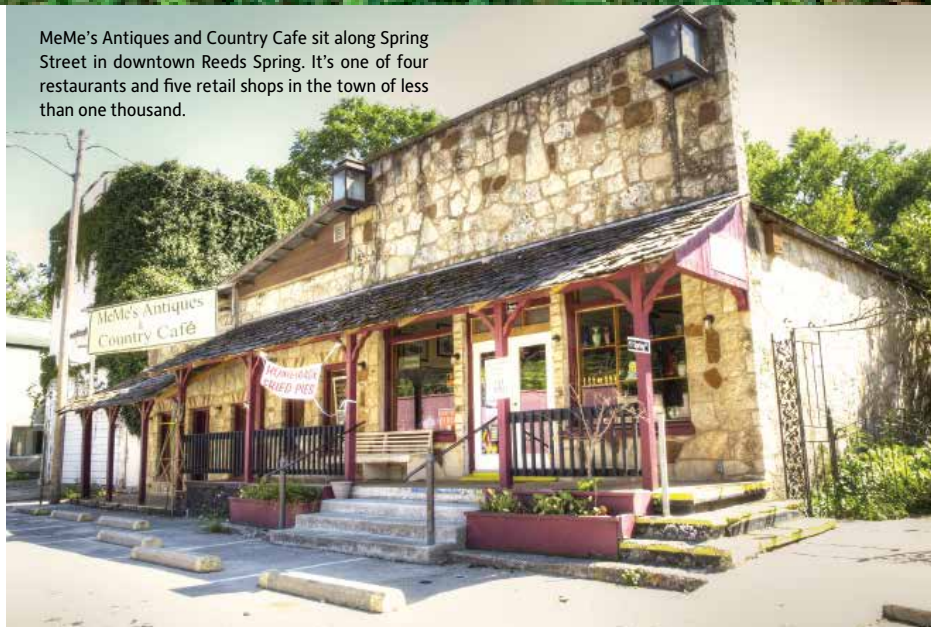
### REEDS SPRING

A cozy village on Table Rock Lake, Reeds Spring is more than a vacation destination.

Although Table Rock Lake sports a number of resorts and summer homes, Reeds Spring is year-round hometown for about nine hundred proud residents. For more than a hundred years, this small town has stood the test of time, surviving fires, Bonnie and Clyde, and more.

MARK SCHUYER AND DONALD HABERMAN

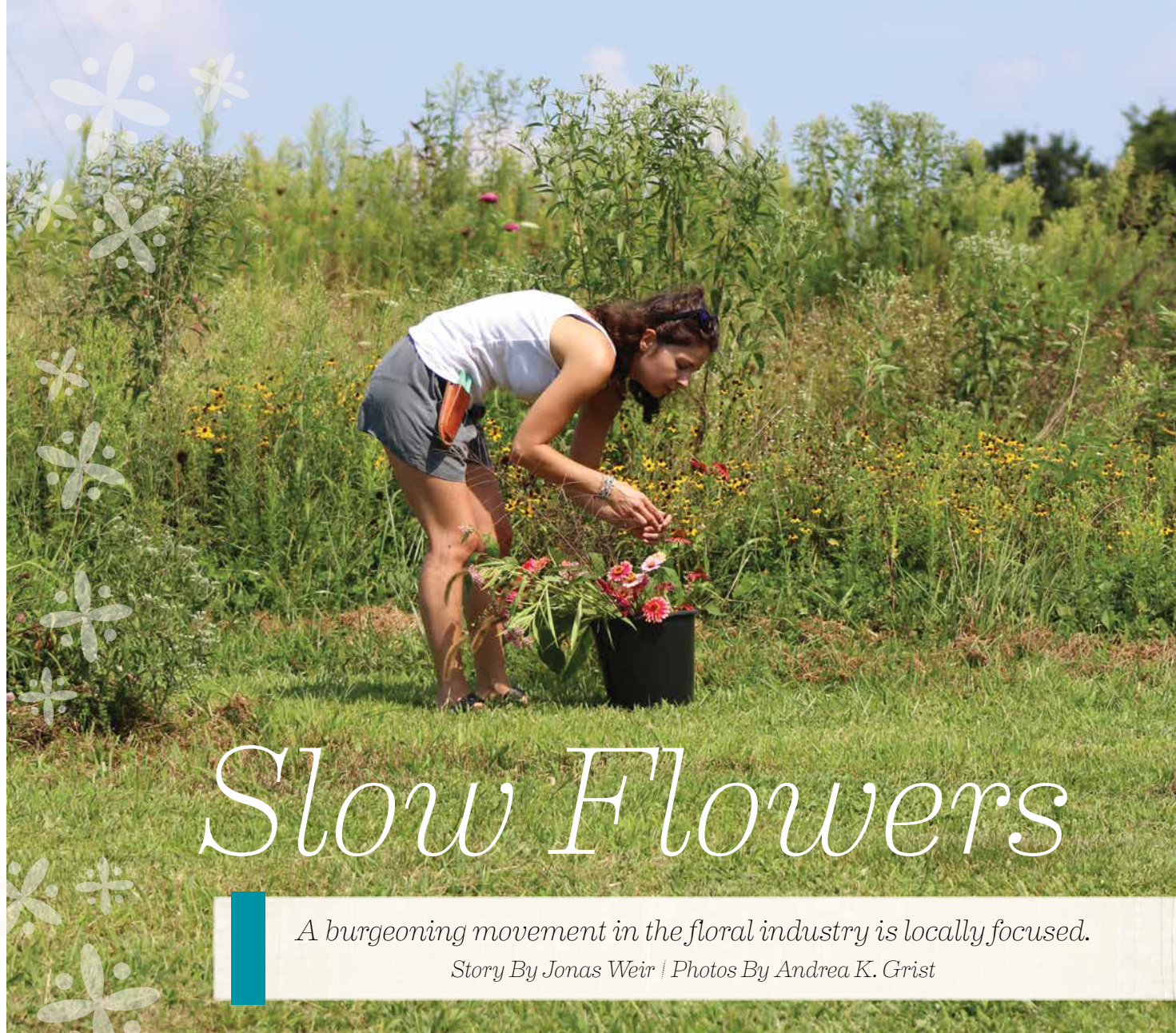
MeMe's Antiques and Country Cafe sit along Spring Street in downtown Reeds Spring. It's one of four restaurants and five retail shops in the town of less than one thousand.



