

Historical author to visit Pacific Library

By Antjea Wolff
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This Thursday, the Scenic Regional Library Pacific Branch will host John Launius for a presentation based on his book "The Life and Times of Missouri's Charles Parsons: Between Art and War."

Starting at 6 p.m., Launius said, he will be talking about Parsons, a successful 19th Century banker who made a positive impact in the St. Louis area through his philanthropy.

"I think people will come away from the experience really inspired to know more about their history and also how they can emulate the positive and good things they see in others," he said.

After the presentation, Launius said, he will donate \$5 to the library for every book he sells during his visit.

Launius first became interested in learning about Parsons when he was recruited by the Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum at Washington University to look at some artwork that had been mislabeled. Launius said that one person's name appeared as the donor on many of the pieces: Charles Parsons.

Parsons lived from 1824 to 1905. At the beginning of the Civil War, Parsons traveled to St. Louis to serve under his brother's command. The two brothers were responsible for moving and supplying Gen. Ulysses S. Grant's and Gen. Wil-



John Launius

liam Tecumseh Sherman's armies along the Mississippi River.

Parsons was also one of the big advocates of putting the United States on the gold standard rather than the silver standard. For the 1893 Chicago World's Fair he was chosen to be the head of the Congress of Bankers representing all international bankers. This became the model for the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair.

Parsons helped found the St. Louis School and Museum of Fine Arts in 1881, the first museum west of the Mississippi. The museum would later become the St. Louis Art Museum in Forest Park, and the Mildred Lane Kemper Art Museum.

Two of the mummies in the St. Louis Art Museum were purchased by Parsons in Egypt. He wanted them to be on display for all people free of charge. Parsons and some of his business associates were influential in the process of making the St. Louis Art Museum free to the public, because they wanted art to be available to everyone.

Parsons and his wife also supported the first female sculptor to achieve international recognition, Harriet Hosmer. She traveled to St. Louis to study under a few of Parsons' friends after being denied the opportunity to study in Boston.

"Basically what this book does is that it traces the life of an individual who used business to improve the common good for all people," Launius said.

During the presentation at the library, Launius said he will be demonstrating Japanese fragrances, which he has studied extensively and also happens to have been one of Parsons' interests.

For Missouri's Bicentennial, Launius's book was used to help explain the development of art in the 19th Century during the St. Louis Art Museum's Art Along the Rivers show.

Launius holds a bachelor of arts degree from Webster University. He also studied at Washington University in St. Louis, DePaul University's Goodman School of Theatre and The Second City in Chicago. Over the years, Launius has worked in government, education and all forms of media.

Launius said he is currently in the final stages of his second book "Love and Letters in World War II," which is about his grandparents' love letters and the historical events that coincided with the letters.



Tis the season

Wanda Zeitzmann adds a bow to the bar front yard, which already contained lights Street in Washington. Zeitzmann said her tree as tall as the home to the side of the giving and has been doing so for six decades.

Parks & Rec to s bag recycling ch

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The Washington Parks and Recreation Department plans to participate in a plastic bag recycling challenge that could result in the city receiving a free outdoor bench.

During the Parks & Recreation Commission meeting Wednesday, Director Wayne Dunker gave commissioners information on a recycling program the department will soon implement. Dunker said Parks Commissioner Betty Werner brought the idea to his attention.

NexTrex, a branch of the company Trex, offers recycling challenges to K-12 schools as well as civic, religious and university organizations. If the organization collects

1,000 pounds of plastic bags over a month, NexTrex rewards them with a door bench.

Trex is a company that creates composite deck-building materials made from 95 percent recycled plastic film and reclaimed sawdust.

For the NexTrex challenge, Trex provides up to three collection bins and prizes for each organization to use to promote the challenge.

Dunker said the church parish department challenge a few years ago and were able to receive one or three benches for the challenge.

The commission decided they would place one bin at the Recreation Center, one at the City Hall and one at City Hall. Items that are recycled in these bins