

# Friends

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF MCCONNELL SPRINGS

**McConnell**  
*Springs*  
LEXINGTON 1775

Volume 29 Issue 2  
May 2023

## Celebrate Founders' Day With Us

by Jon Hagee, Founders' Day Chair



Our annual Founders' Day celebration at Lexington's Historic McConnell Springs is Saturday, May 20!

Two hundred forty-seven years ago Lexington and the surrounding Bluegrass was a woodland paradise for pioneers seeking freedom and land of their own. William McConnell and a surveying party were camping down by the Springs when word came of the Battle of Lexington and the start of the Revolutionary War. In honor of that event, the explorers decided to name our community Lexington, and did so in 1779 when the town was founded. This year, in honor of that surveying party, we have a special presentation on the frontier surveyors.



Experience frontier life of 1775 for yourself! Founders' Day is held from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. There will be traditional musical entertainment; colonial crafts such as woodworking, quilt making, weaving & gunsmithing. Exhibits of colonial tools & Indian artifacts. Demonstrations of pioneer cooking & blacksmithing. And a special frontier living history area around our primitive log cabin. Children's activities include bow & arrow, tomahawk throw, pioneer kids toys & games. And the usual 27 acres of woodland trails!



This is a FREE family event, come spend the day! We have invited a food truck for your lunch. As always, a rain or shine event; sunscreen, rain gear and insect repellent may be needed.



Inside: **History To Chew On Series is Back!**



# Dear Friends...

## Charlie Boland, Chair

The annual Wine Barrel Tasting on March 25 was a great success,

and I want to thank board member **Becci Ray** and the event committee – their hard work really paid off! This event is always our largest single fund-raising effort of the year, and the proceeds lay the foundation for so many of our other activities and communications throughout the rest of the year. Congratulations on a job well done!

Founders' Day is just ahead, on May 20, and we have a very enjoyable, family friendly program taking shape. In addition to the festivities outlined in the article, we will be joined by several community partners such as Bluegrass Green-source, LFUCG Environmental Quality, KY American Water, two DAR Chapters and one SAR Chapter, Bagpipe and Drum Corps, Councilmember Jennifer Reynolds, and others. Thanks to board member **Jon Hagee** for his leadership in planning this event. Find more details in the newsletter. Come with your family or friends, and we'll see you here!

Following that, the 'History to Chew On' series starts in June, and you can find the slate of speakers and dates here in the newsletter – thanks to board member **Peter Andrew** for the great job he

does in putting this series together. In addition, you can also find the first installment in the "Spotlight" series, featuring board member emeritus **John Kiefer**. We are so privileged to have people like John serving on our board, and I look forward to shining the spotlight on several of them in upcoming newsletters.

Finally, I want to say a thank you to **Renee' Williams**, our 'communications guru' board member, for her work in preparing our newsletters. She does such a great job and we are so appreciative to have her skills and services!

Please visit us anytime you can, and support us as a volunteer, or financially if possible by buying a paver, memorial tree, or with a general donation to support our mission and purpose. Thanks so much to all of you who have volunteered your time or made financial contributions to sustain our efforts. We could not do it without you!

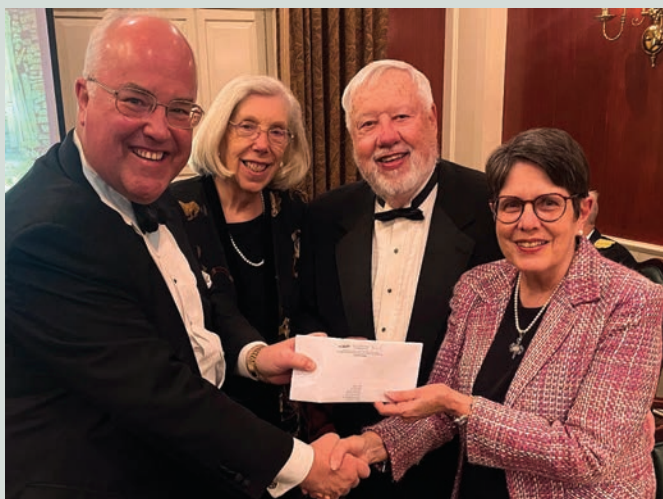
Sincerely and on behalf of The Friends board,