The charming business district and 1936 stone Works Progress Administration building add to the town's charm, but what really makes it beautiful is the abundance of natural beauty in the bordering lake and surrounding Ozarks. Currently, the city is looking forward by remodeling the WPA building, making it ADA accessible, adding a library, and turning it into a new community center.

### PRETTIEST SMALL TOWNS 2017

What did you think of our list? Next year, we're expanding the list to include towns under 2,500, and we want your input. Tell us what towns should be on the list, and you'll get to vote for the winner. Visit [missourilife.com/prettiest-small-towns](http://missourilife.com/prettiest-small-towns) to learn more.



# Slow Flowers

*A burgeoning movement in the floral industry is locally focused.*

*Story By Jonas Weir | Photos By Andrea K. Grist*

Nora Case with Flora By Nora, a floral designer and frequent visitor to Flower Hill Farm, collects flowers and organic materials for her designs.

About ten years ago, Vicki Lander started renting land at Mueller Farm in Ferguson. She had received her master gardener certification from the Missouri Botanical Garden in 1991 and had learned organic farming from mentor Paul Krautman at Bellows Creek Farm in Cedar Hill, thirty miles south of St. Louis. Vicki now wanted to continue on her own, but she was a city dweller.

"I lived in the city and didn't have enough space, so I started renting land, about a half an acre," Vicki says.

On her rented acreage at Mueller Farm, Vicki began harvesting organic vegetables and flowers. In 2007, a farming group moved into the plot next to Vicki and began organic farming. Eventually, the group became known as Earth Dance Farms—the well-respected nonprofit, organic farming school that offers season-long apprenticeship programs.

Vicki started helping out with Earth Dance, and eventually, she was asked to be the farm manager. During her ten-

ure as farm manager, Earth Dance was invited to the Terra Madre International Gathering in Turin, Italy. The biannual event gathers farming communities from across the world to share ideas and resources about sustainability and is tied to the roots of the slow food movement.

Founded in 1989 by Carlo Petrini, Slow Food is an Italian organization that pioneered the idea of farm-to-table. Carlo Petrini and Slow Food both helped establish the Terra Madre gatherings. The year Vicki attended, Carlo Petrini invited more than 150 elders and native farmers from Italy to speak. Finally, Vicki found the encouragement to stop renting and become a full-time farmer and landowner.

"We always wanted to live in a country setting and do some farming," Vicki says. "I was so inspired by this, I just thought we had to do it right then. After that, we got really serious about looking, and we found a really beautiful piece of property in Beaufort. We've been working on the soil ever since."



From left: Zinnias grow in a field at Flower Hill farm. This bouquet was made by a workshop student at Flower Hill. Friend of Flower Hill Bobby Autry and his dog Emery seek some shade after time out in the flower fields.

The land Vicki has been working on for the past five growing seasons is now known as Flower Hill Farm in Beaufort. Being a first-time landowner, Vicki was able to take advantage of the Missouri Beginning Farmer Entrepreneurship program for financial assistance. Accordingly, she had to write a business plan. That's when she found a new focus in her sustainable farming efforts.

"At the time, there were no flower vendors at any of the farmers' markets in St. Louis, so I thought it was a niche that we could fill," she says. "I had also just finished training thirty organic vegetable growers, and I didn't want to be competing with my students."

Thus, Vicki started using the farm's acreage and greenhouses to grow flowers, and coming from a slow food background, she found herself at the base of a blossoming movement.

## FIELD-TO-VASE

Slow flowers is a movement that, like Vicki, is rooted in the slow food movement. It's taking the same ideas that helped propel slow food into the culinary world and applying them to the floral industry. Instead of farm-to-table, it's field-to-vase.

"All of it is about buying local," Vicki says.

