

Missouri Historic Schools Program & Plan for the Virginia Snyder Memorial Fund

Honoring a Legacy, Enriching Rural Missouri

The Greene County MU Extension Council is honored to be entrusted with one-third of Virginia Snyder's estate, alongside the Missouri Veterans Hospital and the Missouri State University College of Education. Virginia's heartfelt wish was for her legacy to support the sustainability and impact of the Missouri Historic Schools Program (MHSP) that celebrates Missouri's rural one-room schoolhouses and their ongoing potential for building social capital, connection and trust in rural communities.

These historic schools are more than old buildings—they are the heart of rural communities, holding generations of stories, traditions, and lessons. With the support of this fund and other future sponsors, we can honor this legacy by turning these cherished places into dynamic centers of heritage education, tourism, and neighborhood engagement.

Mission statement: The Missouri Historic Schools Alliance exists to preserve and promote Missouri's historic one-room schools as living community assets that celebrate our heritage, strengthen rural communities, inspire lifelong learning, and build social capital for generations to come.

Vision: A Sustainable Future Through an Endowment

To ensure the long-term success of the Missouri Historic Schools Program, we propose establishing the Virginia Snyder Endowment for One-Room Schools through the Community Foundation of the Ozarks.

The following logistics with CFO are needed for an endowment.

- Established under the CFO EIN of 23-7290968 with payouts coming annually to the Greene County Extension Council.
- To get higher earnings, designated endowment funds are invested.

- The benefiting agency receives a payout of 4% from the endowment per CFO spending policy. This allows the endowment to grow.

The initial gift from Virginia will:

- Be invested to generate annual interest to fund alliance programs.
- Provide a startup fund to immediately support program needs.
- Enable strategic, long-term planning to prioritize ideas.

The Greene County MU Extension Council will manage the use of the annual endowment interest, ensuring funds are deployed to support impactful and sustainable programming related to one-room schools in Missouri as part of the community development program.

Funding Priorities

It is the policy of the CFO to distribute 4% of endowment earnings yearly. The exact final size of the endowment is not known at this time. The interest generated will be used to support these priorities:

- **Program Staffing Support:** Cover 5% of a community development specialist's salary to lead statewide programming.
- **Local Oversight and Administration:** Provide 10% to the Greene County Extension Council for fiscal management and coordination.
- **Conferences and Speaker Engagements:** Host or contribute to one-room school conferences and lectures at museums, libraries, and historic events across Missouri.
- **Education and Preservation Grants:** Award competitive grants to help other communities restore or enhance their one-room schools.
- **Training and Resource Development:** Offer hands-on training, toolkits, and resources to alliance members and rural stewards.

- **Storytelling and Oral Histories:** Expand Missouri Historical Society's collection of oral histories from one-room school attendees.
- **Traveling Exhibits:** Create a “trunk” filled with interpretive materials and exhibits for schools, libraries, and community groups. Probably partnership with The History Museum in Springfield.
- **Rural School Hall of Fame:** Develop a statewide initiative to honor and recognize individuals and organizations that have preserved rural (one-room) schools that serve a community in an ongoing way. Award could include an event or dinner that is revenue positive.

Why One-Room Schools Matter

Historic one-room schools tell the story of Missouri’s development. They:

- Fostered community gatherings, from town meetings to celebrations.
- Served as the cultural and geographic heart of rural communities.
- Housed multigenerational learning with a single teacher and all ages.

Today, they remain powerful symbols of perseverance, local pride, and the value of education. Revitalized, these buildings can become museums, tourism destinations, community centers, or spaces for civic engagement. All of these characteristics add to the civic muscle of a community.

Platform for Neighboring and Rural Revitalization

The Missouri Historic Schools Program, with support from the Virginia Snyder Endowment, is not just about preservation—it’s about connection. These historic schools offer a natural gathering point for neighbors, much like they did a century ago. They can once again:

- Serve as meeting hubs for rural communities.
- Support placemaking efforts, enhancing local identity and tourism.
- Anchor community events and celebrations.
- Inspire intergenerational learning and volunteerism.
- Build social capital with monthly events or potlucks for residents.

