

Friends

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE FRIENDS OF MCCONNELL SPRINGS



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Board Member Spotlight...Isabel Yates

by Charlie Boland, Chair

For a person who is so highly winsome in every conceivable way, it is not a surprise that Mrs. Isabel Yates began life in a small town named Winnsboro, SC.

She was born there on October 1, 1924 to a prominent small town physician, Dr. Charles Spencer McCants and Isabel McCants. She was one of four daughters. Growing up in Winnsboro, she learned the value of community life and education by the example of her parents, who were very engaged in the life of the town. Isabel graduated from the University of South Carolina and obtained a Masters degree in English Literature from Ohio State University, where she attended on an academic scholarship. Following her education, she taught English at both high school and university levels, until she married Wilson Yates, an attorney with Kentucky Central Life Insurance Co. in Louisville, KY. They started a family and had four children, who still cause Isabel's eyes to light up with joy and pride when she mentions them.

In 1963, the Yates family moved to Lexington, KY with a company move, and Isabel has been making her mark here ever since. Embracing the city fully, she dove into many civic groups and projects, a sample listing of which includes: downtown hanging baskets, HorseMania, Picnic with the Pops / Philharmonic, Kentucky Theater Restoration, LexArts, Sanders-Brown Center on Aging, Downtown Lexington Corporation and of course, McConnell Springs.

That involvement took a new turn when Isabel ran for Lexington-Fayette UCG Council in 1991 at age 66. She served the 4th district initially and then was vice mayor from 1998-2002. In addition, several community awards have been named after her as tribute to her lifestyle of service to others.

It was my distinct pleasure to work alongside Mrs. Yates, as I called her, during my own career with LFUCG. We shared southern roots and perspectives and I always particularly enjoyed her pronouncement that something was 'wonderful' or 'marvelous' in that delightful and distinguished southern drawl. Recently we visited and recounted some

of our adventures at city hall, including the acquisition and preservation of McConnell Springs. That effort involved several important community members, and while it might have happened without Mrs. Yates' leadership, I'm not sure I see how. She was uniquely gifted for that task and wielded a magnificent and indomitable persuasion that just made everyone want to say 'yes'. Isabel might be small in stature, but she is a giant force for good, and her fingerprints are on so many of the most positive things about our community.



She told me her approach to public service was wrapped up in a simple question: "What can we do to improve ____?" Whatever issue filled in that blank, the idea of improving things was her primary focus as she respectfully engaged people from every quarter of the community with consistency and goodwill. I witnessed this more times than I can tell.

Dr. McCants, who shared his daughter's penchant for public service, gave Isabel this sage advice: "You better be proud of the place where you live, and you should live so the place is proud of you." May I just say on behalf of everyone that knows you, Mrs. Yates, this place is so incredibly proud of you and grateful for everything you have done. You continue to meet your father's charge in every way and we are the better for it – may we carry the torch as well as you.

Thanks for carrying the torch for McConnell Springs, helping reclaim the spot of our city's founding, and preserving it for generations. Just one part of the wonderful legacy of the winsome lady from Winnsboro.



Dear Friends...

by *Charlie Boland, Chair*

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Parks Representative and Park Naturalist

Steven Rogers

McConnell Springs is brimming with activity in many ways, especially with the arrival of spring and warmer weather! This beautiful place has so much to offer and we sincerely hope you will make time to come visit and explore soon. The beautiful quiet trails and natural springs and abundant flora and fauna are enough reason to come all by themselves. Add in the mix of Founders' Day on May 18, the advent of the 'History to Chew On' series that begins on June 11 and continues monthly until October, birding activities, and the large number of great programs conducted by Parks and Recreation staff, and you can see that McConnell Springs is a great place to be!

Thanks for Becci Ray and the Wine Barrel Tasting committee for a very successful event, and thanks to the 14 participating wineries who hosted our supporters on a beautiful late March day – we are grateful for your ongoing support. This annual fundraiser is so important to our board's mission to support the park, and they did a wonderful job.

Steven Rogers, our Park Naturalist, has led McConnell Springs Park for the past 10 years, and as so often happens with highly gifted and capable people, he is taking a new opportunity elsewhere within city government. To say that our board will miss him greatly is at best a woefully inadequate understatement. Steven's character, engagement, passion, and desire for excellence in whatever he does will serve him well and likely blaze many new trails for him in the future. From the Friends of McConnell Springs board, thank you Steven from the bottom of our hearts. You are a bright light and we wish you all the best in your new adventure!

Friends, come visit us anytime you can, and again, thanks so much to all of you who have volunteered your time or dollars to sustain our efforts.

Founders' Day Celebration May 18

From woodcarvers and pioneer foods, to tomahawk throwing and traditional music, Founders' Day has something for all. Celebrated on May 18 at the park from 10 am – 3 pm, Founders' Day will feature a variety of educational exhibits, traditional music, wildlife, and much more from our frontier heritage (see insert for more activities).