Right now, 80 percent of the cut flowers sold in the United States are imported, according to the California Cut Flower Commission. It's an \$8 billion industry, according to the Society of American Florists, but the USDA Floriculture Crops Summary shows that only about \$500 million of that is going to US farms. On top that, of the 20 percent of cut flowers that are grown in the United States, 76 percent come from California.

One reason to buy locally grown flowers is to support your local economy. Several studies show buying local directly benefits the community by keeping more of the money in the local economy. Another reason, which specifically relates to flowers, is because a majority of imported flowers

come from South American countries that do not have regulations on herbicides, pesticides, or working conditions.

Andrea Grist, owner of Andrea K. Grist Floral Designs in Kansas City, was shocked when she read a book that exposed the dirty truth.

Published in 2007, *Flower Confidential* is author Amy Stewart's investigative report on the global floral industry. Among a wide range of topics, the book looks at the working conditions in places like Ecuador, where the average monthly wage for a worker is \$150 and children work to dip cut flowers in harmful fungicides that can cause neurological issues. After learning these facts, Andrea started sourcing more of her flowers locally.

"As a consumer of those goods, I was contributing to that," Andrea says. "I started self-educating. I wanted to understand where my floral product came from."

Andrea is an industry veteran of sorts. She's been a floral designer for twenty-two years and owned her own business for the past sixteen years. Although she has no brick-and-mortar store, Andrea gets a majority of her business catering to weddings and corporate events. Increasingly, she's becoming involved in the slow flowers movement.

"This is a movement where floral designers and event planners are thinking about where they source their flowers from and how that can impact local farms," she says.

Primarily, Andrea has been reaching out to farms around the state to find more places she can source from. However, she's also worked with the MU Extension office to host events on the subject, and she recently spoke at the St. Louis Art Museum about the topic, along with others involved with the slow flowers movement. With the help of people like Andrea, a Missouri floral network is starting to take shape. Still, the fact is the slow flower movement simply doesn't benefit from the same infrastructure the slow food movement has.

"The slow food movement is so advanced compared to slow flowers," says Debra Prinzing, a Seattle-based writer





### Slow Flower Farms

Lamar

#### Dragonfly Dreams Flower Farm

[dragonflydreamsff.webs.com](http://dragonflydreamsff.webs.com)

417-214-6494

Beaufort

#### Flower Hill Farm

[flowerhillfarmmo.com](http://flowerhillfarmmo.com)

848 Laurel Lane

314-882-9642

Troy

#### Mossy Creek Farm

[mossycreekfarm.com](http://mossycreekfarm.com)

689 Harmony Grove Road

314-374 4882

St. Louis

#### Urban Buds: City Grown Flowers

[urbanbudscitygrownflowers.com](http://urbanbudscitygrownflowers.com)

4736 Tennessee Avenue

573-999-6293

and slow flower advocate. “Flowers are catching up. We have a long way to go. It’s exciting to see people start paying attention to this issue.”

### THE NETWORK

Debra Prinzing has emerged as one of the lead advocates for this movement. After working as a home and garden writer and reporter for years, she has steeped herself in field-to-vase ideas over the past ten years as she began paying more attention to how the product came to be rather than what the final product was.

“I was interested in how things grew, and I started meeting flower growers” Debra says. “I found it fascinating that people were fighting this huge battle against big growers that had flooded the marketplace with imported flowers.”

Debra’s interest stems from a story she was working on for the *Los Angeles Times* in 2010. She wanted to put together a story on organically grown flowers that Los Angeles consumers could buy for Valentine’s Day. She found that there weren’t many organic farms growing flowers. In fact, there weren’t many local farms growing cut flowers at all. So, she had a new mission: to find as many local farms growing flowers sustainably.

What does sustainable growing mean, though?

“Sustainability is such a moving target,” Debra says. “There are measures and practices we can look at, though.”

In her book *The 50 Mile Bouquet*, Debra defines the concept: “A product can be considered sustainable if its production enables the resources from which it was made to continue to be available for future generations.”

However, the problem is finding a clear-cut definition of what that means. Debra points to a few key practices to help define sustainable growing, including implementing drip irrigation, taking advantage of cover crop techniques, and using organic fertilizer.

Debra also points to farms that use all organic farming methods but are not USDA-certified organic—such as Urban Buds: City Grown Flowers in the Dutchtown neighborhood of St. Louis—as the ideal farms to buy flowers from.

Right now, on a consumer level, there is not a universal way to tell whether your flowers are grown in the United States. The majority of flower sales take place at the grocery store level, and the labelling in the produce department is much better than in the floral department.

“Bottom line, we don’t eat these flowers,” Debra says.

“Made in the USA” stickers could mean the bouquet was only assembled and not grown in the country. There is an organization, the Certified American Grown Council, that has a red, white, and blue logo you can look for, but only about fifty farms are currently members and none are in Missouri. However, you can do research before going out and buying.

“It just became clear that I needed to start a directory to help point consumers to those resources,” Debra says. “That’s what *slowflowers.com* is right now.”

Celebrating its second anniversary this month, the *slowflowers.com* directory now includes forty-eight states and more than seven hundred listings, which include both flower-producing farms like Flower Hill and floral designers like Andrea Grist. There are eight listings in Missouri for both farms, designers, and floral shops. However, in the end, it comes down to being a conscious consumer.