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
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Doug McLaren  
Don Powell  
Becci Ray  
Laurie Thomas  
Franklin D. Thompson  
Renee' Williams

**Parks Representative  
and Park Naturalist**  
Steven Rogers



## Thank You Society of Colonial Wars in the Commonwealth

Past Governor John McLeod of The Society of Colonial Wars in the Commonwealth of Kentucky, presented a grant to Lexington Mayor Linda Gorton for The Friends of McConnell Springs to help support and preserve the history of our country's Colonial period. Also shown is past board member Annette Mathy and current treasurer Dick Mathy.

# History To Chew On Series is Back!

History to Chew On Series will be held on June 13 - October 10, at McConnell Springs. Join us for this amazing new line up of speakers.

Tuesday, June 13

**Stuart Saunders - Murder on a Steam Boat**

The presentation covers Southern honor culture, vigilante justice, fugitive slaves, the Civil War, and more. The boat was based out of Cincinnati.



Tuesday, July 11

**Marty Schadler - First successful Powered Flight in KY**

The Matthew Sellers Story, which considers the life and invention of the first successful powered aircraft (1908) in Kentucky and its inventor, five years after the Wright brothers.

Tuesday, August 8

**Charles Welsko - Governor Thomas E. Bramlette**

Civil War era experiences of Governor Thomas E. Bramlette. Born in Cumberland (now Clinton) County, Kentucky, Bramlette was an attorney and politician before the war. When the Civil War began, he firmly supported the Union, denounced secession, and eventually led the 3<sup>rd</sup> Kentucky Volunteer Infantry Regiment before Abraham Lincoln appointed him a U.S. District Attorney out of Louisville in 1863.



Tuesday, September 12

**Kentucky Politics in the 1800's**

Join KHS staff for a glimpse into Kentucky politics during the antebellum era through the letters of Peter Dorman of Gallatin County. Dorman was a member of the Kentucky House of Representatives from 1853-1854. In a letter to his wife, he details the arrival of Indiana Governor Wright and his speech at the Old State Capitol as well as the social life and lavish balls of Frankfort during the session. Staff will also highlight additional research related to Dorman's family, including the political ventures of his son and grandson.

Tuesday, October 10

**Steve T. Phan, Historian and Park Ranger - Camp Nelson**

Camp Nelson was established in 1863 as a US Army fortified base, supply depot, and hospital. Camp Nelson also served as a recruitment post and refugee camp for white Unionists fleeing Confederate occupation in East Tennessee. The following year, the base evolved to become one of the country's largest recruitment and training centers for African American soldiers during the Civil War and served as a refugee camp for their wives and children.



Camp Nelson represents the courage and determination of formerly enslaved African Americans to secure their own emancipation. It also illustrates the nation's struggle to define the meaning of freedom during and after the Civil War.





## Board Member Spotlight – John Kiefer

John Kiefer is a meteorite. That is to say, he is a rare and valuable find. Meteorites are common to see in the evening skies, but to find a fragment of space rock that survived that fiery plunge through the atmosphere all the way to earth's surface is a rare thing. Being an expert in geology, John knows a thing or two about rocks. Having a person with his particular knowledge on our board is a rare and valuable find, since McConnell Springs' unique geologic formation must be carefully understood to preserve and protect it for future generations.

John was born and raised in Evansville, IN. He went to small St. Joseph's College in Rensselaer, IN where he began in engineering, but realized it was not his thing and moved into geology after being fascinated by a nearby meteor impact site-become-rock quarry in Kentland, IN. And the rest is geologic history, so to speak. That ancient meteor impact site spiked his interest. He completed his geology degree, and then being approached by both Kansas State and University of Illinois, he chose to go from St. Joseph's to the comparatively gargantuan Illinois. He thought he would never have a chance to go to such a large school or be able to compete well, but by the end he graduated with a PhD in geology, taught there for 4 years, and completed a minor in civil engineering. He also did a post-doctorate fellowship at Northwestern University, helped build a great geology program at Eastern KY University, and was an adjunct geology professor for many years at the University of Kentucky. His "real job" was as assistant state geologist for Kentucky Geological Survey, where he spent 30 years consulting and educating the masses about the particulars of Kentucky's unique geology.

