Announcer: The Missouri State Journal, a weekly program keeping you in touch with Missouri State University.

Emily Yeap: Whether it's the hillbilly stereotype or the backwoods myth, it's a fact there's plenty of misunderstandings about the Ozarks and Ozarkers. Last week on the Missouri State Journal, we highlighted how historian Dr. Brooks Blevins, set out to write a comprehensive history of the Ozarks about five years ago. He wanted to present the most complete portrait of the region. That project resulted in a trilogy. “A History of the Ozarks, Volume 1: The Old Ozarks,” was published this summer. I'm Emily Yeap.

 Blevins is the Noel Boyd professor of Ozarks studies at Missouri State University. He joins me again today to shed light on stereotypes and offer a glimpse into volumes two and three of his book.

Brooks Blevins: We're a nation of stereotypes and everybody is stereotyped in some way. Certainly, the Ozarks for generations has been stereotyped as a backward sort of hillbilly place. There was always just enough evidence that people could pull out and justify the stereotypes. But one of the things that I've tried to do with this book is dispel the myths of this sort of backward, isolated Ozarks of the pre-Civil War era – that Ozarks that would create the hillbilly Ozarks, because one of the things that I found as I got into the research is that the region really was connected with markets and cultural connections, and all that kind of stuff with the rest of the United States. In general, the people who came here kept connections with the places that they came from. The Ozarks wasn't quite in the middle of everything, but it was connected to everything.

 I describe it in the book as the Ozarks as a microcosm of the American story. It's got its own unique flavors and things like that, but it's similar enough where someone's going to read this and not think they're reading about make believe land or some kind of exotic locale. It is an American story with those little Ozark touches to it.

Emily Yeap: Volume two is in the pipeline and will be out by fall 2019.

Brooks Blevins: It is going to be the long Civil War era volume of the trilogy. It will cover slavery and the secession crisis, the Civil War, reconstruction, and will even extend beyond the traditional reconstruction era of the 1770s. It will extend into the 1780s. I actually use the triple-hanging of the Bald Knobbers in Ozark, Missouri, in 1889 as the cut-off date for Volume two.

Emily Yeap: Volume three, which should be published by 2021, picks up in the late 1800s and continues to the present day. It will cover everything from farming and industry to music and tourism. Besides that, it will include different aspects of the Ozarks today, such as Fortune 500 companies and the continuing struggles of Ozarkers who live in rural areas.

Brooks Blevins: It will obviously see tremendous changes in the Ozarks as you can imagine over 120, 130 years to the modern day that we have today. Volume three is probably the most difficult to write because there's so much information. The hard part becomes sifting through all that and deciding what’s important, what should be included with all the stuff there is out there.

Emily Yeap: Volume three will also discuss more about the cultural Ozarks.

Brooks Blevins: The cultural Ozarks, at least in my definition, it sort of boils down to identity and where people identify with this social construct that we've created called the Ozarks. Over the years, I've kind of formed this mental map of what is the cultural Ozarks, but I have yet to turn it into an actual, physical map, but I hope that's one of the features of Volume three is something really close to a cultural Ozarks map. It's mostly going to be the physical Ozarks, but there will be those differences.

Emily Yeap: Blevins hopes everyday folks will enjoy reading his trilogy and get to know the Ozarks better.

Brooks Blevins: From an academic standpoint, the big picture message is that the Ozarks, while special to us who live here, is not such a radically different and strange place as it has often been portrayed in stereotype, in popular culture, in things like that. Beyond that, for general readers, people who either grow up in the region or people who move to the Ozarks and just want to know what it's all about and want to know if it's what they've always heard it is, I just hope that it gives them a picture of the history of this region. I think every identifiable region deserves a solid, readable history to tell people who live there what has happened here before and why it's important.

Emily Yeap: “A History of the Ozarks, Volume 1: The Old Ozarks,” is available for purchase online. I'm Emily Yeap for the Missouri State Journal.

Announcer: For more information, contact the Office of University Communications at 417-836-6397. The Missouri State Journal is available online at KSMU.org.