“You really have to ask,” Debra says. “If you indicate a preference that you want American-grown or Missouri-grown, locally sourced flowers, you’re asserting your values with your pocket book.”

### A NEW SPRING

Over the past thirty years, imported products have increasingly become a part of the US floral industry. However, things are starting to change. The number of cut flower farms has increased from 5,085 to 5,903 from 2007 to 2012, according to the USDA Census of Agriculture. And floral designers like Andrea are seeing a change.

More and more customers are asking for all locally sourced flowers, and Andrea has no problem satisfying their needs. However, Andrea can’t source all of the flowers required to meet all her clients’ demands from Missouri growers, or even US growers for that matter.

“This is definitely an avenue where farmers need to do better,” Andrea says. “I want to purchase from you, but I can’t purchase from you if I don’t know you’re there.”

Right now, Andrea primarily works with Urban Buds and Flower Hill Farm. Mossy Creek Farm in Troy and Dragonfly Dreams Flower Farm in Lamar are two more growers that head the pack when it comes to slow flowers in Missouri. The movement is just beginning to take shape in Missouri, and, likewise, florists and producers are only now beginning to make an impact on the public, just as the slow food movement did twenty years ago.

“The slow flowers movement really depends on the customers,” Vicki Lander says. “We’re just finally starting to see people requesting locally grown things, and we’re very grateful. It’s a relationship between a producer and a consumer.”

The cut flower harvest at Flower Hill is done for the day and off they go to the cold room. It’s time to prepare for tomorrow before the sun goes away for good.





# THE TENDERLOIN

*Discover the Missouri restaurants that have made the pork tenderloin sandwich a Midwestern delicacy and a staple on our diners' menus.*

BY JONAS WEIR

**BREADED AND DEEP-FRIED** to perfection, a good tenderloin sandwich can't be contained by a mere bun. No, if it's done right, the pork cutlet is hammered thin, and it hangs off both sides of a white-bread bun. It's an indulgent treat that's signature to the Midwestern palate.

The pork tenderloin sandwich, as we know it today, most likely has German roots. You'll notice it closely resembles a delicacy known as the wiener schnitzel. However, what sets the tenderloin sandwich apart is the meat. Wiener schnitzel is typically made from veal, but the tenderloin sandwich uses meat from the loin of a hog. From there, the differences become thinner. Schnitzel is typically pan-fried; tenderloin is

usually deep-fried, though some diners don't fry it all, offering a slightly healthier grilled tenderloin sandwich.

In the Midwest, many states lay claim to the best tenderloin sandwich. Restaurants from Ohio to Idaho take pride in the batters, breading, and seasonings that make their tenderloin the best. No one can really say who has the best tenderloin sandwich, though. Indiana is most likely home to the very first iteration of the fried pork tenderloin sandwich, and Peoria, Illinois, claims to be the tenderloin sandwich capital of the world. But Missourians know how to do comfort food right, and you could say we have the best tenderloin sandwiches west of the Mississippi. Our status as

HARRY KATZ



**Above:** From the outside, Kitty's Cafe in Kansas City might not look like much, but what's being served up on the inside is certainly special. **Right:** The Pigwich food truck is permanently located behind the Local Pig in Kansas City. It's a great lunch spot for a sunny day.

both a Southern and Midwestern state gives us a leg up on Iowans, whose signature dish is the loose meat sandwich, and Kansas, which is known for hamburger casserole. In fact, Kansas City—one of America's best cities for foodies—has, on its own, a cornucopia of delicious diners that do pork tenderloin justice.

Most comfort-food joints across the state offer some version of this sandwich, and most do a good job. Here are just five of our favorites. They range from fine dining to Southern fried. Pork lovers of all kinds will find something to like in this group of Missouri's top tenderloins.

## *Kansas City* KITTY'S CAFE

Kitty's has a long history in Kansas City.

During World War II, Japanese-American Paul Kawakam was confined to an internment camp, but once the war was over, he bought a one-way bus ticket to Kansas City to start a new life. In 1951, he and his wife, Kitty, opened the now-legendary restaurant in south Kansas City. In the 1980s, the couple retired and sold the restaurant.

Nowadays, Charley Soulivong runs the joint as he has for more than fifteen years, and Kitty's is still known for its outstanding Midwestern comfort food.

The small, square box of a restaurant has limited indoor seating, but there are some picnic tables around back to accommodate a crowd. The simple menu offers many fan favorites, and you really can't go wrong. For less than \$2, the grilled cheese is a go-to for a cheap meal. The most expensive item, a catfish sandwich, comes in at around \$5.50 and is well worth the price. The sides of tater tots and french fries are up for debate on which is better. However, the dish that undeniably takes the cake as the best is the pork loin.

A light batter—more similar to a beer batter or tempura than traditional breading—coats three sizable pieces of pork tenderloin that are

COURTESY OF THE DLC AND STEVEKC VIA FLICKR



fried to golden perfection. Add that to a white bun, shredded lettuce, cut-up tomatoes, and either mayonnaise or hot sauce, and you'll be in hog heaven.

Kitty's is a cash-only place, so come prepared.

