

# Field Notes

Volume 5 - Number 1

Spring 2020

## *The Field House Museum's Temporary Closure During the Covid-19 Pandemic*



Part of the *Field Notes* newsletter's mission is to keep the Museum's loyal members and friends informed about events happening at the Museum, as well as other news pertaining to our ongoing activities. To that end, rather than featuring our latest happenings or exhibits on this cover page, we are instead providing you with news about the Museum's operations and planned activities during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

**Is the Museum closed? If so, is that closure temporary or permanent?**

Yes, the Museum is currently closed to visitors based on guidance that has been provided to us by the City of St. Louis and by other governmental and health authorities. Through this closure, we are doing our part to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus in our communities. The health and safety of our staff and visitors remain our top priority. We expect to continue this closure until we are advised it is safe to resume operations by the appropriate authorities.

*Updates on this temporary closure will be posted to our website at [www.fieldhousemuseum.org](http://www.fieldhousemuseum.org).*

**What events or exhibits have been cancelled? Will they be rescheduled?**

This newsletter features the wonderful exhibits that are currently on display in the Museum, as well as several that are in the planning stage. The current exhibits will be extended until after the Museum is again open to the public. Please see page 3 for more information.

Several major events had been planned as well, but have now been put "on hold" given the recently mandated restrictions on public gatherings. We continue to monitor the situation and will certainly adapt the remainder of this year's programming to conform to the guidance set by the authorities.

*We thank all of you for your patience and continued loyal support during this difficult time.*

### Stay Connected with Us

There are many ways you can stay connected with the Field House Museum during this time. We will be utilizing our social media pages to show highlights from the collection, staff favorites, previews of our exhibits, and more. These features will be available on the Museum's Facebook and Instagram pages. One special program we are offering during this time is a weekly Wednesday poetry reading through the month of April to celebrate National Poetry Month. The Field House Museum will post a video of a staff member reading one of Eugene's poems from *Poems of Childhood* along with a free printable coloring page. This is a great way for kids to celebrate poetry month from home while schools are closed. We hope you will visit us online and at the Museum when it is safe to open once again.



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## ***Building on History: Celebrating the 175th Anniversary of the Field Family Home in Saint Louis***



Field House Museum members and friends have cause for celebration in 2020: This year marks the 175th anniversary of the construction of the Field family home at 634 South Broadway. The house is the oldest remaining brick residence in St. Louis and has been designated a National Historic Landmark

It hasn't been an easy path for this treasured building. What follows below, and will appear in upcoming newsletters this year, are stories about the Field family home's history, and about the efforts undertaken by a noble, dedicated group of St. Louisans – both adults and children – who valiantly sought to protect and preserve it.

Three stories high, the house was built in 1845. It is located on land once owned by Pierre Laclede, the city's founder. Laclede's estate sold the property to his younger associate, Auguste Chouteau.

Pierre Laclede and Auguste Chouteau were not only business partners; in fact, Pierre acted as father to young Auguste. Auguste was only an infant when his mother was abused and abandoned by her husband, his birth father, who returned to France. The little boy and his mother remained in New Orleans. It was there that Laclede arrived in 1755. Chouteau's mother and Laclede formed a relationship not long after and went on to have several other children together. Laclede brought 14-year-old Auguste with him on an journey up the Mississippi River to establish a trading post near the confluence of the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers. The site founded by Laclede and his crew became the city of St. Louis in 1764.



*Auguste Chouteau*

In 1829, upon the death of Auguste Chouteau, the land where the Field House Museum now stands was deeded to the City of St. Louis with revenues from the lease of the land earmarked for the support of the city schools. Sixteen years later, in 1845, with St. Louis still clustered close to the Mississippi River and its steamboat commerce, Edward Walsh leased the land from the school system and built 12 row houses known as Walsh's Row. The row houses, located on what is now known as South Broadway, were considered quite a fashionable residential location in the mid-1800s.



*Roswell Field*

In 1850, Roswell Martin Field and his wife, Frances Maria Reed Field, leased the second unit from the south end, the family home until 1864. Eugene Field was born in the house in 1850. The poet lived in the house until he was six, when his mother's death prompted his beleaguered father to send him and his younger brother, Roswell Jr., to Amherst, Massachusetts, to live with an aunt.

Over the years, and long after the Field family left the house, the riverfront location of Field's birthplace deteriorated. About to be torn down in 1934, the house was saved by a number of serendipitous events, which began with a newspaper editorial that caught the attention of an inspiring and dedicated civic leader.

***In the next issue of Field Notes, learn how St. Louis visionaries understood the importance of historic preservation, and began a quest to save the house from demolition and to protect the legacy it represents.***

## Exhibiting a New Perspective

The Field House Museum features exhibits that nurture a love of history, honor local trailblazers, and celebrate the Museum's collection of toys. Please check the Museum's website for the latest information on scheduling this year.

### ~ Currently on Display ~

#### *Life in Miniature*

Lose yourself in a microscopic world in the Field House Museum's exhibit, *Life in Miniature*. Featured on the third floor of the historic house, this exhibit shares the big story of all things tiny. Dollhouse enthusiasts can spend time examining the contents of a number of historic dollhouses while miniature lovers expand their knowledge on the value of these diminutive objects throughout history.



#### *Tails of Friendship*

*Tails of Friendship* is a must-see for animal lovers and history buffs alike! This exhibit features the remarkable story of pet ownership since the ancient era, and also highlights the invaluable work of the Humane Society in protecting countless animals since 1870. Accented with pet-themed toys from the Field House Collection and the collar of Eugene Field's beloved fox terrier, Jessie, visitors will leave with a new understanding of their four-legged friends and their place in history. This exhibit was created in partnership with the Humane Society of Missouri to celebrate their 150th anniversary.



