

From the editor

It's sometimes hard to think in terms of the wonder experienced in another age. As someone who teaches history and lives most of his life in the nineteenth century, I'm especially aware of how hard it is for students—and the rest of us as well—to realize how different another time really was, and how much people marveled at things we consider run-of-the-mill.

Just think of our own lifetimes and our own recent past. I can take a photo of, say, Horseshoe Lake and email it to people right on the spot with my phone (which, as my wife reminds me, isn't a phone—it's a camera, information center, online access tool ... and a phone) or post it on social media. It takes a few seconds—a few more if you have an older "slow" one. When I got my first "smart" phone it seemed like a miracle that I could do that; now, not really. And so it goes.

In many ways, that sense of wonder of another age is an underlying theme of all these articles. R. Bruce McMillan reminds us of the wonder of discovery of the remains of extinct creatures. Now, it takes a child finding a dinosaur bone to provoke that in us, and even then it seems fleeting. We're reminded of the wonder of seeing St. Louis from a birds-eye view and the unbounded confidence in the city in Miranda Rechtenwald's selections from *St. Louis Through the Camera*, a promotional booklet published in 1892 and coupled with the brochure for the 1886 Autumnal Festival. Photography wasn't all that new in 1892, but it was becoming much more commonplace thanks to both printing technologies and George Eastman's cameras—rapidly becoming the 1890s version of my smart phone.

Rebekah Mergenthal's fascinating look at the role of gender in the Missouri Valley in the 1820s suggests not only a sense of vision that we see in *St. Louis Through the Camera*, but also reminds us of the sense of progress that marked the Jacksonian era. These were people who saw America in terms of constant growth and constant progress as it marched westward. That sense of progress continues, of course, although now we see a need to plan it more strategically. John Wagner's fascinating look at the role of tree species in planning sustainable parks, using Forest Park as a case study, suggests the wonder of the natural world and its place in shaping our future.

Finally, one cannot enter the newly renovated St. Louis Public Library's Central Library in downtown St. Louis without a sense of awe. It's a magnificent structure, built in 1912 with funds from Andrew Carnegie, the steel magnate-turned-philanthropist. Besides being the world's first billionaire, Carnegie was committed to giving away his fortune, noting in 1889 that "the man who dies thus rich, dies disgraced." And I can take a picture of it with my phone/camera/whatever-it-is and send it to you in seconds.

Jeffrey Smith, PhD
Editor