810 E. Thirty-First Street • 816-753-9711

## *Kansas City* PIGWICH

In 2014, chef Alex Pope brought his own brand of artisan butchery to the hungry residents of Kansas City. Now in its second location, the butcher shop known as the Local Pig has expanded to include a sandwich-focused food truck—aptly named Pigwich—right behind its northeast Kansas City location.

The Local Pig only sources humanely raised pork, beef, chicken, lamb, and duck from nearby farms in Kansas and Missouri, and in turn, so does Pigwich.

While the Local Pig lets you take home quality cuts, sausages, and cured meats to prepare yourself, Pigwich offers a way to taste Alex's succulent creations on the premises. The menu includes five everyday options: a double cheeseburger; a Philly cheesesteak; the Pigwich, a combination of smoked pork, slaw, and barbecue sauce; the restaurant's take on a Vietnamese-style Bahn Mi; and the surprising vegetarian option of a Falafel. Each sandwich can be made into a combo meal that comes with house-made chips and a drink.

On top of the regular menu items, Pigwich offers daily specials. Many patrons may argue over the day to visit. Friday's Meatloaf Patty Melt is amazing, and Monday's Cuban—served with roast pork, smoked ham, Swiss cheese, pickles, and Dijon mustard—is another fan favorite. However, Pigwich's take on the fried pork tenderloin sandwich, which is served up each Thursday, makes the case that diner food can be elevated, and it can be great.

The sandwich is simple but delicious. It's all about the ingredients. First,



**Above:** The Goody Goody Diner is a relic from a bygone era. Although the car-hop service is gone, this St. Louis establishment still serves great diner food like it did when it opened in 1948. **Right:** The pork tenderloin sandwich at Toot Toot in Bethany is massive, so come hungry.

the kitchen team starts off with cuts from the Boston butt or shoulder. Then, the pork is seasoned with bread crumbs made with baguettes, thyme, and rosemary. Next, it's fried and served on a pretzel roll with arugula, house-made dill pickles, and ranch dressing. It might not be the same as the pork tenderloin you grew up on, but it is definitely a new Midwestern delicacy.

*Pigwich.com • 2618 Guinotte Avenue • 816-200-1639*

### *St. Louis* GOODY GOODY DINER

Open seven days a week, the Goody Goody Diner on Natural Bridge Avenue is a St. Louis institution.

The diner first opened in 1948 to serve a new influx of motorists. Offering car hop service, fresh off-the-griddle-food, and A&W root beer, Goody Goody was a hot spot when America's obsession with cars began. In fact, the whole neighborhood was a hopping place back then; the very first Ted Drewes' stood less than a football field away from Goody Goody, and many more once-legendary diners opened in the area.

While many restaurants have come and gone, the Goody Goody Diner has stood the test of time. For many of those years, the Connelly



family has run the place. The family started out as regulars and became full-fledged owners in 1954, and the rest is history.

The Goody Goody still serves up diner food for breakfast and lunch. The diner's catfish breakfast—a fried catfish filet served with eggs and all the breakfast fixings—is a favorite you won't see on a lot of menus, and the St. Louis slinger—eggs, hash browns, and a hamburger patty topped with chili, cheese, and onions—is in competition for the city's best. However, the



pork tenderloin sandwich stands tall among giants on this menu.

What sets the Goody Goody's pork tenderloin apart is that it's grilled and not fried. That might sound like sacrilege to some tenderloin enthusiasts, but one bite will likely change their minds. With a light seasoning and just the right amount of grill time, this sandwich showcases the tender part of tenderloin, and the homemade roll is light and fluffy enough to make the whole thing melt in your mouth.

*GoodyGoodyDiner.com • 5900 Natural Bridge Avenue • 314-383-3333*

### *Bethany* TOOT-TOOT FAMILY RESTAURANT & LOUNGE

If you see a billboard that says TOOT-TOOT in bold capital letters, don't honk back; just prepare to stop for some good food. This Bethany establishment is located at Exit 92 off Interstate 35—only about twenty miles south of the Iowa border.

The family restaurant has made a name for itself by offering delicious lunch buffets during the week, breakfast buffets on the weekends, and special brunch spreads for holidays like Mother's Day.

A typical buffet at Toot-Toot will have all the Midwestern classics: a salad bar, fried chicken, mashed potatoes, corn, you name it. The family-run restaurant has a friendly staff, which is an added bonus to the heaps of delicious food served up daily.

If you don't make the buffet or prefer made-to-order entrées, you're in luck. Toot-Toot has an expansive menu full of breakfast, lunch, and dinner options to satisfy the hungriest of patrons. Pickle fries or the white cheddar cheese curds are a good way to start off any meal, and the restaurant's steak menu is, if anything, hearty and delicious. However, the way to go here is to order Toot-Toot's Famous Pork Tenderloin sandwich.

These hand-breaded, deep-fried pork cutlets come in either a four-ounce or the larger eight-ounce version for those looking for a gut-busting, good sandwich served on a toasted bun with lettuce, tomato, pickle, and onion. Get a side of curly fries to round out the experience.