#### *Binding the Written Works*

Enjoy a different perspective of the Gleich Collection by focusing on the covers of books as we take a look at the transformation of bookbinding during the life and career of Eugene Field. For this exhibit, the Eugene Field Library has partnered with Peter Gleich and the local St. Louis business, Central Print, to bring tools used for book binding and printing into the museum. See various types of presses and an embossing machine patented locally in 1914 by Prince Gardner. From hand tools to book binding samples, be sure not to miss all the finer details in *Binding the Written Works*.



### ~ Upcoming Exhibits ~

#### *Steiff Everlasting*

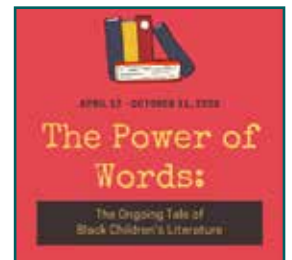


In this exhibit, we take a closer look at the world's only luxury toy company. Created by Margarete Steiff in 1880, the Steiff standards have carried the once-small toy manufacturer through wars and into the hearts of millions around

the world. This exhibit is created in partnership with Don and Shirley Zork and with the Steiff Museum in Germany.

#### *The Power of Words*

Join us as we explore the trailblazers of the Black literacy movement and the modern African American authors whose work celebrates the strength in diversity and promotes connections between stories and young readers. This exhibit is created in partnership with Saint Louis Black Authors of Children's Literature.





## Welcoming Local Artisans and Educators

Programming for the 2020 year kicked off wonderfully in January with our very first Speaker Series Panel, *Perspectives of Freedom Suits and the Dred Scott Case*. For this program we were joined by Lynne Jackson, Dr. David Konig, and Michael Everman. Presenters gave unique insight to the topic of freedom suits and the Dred Scott case from their professional and personal perspectives. Susie Cobbledick followed in March, holding the audience captive with her presentation on book conservation and repair.



Christopher Alan Gordon, the Director of Library and Collections at the Missouri Historical Society, will be giving a talk on his book *Fire, Pestilence, and Death: St. Louis 1849*. Gordon has used newspaper accounts, letters, diaries, city and county records, and contemporary publications to reveal what life was like for those in 1849 St. Louis. During this year of history, Roswell and Frances Field were living in St. Louis and lost their first child to the cholera epidemic. This event will be presented live April 18, 2020 at 1:00 pm on the Field House Museum's Facebook page. Video of the presentation will be accessible on Facebook after the livestream.

## Free Museum School Days



As part of our efforts to make the Field House Museum more accessible to our community we are now offering a new program called Museum School Days. Sponsored by generous donors, the Museum will waive the admission fees for school groups on four select days throughout the year. Teachers will need to register in advance on our website as space is limited. There are four themes featured during Museum School Days: Writing with Eugene Field, Roswell Field and the Dred Scott Case, Historic Toys, and 19th Century Life in St. Louis. Each group will take a guided tour through the historic Eugene Field House and participate in a craft or activity related to the day's theme. We hope this new program will allow more students the opportunity to experience the unique history of the oldest historic house museum in St. Louis.

The Field House Museum has a lot of fun activities planned including a Local Authors Book Fair, Garden Tour, History Happy Hours, and much more. Due to the necessary closure of the Museum, activities are currently postponed and will be rescheduled. We ask that you please check the website or call the Museum for the most up-to-date information.

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## Wrapping Up *Finishing Touches*!



As *Finishing Touches* draws to a close, the Field House Museum reflects on the pieces that spurred wonder, the history that encouraged fascination, and the people who made the exhibit possible. Word of the exhibit spread following a feature in *Ladue News*, accompanied by photos of the gallery and the artifacts that inspired awe and intrigue. With this article came new visitors to the Field House Museum, who we hope to welcome again to our events, programs, and exhibits in 2020. For the eclectic and lavish tastes of Eugene and Julia Field, we are forever gratefully inspired, as we are equally grateful to the private collectors and local institutions who contributed their unique artifacts.

## **WELCOME MEMBERS**

The Board of Trustees and staff of the Field House Museum thank the following members who have continued to support the mission, preservation, and programming of the foundation with their generous membership donations:

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October 2019 - February 2020

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October 2019 - February 2020

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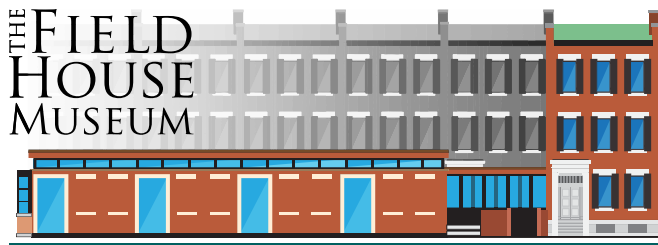
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***Help support the Field House Museum during this period of closure.  
Go to: [www.fieldhousemuseum.org/donate/](http://www.fieldhousemuseum.org/donate/)***



**WHERE INSPIRATION HAS A HOME**  
634 South Broadway, Saint Louis, MO 63102

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**A Day of Online Fundraising  
with Give STL Day**

Mark your calendars for Give STL Day on May 7, 2020! This day of online giving is even more crucial as local nonprofits are dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. We would love for all of our members to make a contribution to the Field House Museum during these difficult times to help us continue our mission of preserving and promoting the legacies of the Field family. While we may not be open to tours, our staff is looking into reaching our community through other avenues. We have plans in the works to create a virtual tour of the Eugene Field House, which is celebrating 175 years since its construction! There are also plans in place to livestream our speaker events and provide special footage of current exhibits during this period of closure. Head over to [www.givestlday.org](http://www.givestlday.org) to check out all of the details and consider contributing to the Field House Museum.

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