

~ VOICES OF ~  
**ARROW ROCK**

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**Readers Theatre Series**

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*Episode Guide*

Using art to explore history, this readers theatre series brings to life lesser-known citizens of Arrow Rock, one of Missouri's most historically significant villages. It is about forgotten and underrepresented people, their times and their spirits, whose voices span the centuries since Arrow Rock was first mapped by French explorers in the early eighteenth century.

The series began as an official project of the Missouri 2021 Bicentennial Commemoration and will continue through 2029, Arrow Rock's Bicentennial. Sponsored by the Friends of Arrow Rock in partnership with the Arrow Rock Lyceum Theatre, Michael Kateman is creator and producer. For more information, contact him at [mwkateman@gmail.com](mailto:mwkateman@gmail.com).

**SEASON ONE**

***Spirit of the Missouri Frontier*** – Episode One

August 7, 2021, Historic Christian Church, Arrow Rock, Missouri

August 8, 2021, Center for Missouri Studies, Columbia, Missouri

Mary Barile and Michael Kateman, narration

Through four family stories, spanning the early to late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, we hear from women, formerly enslaved people, and a restless young man of privilege as they navigate the restlessness of the Missouri frontier and the new frontier of freedom in the village of Arrow Rock.

In **“Too Pretentious”** by Scott Miesse, we meet Nancy and Burton Lawless on July 3, 1829 at their home in Arrow Rock. They, along with Mary and John Bingham, donated land to create the town of Arrow Rock. Nancy believes the original name for the town is too pretentious.

**“Your Destiny”** by Brady Kateman shares Margaret Medley Fenwick's conversation with her grandson, George Fenwick in the spring of 1832 in Washington, D. C. as he prepares to graduate from Georgetown College. He dreams of going west, but his grandmother confronts him with his family legacy. After her death in 1834, George settles in Arrow Rock.

Nelson Robinson, a formerly enslaved man, helped fight a devastating fire in Arrow Rock on December 28, 1872. In “**Family is Everything**” by Ricky D. Wilson, we meet Nelson and his wife, Dinah, at Brown’s Freewill Baptist Church on Sunday, January 5, 1873 when he shares his story of fighting the fire and she emphasizes the importance of family and community.

As Adeline and Frank Switzler welcome their youngest child on June 22, 1884, they discuss what they will name her. “**Her Name**” by Michelle Tyrene Johnson explores why they decide to name her for the woman who enslaved them.

## SEASON TWO

### *Crossing Barriers* – Episode Two

May 7, 2022, Brown’s Chapel, Arrow Rock, Missouri  
Michael Kateman, playwright and Glenn North, poet

As a Missouri School of Journalism graduate student, photojournalist Jim Curley was assigned to report on E. L. Taylor for the 1981 book *Arrow Rock, 20th Century Frontier Town*. E. L.’s unexpected death before Jim could complete the interview and photoshoot with him led Jim to Herb Templeton, E. L.’s friend. As Jim chronicles the unlikely bond between E. L. and Herb, two retired Arrow Rock citizens of very different social and racial backgrounds, Herb and the spirit of E. L. illuminate their moving story.

### *The Heartbeat of Women* – Episode Three

October 1, 2022, Oak Grove Plantation, Napton, Missouri  
Mary Barile and Sheri Hall, playwrights

As Bette Murrell prepares to give her grandson Oak Grove Plantation in the 1990s, she reflects on historic preservation and is reminded of the challenges created for the women following the October 12, 1863, Civil War skirmish, which occurred on the estate. In her reflection, the voices of Sophia Murrell and Mary, an enslaved woman, come to life to share their thoughts, fears, and hopes as 19<sup>th</sup> century women.

## SEASON THREE

### *County Election* – Episode Four

May 6, 2023, George Caleb Bingham House, Arrow Rock, Missouri  
Brady Kateman, playwright and Glenn North, poet

In the summer of 1976 during the United States' Bicentennial, Helen McDaniel introduced thirteen-year-old Mike Kateman to a new way of looking at George Caleb Bingham's 1852 painting, "The County Election." As they chat about ancestors of local residents who might be depicted in the painting, Helen's answer to one of Mike's questions forever changed his perspective on freedom and democracy. In their discussion, we meet one of the characters in Bingham's painting, the Barkeep, who shares his thoughts on freedom and democracy as an enslaved man.

### *Her Name* – Episode One reprisal

June 16, 2023, Courthouse Lawn, Fayette, Missouri  
Fayette Juneteenth Commemoration  
Michelle Tyrene Johnson, playwright

As Adeline and Frank Switzler welcome their youngest child on June 22, 1884, they discuss what they will name her. Their discussion explores why they decide to name her for the woman who enslaved them.

### *Ignore the Shadow* – Episode Five

October 7, 2023, Historic Christian Church, Arrow Rock, Missouri  
Ricky D. Wilson, playwright

As Green Henry Wilson prepares to wed Nellie Robinson on November 24, 1881, at Brown's Chapel in Arrow Rock, he struggles with his mixed-race identity and what freedom truly means. Born into slavery fathered by his master, Green longs to be free of the shadow that looms over his mother as he and his bride dream of their future in Kansas. Green tells his mother Ellen of their plans only to meet with her disapproval. After all, as Ellen puts it, they can pass as white and that gives them a brighter future in Arrow Rock.