This work aligns with the University of Missouri’s emphasis on regional tourism and economic development—especially through heritage and cultural initiatives and our community development program.

Building on a Proven Model

Missouri can build on successful models like Iowa’s rural school preservation efforts. Ideas under consideration include:

- Developing driving tours featuring restored one-room schools.
- Partnering with local leaders, like Rep. Louis Riggs, to create a Rural Schools Road Tour across Missouri.
- Creating an online map and guidebook to connect tourists and educators with these living pieces of history.

Join Us in Preserving Missouri’s Story

We will seek additional gifts to the endowment. Whether through a one-time gift, corporate sponsorship, or partnership, individual investment will help restore historic schools and reinvigorate rural communities. Donors will be preserving not just buildings—but the values, stories, and spirit they represent so Missouri’s past remains a vibrant part of its future.

Projected Budget

Here’s a **proposed budget framework** for the Virginia Snyder Endowment, assuming a **\$300,000 principal** with **4% annual earnings (\$12,000 per year)**. Allocations include:

1. Estimated allocations from endowment or fund: \$12,000.

- **10% to Greene County Extension Office – \$1,200**
- **5% of the salary for the community development specialist responsible for the program to MU Extension Community Development Program – \$5,000**
- Remaining **dedicated to Missouri Historic Schools Program initiatives**

2. Program Funds - Remaining \$8,000 distributed annually on these priorities:

Restoration	Small grants (\$2,000–\$5,000) for local historic	\$3600
Micro-Grants	school restoration projects across Missouri.	

Conferences & Events	Support for statewide symposia highlighting rural school history or annual event at Liberty School.	\$700
Resource Development	Educational resources (guides, videos, publications) for schools and communities.	\$400
Traveling Exhibit	Design, maintenance, and transportation of a mobile exhibit of Missouri's one-room schools.	\$400
Speaker Travel Fund	Travel costs for five educational presentations per year across Missouri.	\$700

Notes & Sustainability

- The **principal remains untouched**, ensuring long-term sustainability.
- The **funding mix is flexible**: restoration grants and exhibit funding could be adjusted annually depending on demand.
- Note: If the fund is larger than \$300,000 the budget will be adjusted.

Obituary for Virginia Snyder

Virginia Snyder, a month shy of her 99th birthday, passed away on the 25th of November 2024, in Springfield, Missouri. Virginia was born December 27, 1925, in Lawrenceburg, Missouri, the daughter of Freddie Glen Snyder and Lorene (Adamson) Snyder. She was saved at the age of twelve in Lawrenceburg Methodist Church in response to the preaching of the Gospel of God by Rev. Ralph Turner. She was baptized in Turnback Creek.

Virginia graduated from Ash Grove High School in 1943 and began teaching in a one-room school at the age of seventeen on the condition she would attend college during the summers. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Education from Southwest Missouri State College in Springfield in 1954. She obtained her master's degree in education and administration from Drury College in Springfield, in 1961.



Virginia had no children of her own but was a teacher of many. She taught a total of 42 years - eleven in a one-room school (Union Hall, Onward and Halltown) in Lawrence County. She taught 31 years at Westport Elementary School in Springfield. Virginia loved teaching and she loved her students. Her students remember Virginia as a kind, loving, and understanding teacher, and when they would come back to see her, they always warmed her heart.

Virginia retired from teaching in 1986 to help take care of her mother, Lorene, until her passing on January 15, 1993. Her father passed away with a massive heart attack on July 10, 1974. Her only brother, Freddie Glen Jr. passed away on March 27, 1998. After Virginia's mother passed, she decided to fulfill her father's dream and her dream - that of building a Music Park on the family farm for people to enjoy. Virginia was always a determined person and always had goals to work toward throughout her life. She wanted to contribute something to society in the later years of her life. Virginia always worked hard and always did her best in teaching, relationships with friends and family and towards her Music Park dream. Many people enjoyed the Music Park events: Fiddlers' Jams, Bluegrass Festivals, and the Folk and Gospel Music Festivals.