Perche Creek Cafe is hidden gem of Mid-Missouri. Located a few miles outside of Columbia, down the street from the Midway truck stop, the diner has a reputation for serving delicious comfort food.

Check Toot-Toot Family Restaurant & Lounge's Facebook page to see what's being served at the buffet or to look for upcoming specials. You'll have a honkin' good time.

*Facebook: Toot-Toot Family Restaurant & Lounge • 2905 Miller Street • 660-425-7001*

### *Columbia* PERCHE CREEK CAFE

The Perche Creek Cafe has just the right amount of Mid-Missouri charm.

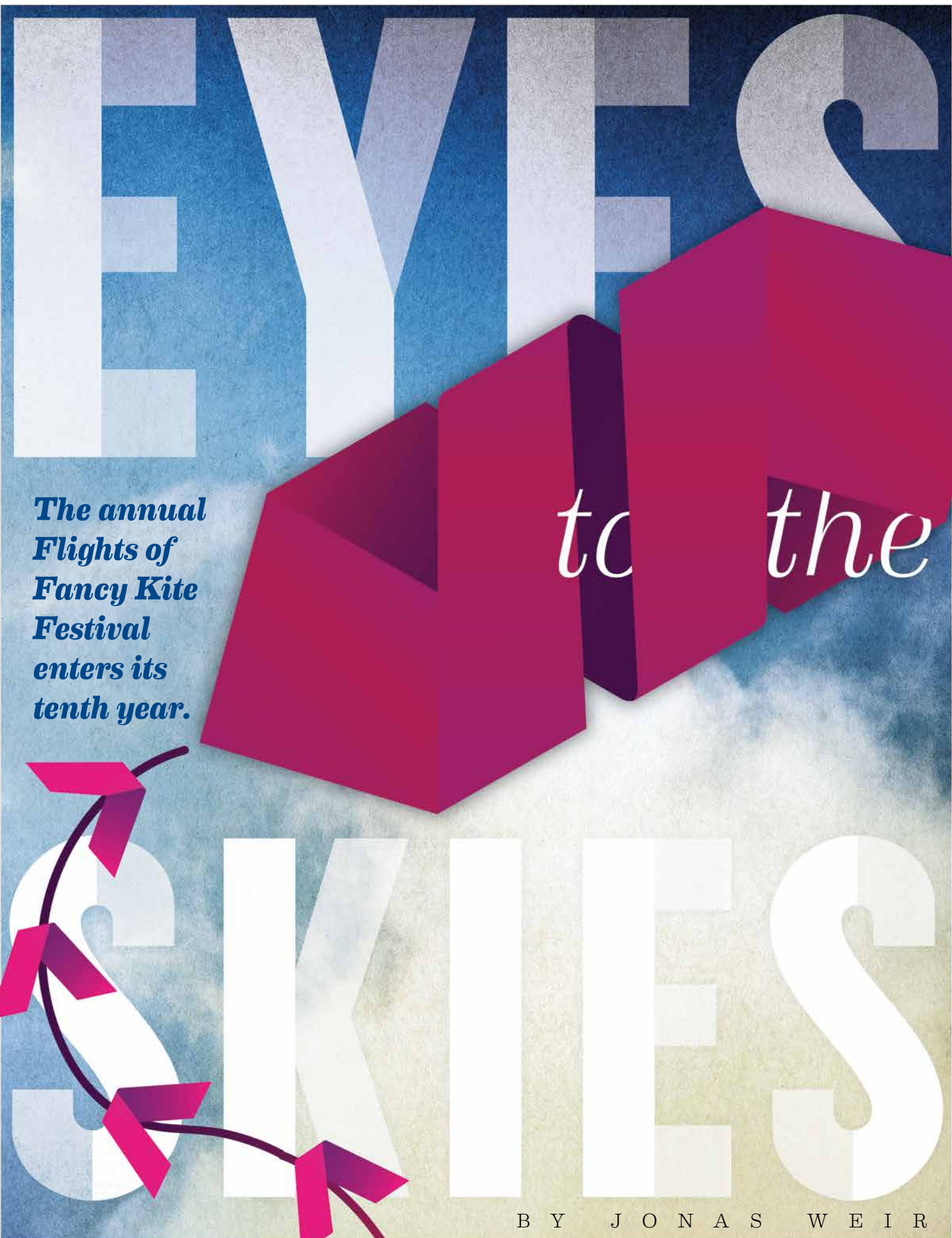
Located in the Little Midway gas station, just down the road from the Interstate 70 Midway Truck Stop, a tongue-in-cheek sign hangs out front that reads "Perche Creek Yacht Club." Well, the sign is not entirely a joke. The Perche Creek Yacht Club formed in 1989. However, their name is a joke. If you know Perche Creek, a tiny stream not far from the diner, you'll know no yacht has ever taken to its waters.

The purpose of the yacht club is not to sail. It is merely to meet at the Perche Creek Cafe to "further its mission of having no purpose." And what better place to do nothing than this stellar diner?

Open for breakfast and lunch, the diner serves comfort classics seven days a week, with specials on each weekday. The locals will tell you that Catfish Friday is the time to visit. Pork Steak Thursdays and Meatloaf Mondays are other great days to stop in, but the hidden gem on this menu is the breaded pork loin sandwich.