John also wanted real-life experience outside of academia and found plenty. Working initially with his father in law who did geological evaluations for construction projects, he helped build many projects. He specialized in grain elevators, tricky work due to the weight of multiple loaded or empty structures adjacent to each other, all needing a solid base. Other projects he consulted include the Illinois state library, hotel work in St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands, three trips to China doing seismic studies and teaching geology and public policy, just to name a few.

John met Jim Rebmann in the 1970s, who badgered him to come see the potential of McConnell Springs. John recalled his first visit there, finding a large homeless encampment and a dumping ground for industrial debris. Over the years, with the leadership of councilmember Isabel Yates, John, Jim and others volunteered their time to dye-trace the water sources, examine the hydrologic effect of all the dumped debris, help spelunkers diving to find and remove blockages in the spring system, and protect the site from further development incursion. Lexington's groundwater system was developed by nature, and restoring it here came at considerable cost. John was involved in speaking to local officials, making donation appeals, and bucket brigades formed by college students hauling debris out of the property. The victory to preserve the site was finally won in the 1990s when the city acquired the property. Many good things have happened since then as the former dumping ground became a pristine park, and John has been there for all of it.

We owe John a great deal of gratitude for lending his time and expertise and playing such an important role in McConnell Springs' rebirth. And a special thanks to his wife, Martha, for supporting his involvement over the decades. Thank you, John, for serving the Friends so well – we are grateful to have a rare meteorite like you!

## Wine Barrel Tasting a Hit

Close to 330 people drove through the beautiful bluegrass countryside, visiting wineries in support of McConnell Springs! Some tried to make it to as many wineries as possible, some stopped at only a few, while others tried some they had not been to before. Everyone received a special McConnell Springs wine glass and a unique experience at each winery. We had many from other states and a few from other countries! Mark your calendars for the last Saturday in March, 2024. A big thank you to these wineries for their sponsorships: 1922 House Vineyards & Winery, Chenault Vineyard, Equus Run Vineyards, First Vineyard, Grimes Mill Winery, Hamon Haven Winery, Harkness Edwards Vineyards, Jean Farris Winery & Bistro, Lovers Leap Vineyards & Winery, Prodigy Vineyards & Winery, Rising Sons Winery, Talon Winery & Vineyards, and Wildside Winery.

Barrel Tasting  
for the Springs

March 25  
11 am - 5 pm

begin at one of  
13 KY Wineries  
See website for locations.

2023

McConnell Springs  
Purchase your ticket at our  
EventBrite QR code or by visiting  
McConnellSprings.org



# Notes from the Naturalist...

by Steven Rogers

As the weather warms up and the trees start to bud, many migratory birds are making their way back to Central Kentucky. Spring is a great time to observe these beautiful creatures and witness their stunning colors and behaviors.

One of the most common migratory birds to see in Central Kentucky during spring is the Eastern Phoebe. These small, grayish-brown birds can be found perched on branches, wagging their tails up and down while singing a distinctive "fee-bee" call. Another migratory bird to look out for is the Wood

Thrush, known for their melodic flute-like song.

But that's not all! Keep your eyes peeled for the strikingly blue Indigo Bunting, the vibrant Baltimore oriole, the flashy Scarlet Tanager, and a variety of colorful Warblers. With so many migratory birds passing through the area, you never know what feathered friend you might spot!

To get a closer look at these stunning birds, come out to McConnell Springs. Stop by the front desk at the Kentucky American Water Education Center during open hours to borrow a pair of binoculars and field guide to get started on your own adventure.