Virginia had a deep love for her heritage. She restored the "Little Moore School," which her mother and her mother's family all attended with many friends in the community. The "Little Moore School" to this day sits on a little hill overlooking the Music Park. After the restoration,

Virginia was known to say that "The Little Moore School is happy now because it is needed. The school can hear children's voices again as they come to visit her, and she knows she will have an influence on the lives of all of her visitors for a long, long time."

Virginia wrote and published a book, *Virginia's Song, A Country Quilt of Memories*. The book is about growing up in the Ozarks; the people, music, and the places she knew and loved. She also wrote and published her second book "Books, Pies and Spelling Bees" the story of The One Room Country School in The Ozarks, like the one she attended for eight years and taught in for eleven. She spoke often of her hope that there will be those who will never let this legacy die. Virginia passionately believed that the one room school was a vital part of the foundation and growth of America!

Teaching children was Virginia's first love and music was her second. She sang in different groups: The Over the Hill Gang, The Bluegrass Belles, Ozark Traveler's Gospel Quartet, The Sweet Nothings, Music of Yesteryear, County Connections, Turnback Creek and The Silvertones. Along with the heritage of the one room school, Virginia hopes that someone will continue her dream of promoting the heritage of the old-time music of yesteryear.

Virginia served on the Southwest Missouri State University's Ozark Studies Institute Advisory Committee, which was formed to preserve the heritage of the Ozarks - its culture, environment and history - by helping people understand the places, traditions and people of the area. In July of 2007, Virginia was awarded The National DAR Preservation Medal and Certificate for Outstanding Service to the Southwest Missouri Community for her writing and lectures on keeping alive a time lost in history. A gold medal and certificate were presented by the Elk Horn Prairie Chapter of the National Society of The Daughters of the American Revolution. Virginia was a member of the Order of the Eastern Star at Ash Grove, Missouri. She was also a member of the Epsilon Chapter of Delta Kappa Gamma Society International in Springfield.

Virginia would like to take the opportunity in this obituary to express her love and gratitude for the kindness and helpfulness shown to her by so many friends. Virginia's Motto was, "I tried." Her father taught her to pursue life with passion. He always said, "One person with a dream is equal to ninety-nine people who only have an interest." Virginia pursued life with passion. She followed her dream. She is now singing in harmony with her father in heaven.

Virginia is survived by her cousins, Carey Lee Snyder Hyatt of Scottsdale, Arizona, Eva Hadsell of Ozark, Missouri, Linda Ruark of Everton, Missouri, and a host of friends, including especially, Leila Wilkerson of Clever, Missouri.

Missouri Historic Schools Program

Preserving History. Revitalizing Communities.

A Vision Made Possible by the Virginia Snyder Memorial Fund

Why It Matters: Across rural Missouri, historic one-room schoolhouses stand as reminders of our shared past—places where children learned, neighbors gathered, and communities were built. Many of these schools are over a century old and remain important cultural and architectural landmarks. But without support, these vital symbols of Missouri's heritage risk being lost. The Missouri Historic Schools Program (MHSP) is working to change turn these schools into active community assets once again.

A Legacy of Impact: Virginia Snyder believed in education, community, and history. Her generous gift is helping launch the Virginia Snyder Endowment for One-Room Schools, ensuring long-term support for:

- 🏠 Preservation & Mini-Grants – Supporting restoration projects
- 🎓 Education & Training – Equipping local volunteers and historians
- 📖 Oral Histories & Resources – Capturing rural voices and stories
- 🎤 Events & Conferences – Promoting heritage tourism
- 🌱 Placemaking & Neighboring – Using schools as hubs for renewal

How You Can Help: Your partnership ensures this vision grows statewide. Donors and sponsors are vital to:

- Launching a Century School Program to honor 100+ year-old schools
- Developing traveling exhibits for schools and libraries
- Create a Rural Schools Tour to attract visitors and boost economies
- Sustainable funding the Alliance's operations and outreach.

Join Us in Preserving Missouri's Story

These buildings are more than old schools—they're the soul of rural Missouri. With your support, we can protect them, share their stories, and keep them alive for generations to come.

👉 Contact Us Today to Become a Founding Partner or Donor

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