The sandwich specials rotate constantly, so if you see pork loin on the chalk board behind the counter, order it. Served on a standard white bun with lettuce, pickles, and onion, each tenderloin is hand-breaded and made to order. The light breading, quality pork loin from Patchwork Farms in Columbia, and perfect fry of this sandwich is the type of down-home cooking that has helped Perche Creek build its reputation over the past twenty years as being one of the best diners in Mid-Missouri.

*PercheCreekCafe.com • 6751 Highway 40 West • 573-446-7400*



**The annual Flights of Fancy Kite Festival enters its tenth year.**

to the

BY JONAS WEIR



**Far left:** This thirty-foot-long fish kite is owned by Allan Gilson of Olathe, Kansas. **Left:** This butterfly kite is owned by Ron and Charm Lindner of the Gateway Kite Club. **Bottom left:** Face painting is free at Flights of Fancy. **Bottom right:** This spike ball has a twenty-foot diameter and is owned by Don Larkey of the Kansas City Kite Club.



## WITH BEAUTIFUL WIDE OPEN SPACES

and green, grassy fields without trees or obstruction, the campus at Metropolitan Community College-Longview in Lee's Summit is the perfect place to fly a kite. At least that's just what Dr. Fred Grogan—former president of the college—thought in 2007.

“Our president at the time suggested the idea of a kite festival,” says Tami Morrow, community education coordinator at Metropolitan Community College-Longview. “We frequently have nice wind up here.”

Although Fred Grogan stepped down as president in 2013, he left a legacy of turning the Metropolitan Community College-Longview campus into the grounds of the best kite festival in Missouri. In April 2007, he and his staff discovered and enlisted the Kansas City Kite Club to hold the first annual Flights of Fancy Kite Festival. That initial year, the event organizers had no idea what they were getting into. They expected around 500 people. More than 3,500 turned out. The vendors sold out of almost everything, and needless to say, it was a huge success. Much of that success undoubtedly came from the Kansas City Kite Club.

The Kansas City Kite Club does not fly your typical kites; they're a bit more advanced than Charlie Brown or Ben Franklin's old diamond kite.

“Most of these kites are probably bigger than your house,” says Sean Beaver, president of the Kansas City Kite Club. “Think

huge, hot-air-balloon-sized kites. In fact, we have several longer than a basketball court and several that are three stories tall.”

Sean is the heart of the Kansas City kiting community and, frankly, the Midwest kiting community. He has been involved for almost twenty years. He's a member of the Professional Air Sports Association as a certified kite boarder—a sport similar to windsurfing, only using a kite instead of a sail. And he travels the country promoting the sport. However, his arguably healthy obsession goes back to a singular experience.

“I don't remember the specific event; I just remember feeling the line, which felt like a steel cable on a crane,” Sean says. “That was it. I just wanted one, and off we went. Fast forward fifteen years later, and I've got one of the bigger collections in the country.”

COURTESY OF METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY COLLEGE-LONGVIEW

## “IT JUST GETS YOU LOOKING UP; IT’S KIND OF A METAPHOR FOR LIFE. IT GETS YOU OUT OF THE DAY-TO-DAY AND DOING SOMETHING FUN AND WHOLESOME.”

Sean is an enthusiast just as much as he is a thrill-seeker who turns kiting into an extreme sport. Although it’s only a hobby for Sean, who works in human resources at a Kansas City engineering and construction firm, he spends most of his free time and plenty of money—more than he’d like to admit—on kites. He’s a go-big-or-go-home type of flier.

“For the last ten plus years, I’ve been flying the bigger ones,” Sean says. “If they’re smaller than a school bus, you probably won’t catch me flying them very much.”

However, not every member of the community is like Sean. In fact, most are not.

“The average consumer is not going to go out and buy these,” Sean says as he chuckles. “It’s only the people who make bad decisions like me.”

Kiting enthusiasts are just as varied as any other sort of hobby, and kites come in all sorts of shapes and sizes. There are mini-kites smaller than a postage stamp, and there are mega-kites longer than a football field. The world’s longest kite is more than three miles long and weighs more than four hundred pounds. Each category can

be further subdivided by how their wings are shaped, what they’re designed to do, and how they’re flown. In turn, kites are used for many different applications.

“There are people who enjoy taking pictures with kites,” says Linda Larkey, a member of the Kansas City Kite Club. “That’s called kite KAP photography. It’s a huge field, a lot of times it’s even a professional field. I know people who are hired by businesses to get aerial photos.”

Many professional kite-fliers exist, but the majority are hobbyists like Sean and Linda. Yet, the hobbyists still have different interests. Some have specialized interests like flying kites indoors. Others, like Linda, are more interested in making kites than they are flying kites.

Linda first got involved when her son showed interest in kites. Reluctantly, Linda let him use his birthday money to buy him a sport kite.

“It’s kind of funny,” Linda says. “I first thought that it was the dumbest idea—getting one of these dual maneuverable sport kites. Within six months, we were heavily involved. I’ve now been in kiting for about fifteen years.”