Starting off the day will be a processional featuring the traditional music of WSR Pipes and Drums and the presentation of colors by the local chapter of Sons of the American Revolution (SAR). We will be welcomed by local dignitaries and have a special introductory welcome from William McConnell (as portrayed by Steven Caudill). In addition, the Lexington Chapter of Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) will be presenting the 'Excellence in Historic Preservation and Medal' to the Friends of McConnell Springs, a distinguished award. We will also pay homage to our beloved board chair emeritus Isabel Yates, and hear from the local 250 LEX celebration planning team.

Throughout the day you can participate in a variety of hands-on activities, enjoy musical performances, see interesting exhibits, and speak with pioneer reenactors about life in the late 1700's. See you at the Springs!

Barrel Tasting

The sun was shining for our March 23 Wine Barrel Tasting Event! We were happy to see so many of our regulars back this year as well as new attendees. It takes the effort of many to make this event a success and our thanks go out to all who bought tickets, to the fourteen wineries that gave their time and wine, and to the many wonderful volunteers we had. All who played their part helped the Friends of McConnell Springs raise funds for many of the free programs we host throughout the year. We hope to see you at the park for those and to see you at next year's wine tasting event!

Thank You Steven for 10 Years of Service!



Notes from the Naturalist...

by Steven Rogers

Thank you! For 10 years I have been the manager at McConnell Springs but as of April 19, 2024, I will leave this position for another opportunity within LFUCG. My time at McConnell Spring has been an absolute pleasure from my first day until my last. This park is a treasure for our community, and it wouldn't exist without the dedication of the Friends of McConnell Springs. The unwavering support of the Board of Directors of the Friends of McConnell Springs has

been a constant during my tenure. So many of the Board Members, past and present, have played important roles in developing the park and I can't thank them enough. The future of McConnell Springs is brighter than ever, and I am comforted knowing that the park that I love so dearly will always be guided by a dedicated group like the Friends. Thank you again for 10 amazing years and I hope to see you while I'm out enjoying a walk at the Springs.

History to Chew On Series- Amazing Lineup of Speakers

History to Chew On, will be held again this year on the following dates: June 11, July 9, August 13, September 10, and October 8. Talks start at 6 p.m. and last about an hour, depending on questions. See below for this free lineup of speakers.

June 11

Stereotypes and Myths about Native Americans

Speaker: Tressa Brown

This presentations will identify the stereotypes and myths about Native Americans in general and Kentucky's Native people in particular. Brown is the coordinator for the Kentucky Native American Heritage Commission, the Kentucky African American Heritage Commission and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Commission. Her position at KHC is to provide accurate information to educators and the public about Kentucky's American Indian history, the diversity of Native cultures as well as the issues affecting Native people in contemporary society.



July 9

Life and legacy of frontiersman, William McConnell

Speaker: Shea Brown

This presentation will briefly explore the life and legacy of frontiersman, William McConnell, through the eyes of the Digital Access Project (DAP) by focusing on his economic opportunity as one of the early pioneers to settle in Fayette County, Lexington, Kentucky in the late 1700s. It will focus on primary sources found preserved in the Fayette County Clerk's Office which are now made available through an online portal.

Mr. Shea Brown is employed with the Fayette County Clerk's Office Land Records Department for almost 24 years. He currently is a Special Projects Deputy in the Land Records Department, and he is the Supervisor and Co-Director of the Digital Access Project (DAP).



August 13

History of Jockey Jimmy Winkfield

Speaker: Jessica Whitehead, Kentucky Derby Museum

James Winkfield was a Thoroughbred jockey and horse trainer from Kentucky and was best remembered as the last African American to ride a winner in the Kentucky Derby. Learn more about this historic man during this presentation.



September 10

Black History at Ashland

Speaker: Eric Brooks

In this presentation we will examine the history of the estate from the perspective of African Americans enslaved and employed at the estate. Encompassing photos, documents, and other artifacts, this presentation includes stories told on other tours at Ashland and new research that creates a much different view of these people that were until recently minimized or ignored. It will focus less on the work they did and more on the lives they created for themselves in the face of great racism, inequality, and even pain and suffering.



October 8

"Great Kentucky Hoard" of Pre U.S. Gold Coinage

Speaker: Jeff Garrett

The cache of rare Civil War-era coins unearthed in the Bluegrass State includes finest-known 1863 Double Eagles as well as several interesting varieties and errors. Numismatic Guaranty Company® (NGC®) recently received rare Civil War-era coins found in the Bluegrass State. "The Great Kentucky Hoard" includes a group of finest-known 1863 Double Eagles and hundreds of US Gold Dollars dated 1850 to 1862, as well as a small number of silver coins. Several interesting varieties and errors were also discovered. Learn more about this Hoard on Oct. 8.





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Friends Information

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Facebook: Be our FRIEND:-

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Website: www.McConnellSprings.org

Friends – Memberships

The Friends of McConnell Springs is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization. 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? If so, please mail this form to the address below.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Donation amount:

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

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
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Trailblazer (\$1,000)
Founder (\$500+)
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Friend (\$49 - under)

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

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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.