

2017 GREGORY STOCKARD DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

Henry Gensky, Recipient

What was Jefferson City like in the 1920s? History sleuth Henry Gensky has made it his mission to find the answers and share them through public presentations.

A part-time interpreter at the Missouri State Museum, Gensky has had the opportunity to deliver several of his self-researched programs during the museum's monthly after-hours event.

Gensky's interest in history began as a child, listening to his aunt tell family stories. For the first 50 years of his life, his fascination with history centered around family genealogy.

Following his retirement from McGraw Edison and Toastmaster after 35 years as purchasing manager and personnel director, he took up the pursuit with a purpose. He and his wife of 66 years, Mardelle, have traveled extensively several times to Europe in search of family lines and locations. In 2004, Gensky finally saw his years of gathering photos; lineages and documents come together in two published books – one for his side and the other for Mardelle's. With sources exhausted in genealogical pursuits, he has turned his historic investigation efforts toward Jefferson City and Missouri History.



Gensky's first work with the state museum came 22 years ago when he provided a collection of early city photos to now retired historian, John Viessman, for an extensive display on the city's history. He was later brought on board part-time by Viessman to help collect oral histories from World War I veterans. After this project was completed he stayed on and the oral history program expanded its topics. In 2009 he was transferred to the interpretative staff.

To date, he has compiled a series of 15 PowerPoint programs ready for presentation. In the spring he keeps busy with the wave of school children touring the capitol as well as children's programming and the traditional tour program. He is developing a program to highlight the upcoming total eclipse in August. One of Gensky's recent research projects unearthed a home no longer standing in Jefferson City – Maple Terrace whose location is now part of the Missouri River Regional Library.

Other program topics Gensky has shared at the Capitol, in addition to his interest in the seal on the floor of the Capitol Rotunda, include The Foot, Jefferson City in the 1960s and the borders of Missouri.

In addition to the collection of books available to the public at the Capitol tour desk, Gensky's research often takes him into the Capitol's legislative library, Missouri State Archives, Missouri State Library or Missouri River Regional Library.

Throughout his life, history has been a central interest and he expects to continue his historical detective pursuits into the future.

-Jefferson City News Tribune, February 6, 2017, "Henry Gensky: Private Eye on History" by Michelle Brooks