## Pauper Testimonial Honoring Greg Morgan



I wanted to thank you for all of your help in making a memorial paver for my late friend, Greg Morgan. Greg was a horticulturist and received a degree in Landscape Architecture from UK. You could go anywhere with Greg, and he would be able to tell you what each tree and plant was and their different properties. McConnell Springs was his favorite

place in Lexington. Since he passed a few years ago, I will go back there when I am in town to walk around and think of him. The last time that I did that, I noticed the pavers around the fountain and thought of how that would be a great way to remember Greg. I was stunned to find out that it was only \$100 to have one made. I made the arrangements and since Greg's birthday was in December

and I was going to be in Lexington for the holidays, I asked for the paver to be ready by Christmas. Our best friend, Siobain Reilly, arranged with Greg's parents, Tom and Flora Morgan of Versailles, KY and his sister Mary to be there to see the stone together. On December 28th, Siobain and I met his family there in the afternoon. Mary brought her husband and two daughters. I brought our friend Brian Holler who now lives in Berlin, Germany, and my mother, Sandy Godecker, who loved Greg as much as I did. Greg took care of my parents' yard for many years. The meeting was very emotional, and his family was so touched by the paver. They even called Greg's older brother who lives in Colorado and couldn't be there. The whole experience was beautiful and overwhelming. Thank you again for all that you did to make this happen.

-- Sincerely,  
Jeffrey Godecker, Madison, WI

### The perfect gift idea!

Help support educational programming at McConnell Springs with the purchase of an 8-inch by 8-inch brick paver. The permanently inscribed paver will be placed in the central plaza of the McConnell Springs Visitors' Center and because \$85 of each \$100 paver is a tax-deductible donation (IRC 501(c)3 not-for-profit) to The Friends of McConnell Springs it will greatly help support projects at the Springs.

Clip this form and return it with \$100 payment to: Friends of McConnell Springs, P.O. Box 12196, Lexington, KY 40581-2196.

Yes, I want to support McConnell Springs by purchasing a paver. I have enclosed \$100.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City, State: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_


Complete boxes with message to be inscribed on paver. Please print carefully, with one letter per box. Each box presents one character.



The Friends of McConnell Springs  
P.O. Box 12196  
Lexington, KY 40581-2196

Non-Profit  
Organization  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Lexington, Ky  
Permit No. 224

## Friends Information

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/McConnellSprgs>

Facebook: Be our FRIEND: -

<https://www.facebook.com/McConnell-Springs-293733489824/>

Website: [www.McConnellSprings.org](http://www.McConnellSprings.org)

## Friends – Memberships

Your tax-deductible donation supports the preservation of McConnell Springs and educational programs at the site. Can we count on your support in being a Friend?

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Donation amount:

\$1000  \$500  \$250  \$100  \$50  \$25  
other: \_\_\_\_\_

*Trailblazer (\$1,000)*

*Founder (\$500+)*

*Preservationist (\$250+)*

*Builder (\$100+)*

*Homesteader (\$50+)*

*Friend (\$49 - under)*

Check this box to make my donation to The Friends of McConnell Springs Endowed Fund #0527 at the BGCF.

Please email my newsletter to: \_\_\_\_\_

Complete the form above and mail it with your membership donation to:

The Friends of McConnell Springs  
P.O. Box 12196  
Lexington, KY 40581-2196



OR, if preferred, scan the QR code and fill out the PayPal form online. No matter what membership level you give, your generosity is greatly appreciated! Thank you for your support!

## Our mission

The Friends of McConnell Springs, an independent not-for-profit 501 (c)(3) organization, works in a partnership with the Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government Division of Parks and Recreation, dedicated to the restoration and preservation of McConnell Springs as:



- a national historic site, recognized as the pioneer encampment in the naming of Lexington, Kentucky;
- an environmental and educational resource; and
- a passive recreational park.

FRIENDS is published by the Friends of McConnell Springs

**Editor:** Reneé Williams

**Contributors:** Peter Andrew, Jon Hagee, Charlie Boland, Steven Rogers, and Becci Ray

McConnell Springs is a natural and historic site at 416 Rebmann Lane in Lexington, Ky. The park has two miles of trails that lets you explore the sinking springs, vegetation, stone fences and vestiges of historic buildings. McConnell Springs boasts more than 130 species of plants and numerous species of urban wildlife that reside at or visit the park. The unique geologic, natural and historic features are protected, providing environmental, cultural and historical education opportunities for the residents of Fayette County and elsewhere.

To learn more about McConnell Springs, call 859.225.4073 or visit [www.McConnellSprings.org](http://www.McConnellSprings.org).