Announcer:

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

Emily Yeap:

What comes to mind when you think about the Ozarks? Perhaps it is its unique geographic features or rich history. It may be the hillbilly stereotype or story of the Baldknobbers.

With the goal of presenting the region’s most complete portrait, historian [Dr. Brooks Blevins](https://search.missouristate.edu/people/brblevins) started to write a comprehensive history of the Ozarks a few years ago.

It resulted in a trilogy. The first and second books were “[A History of the Ozarks, Volume 1: The Old Ozarks](https://www.press.uillinois.edu/books/?id=c041914)” and “[A History of the Ozarks, Volume 2: The Conflicted Ozarks](https://www.press.uillinois.edu/books/?id=c042737),” respectively. The final book, “[A History of the Ozarks, Volume 3: The Ozarkers](https://www.press.uillinois.edu/books/?id=72geh2gf9780252044052)” came out recently.

Blevins, the Noel Boyd professor of [Ozarks studies](https://www.missouristate.edu/areastudies/ozarksstudies/default.htm) at Missouri State University, joins me today to share more about volume three.

Dr. Brooks Blevins:

The “History of the Ozarks” trilogy probably started about 10 years ago, the research did. I started writing it about six years ago. At first, I thought I was writing just a one volume history of the Ozarks, and, as it’s obvious now with a trilogy, it turned out to be much more than that. So, I ended up with three volumes.

The first volume goes all the way from pre-history up until just before the Civil War starts and it’s called “The Old Ozarks.” The second volume is called “The Conflicted Ozarks” and it’s the long Civil War era, which means it’s not only the four years of Civil War but it’s reconstruction and even a period after that. And then this one that has just come out, it's subtitled “The Ozarkers” and it picks up the story where “The Conflicted Ozarks” left off in the late 1800s and brings the story of the region basically up to the present day.

Emily Yeap:

What are some highlights of this final volume?

Dr. Brooks Blevins:

“The Ozarkers”covers a wide gamut of things that had to do with the Ozarks. From agriculture to industry to religion to tourism, all that kind of stuff. But one of the things that I tried to do as much as possible was make sure and tell stories that reflected something unique about the Ozarks. Any time that something happened here and didn’t really happen somewhere else, or it happened here in a different way that it happened somewhere else, I tried to tell that story.

And an example of that would be the Branson story. That's a pretty unique story, and you could certainly write books and books about Branson, and I didn’t have that much room to devote to Branson in here, but I tried to at least lay out the basics, the kind of skeleton of the Branson story, where this tourism phenomenon starts and what were the key points in affecting Branson’s rise as this tourism capital of the Ozarks. The creation of lakes had a lot to do with that. Lake Taneycomo in the early 20th century, and then, in the late 1950s, Table Rock Lake. And people often forget about the importance of those lakes to Branson tourism. I talk about the rise of the music city part of Branson, and even before that the float fishing era in Branson is something that most people today don’t remember. So, that was one example of a story that was unique to the Ozarks. And that people in and out of the Ozarks know Branson. You mention Branson to pretty much anybody in the United States and they at least have some sort of idea of what you’re talking about. It may be negative, it may be positive, but they know.

Another example would be the rise of Pentecostalism in the 20th century, and of course, what makes that, at least, in part an Ozarks story is Springfield becomes the headquarters for the Assemblies of God, which becomes the largest Pentecostal organization in the world. So, as much as possible, I try to fit that into the story of religion in the Ozarks. Obviously, Pentecostals, or members of the Assemblies of God, don’t make up a majority of people in the Ozarks or anywhere near it, but it was one of the more region-specific and unique stories of this era in Ozarks history that really had an impact that went far, far beyond just the Ozark hills.

Emily Yeap:

That was Dr. Brooks Blevins, the Noel Boyd professor of Ozark studies at Missouri State.

You can purchase volume three online at [Amazon](https://www.amazon.com/History-Ozarks-Ozarkers-Brooks-Blevins/dp/0252044053) or [University of Illinois Press](https://www.press.uillinois.edu/books/?id=72geh2gf9780252044052).

That was Dr. Brooks Blevins, the Noel Boyd professor of Ozarks studies at Missouri State. Tune in next Tuesday for the second in a two-part series about this book and Ozarks history.

I’m Emily Yeap for the Missouri State Journal.

Announcer:

For more information, contact the Office of Strategic Communication at 417-836-6397. The Missouri State Journal is available online at ksmu.org.