After enjoying flying kites for some time, Linda decided to try sewing her first kite when her son wanted a traction kite—a large kite designed to provide significant pull to the user. At the time, nobody manufactured the kite commercially, so she found plans online and resolved to sew it herself.

Her first attempt did not go very well. In fact, it barely flew. Now that Linda’s a master kite builder with an eye for design, she can hardly believe it flew at all. Her second attempt, on the other hand, went much better, and it’s been smooth sailing ever since. Her son actually still flies that kite today.

For anyone looking to build their own kite, there are many online resources. Linda recommends kitebuilder.com, but she says that truly the best way is to attend a local workshop or reach out to a local kite club for help.

“Take it one step at a time, and absolutely try to find someone in the area to assist you,” Linda says. “You can do it without any other contact, but the learning curve is sharply reduced if you have someone you can actually talk to.”

Linda is heavily involved in the craft of kite building. She even

attends and helps organize annual kite-building events. There are kite-making events across the world, though she says kiting is larger abroad. The closest event to Missouri is the annual Upper-Midwest Area Kite-making Event in Oregon, Illinois—a hundred miles west of Chicago or a four-hour drive from St. Louis. The event this year runs from February 26 to February 28. Visit [u-make.org](http://u-make.org) for more information. Linda will be there teaching classes.

While Sean and Linda are both enthralled by different aspects of kiting, they both enjoy going out and flying kites with other enthusiasts, which is the basis for having a strong kiting community. Kansas City is not the only place with a kite club. St. Louis also has one, but Kansas City stands out as one of the premier kite clubs in the country.

“We’re extremely lucky,” Linda says. “We have Sean here; he flies extensively. We also have other members that do fly extensively.”

No matter where kites are located, though, most enjoy the hobby for similar reasons. Linda says it’s

one of the most affordable hobbies to get into; you don’t need to get an extensive kite collection like Sean. Both Sean and Linda have made it a family activity, too. Their spouses and children are all into the sport; Sean even had a kite-themed wedding. Above all, though, kiting gets you outside and active.

“If I had to pinpoint one thing that was really attractive about kite flying, it was that I could get my family out of the house, off the Xbox, off the computer, and off the couch,” Sean says. “I always say spring is Mother Nature’s way of saying, ‘It’s time to party,’ so let’s get out of the house and enjoy the weather.”

Sean and the rest of the Kansas City Kite Club, however, will get out and enjoy the weather no matter what the season. This year, the Kansas City Kite Club is venturing to Clear Lake, Iowa, on February 20 for the annual Color the Wind Kite Festival, which is held on a frozen lake that’s about a four-and-a-half-hour drive from Kansas City. Visit [colorthewind.org](http://colorthewind.org) for more information. That being said, spring is usually more enjoyable: March marks the true beginning of the season, and April is National Kite Flying Month.

On April 16, as it has with each Flights of Fancy, Tami Morrow’s day is going to start early. To ready the festival to open at 10 AM, Tami arrives to campus around six. There’s a lot to set up. The free festival always features food and kite vendors; a kite first aid tent, where you can repair your kite; a DJ, who will play everything from classical music to accompany the kites to pop music for children to dance to; booths for the sponsors; and more. After hours of setup, Tami can finally relax because, once 10 AM rolls around, the day pretty much runs smoothly from there on out.

The day is jam-packed with events. Kite bowl racing, which is like having a go-kart powered by a kite, is one of the fan favorites. A candy drop from a kite is usually a highlight for the little children. And the kite demonstrations throughout the day are for children of all ages.

“The wonderful thing about this is that it’s multigenerational,” Tami says. “Older people come and bring a lawn chair or blanket and watch. Younger families will bring their kids and their own kites, or we always have kites for purchase at the show if they want something a little larger or flashier.”

By the time the festival is over at 5 PM, it’s been a full, yet stress-free day. Kite flying is a peaceful thing. Watching the kites dance in the sky is both therapeutic and awe-inspiring, and flying kites is never a chore for people like Sean. In fact, it’s a form of expression.

“What we do is really no different from what painters or sculptors might do,” Sean says. “They’re just different forms of art.”

Over the past ten years, the festival has grown from 3,500 people to more than 25,000 people. It’s had some hiccups and growing pains along the way. Some years it’s been a little chilly. Some years there’s been little to no wind, and one year it rained. No matter what, though, the Flights of Fancy Festival soldiered on, and everyone involved views each year as a success. It’s a labor of love that might be hard to understand if you’ve never attended an event, but Sean says that once you’ve seen the Kansas City Kite Club in action, there’s no way you won’t leave impressed. Then, maybe you can understand the joy kites get from the sport.

“We fly kites; you look up,” Sean says. “It just gets you looking up; it’s kind of a metaphor for life. It gets you out of the day-to-day and doing something fun and wholesome.”



**Top:** This crown kite has a twenty-seven-foot diameter and is owned by Don Murphy of Omaha, Nebraska. **Bottom:** Bill Ray Lewis attends the Flights of Fancy festival.

**Left:** Sean Beaver’s mega sock kite is more than two hundred feet long and has a diameter of thirty feet. **Far left:** Giant alligators fly over the Metropolitan Community College-Longview campus during the annual Flights of Fancy festival.

