



A NEW SERIES EXPLORING MEMORY, CULTURE, AND COMMUNITY THROUGH FOOD

## Feeding Our Roots

*Beginning October 9*

**Raina Melvin, Director of Engagement**

At Historic Locust Grove, we believe the stories that shape us aren't always found in history books — they live in the scent of a simmering stew, the hands that knead dough, and the recipes passed from one generation to the next.

Over the coming year, **Feeding Our Roots** will evolve into a rich tapestry

of programs, including a food video series, a digital archive of food memories from our local community, and a series of culinary dinner experiences that bring culture and history to the table.

These students not only learn how to grow, harvest, and cook their food — they explore how those ingredients connect to their families, their neighborhoods, and their own evolving identities. After their harvest, they will share stories and contribute locally grown ingredients to our dinner series with local chefs, offering guests a direct taste of their labor and learning.

Through food, these chefs invite guests into their personal histories, sharing meals and the lived experiences behind them. These intimate evenings offer a unique opportunity

to experience food as a vessel for storytelling, resilience, and celebration.

Lastly, we want to hear from you! This program doesn't work without your participation. As we build an archive of recipes and memories, we invite you to share your own food stories — the handwritten recipe card passed through generations, the dish that always shows up at family gatherings, the kitchen rituals that transcended from one household to another. All that reminds you of home.

We'll feature your recipes and memories as we build a living, growing record of Louisville's diverse culinary heritage. Submissions begin in September, so watch our communications for the next steps. In the meantime, **Feeding Our Roots** invites us to ask — What dishes

carry your legacy? How does food create a connection across generations? And what can we learn when we gather at the same table?"



*Crystal Wilkinson, Photo: Carsen Bryant*



*Students with the Sacred Earth Community Garden nurture both the land and their own potential.*

The series begins on Wednesday, October 9, with a special evening featuring **Crystal Wilkinson**, Kentucky Poet Laureate and author of *Praisesong for the Kitchen Ghosts*. Wilkinson's work honors the women who came before her and the food traditions they carried, reminding us that the kitchen is a sacred space where identity is formed and history is tasted.

The evening will be moderated by local book influencer **Dawnshaee Reid**, whose thoughtful voice and love of literature make her a perfect guide for this conversation about food, memory, and legacy. A book signing and light refreshments inspired by Wilkinson's writing will follow the program.

We are proud to collaborate with **Sacred Earth Community Garden**, where Executive Director **Velvet Welch** mentors

# A MESSAGE FROM LOCUST GROVE PRESIDENT & CEO JESSICA DAWKINS



Welcome back to the **Grove Gazette** in print! Previously suspended due to rising costs in nearly every direction, we realize the *Gazette* has been a notable absence for our members, neighbors, and friends. We not only heard your concerns, but we **listened to them** and decided to bring our flagship newsletter back to print.

Plus, the **Gazette** has always been a perk of Locust Grove membership. Since our members are also our greatest supporters, it is important for us to invest in you as well. And the cost? With efficient business practices and professional partnerships, we actually lowered the cost of production.

So — for all active members of Locust Grove, we're so excited to be back in your mailbox once again.

I hope you take a moment to read **Raina Melvin's** cover story about **Feeding Our Roots**.

This new program is designed to bring people together through history, culture, and food — here, onsite, and throughout the community.

This ties in with **Kaitlyn Tisdale's** feature on Sam Croghan, a man once enslaved to Locust Grove who became known for his restaurants and hospitality in the south.

Together, these articles highlight how we serve our mission, as I believe Locust Grove is a cultural generator that connects authentic experiences over place and time.

I hope you join us on the path to civic camaraderie and our commitment to creative possibility, no matter what we face.

Lastly, I am proud to share that Locust Grove is an official location on the *Kentucky African American Heritage Trail*. We are proud to be a part of this powerful new initiative by the Kentucky Department of Tourism — recognizing more than 50 sites along the trail as part of the journey that highlights the courage, culture, and contributions of African Americans across the Commonwealth.

We have so many stories to share, but there are also many more to be made....Come help us write a new chapter.



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561 Blankenbaker Lane  
Louisville, KY 40207  
(502) 897-9845  
[www.locustgrove.org](http://www.locustgrove.org)

The mission of Historic Locust Grove is to preserve and interpret the historic landscape and buildings of Locust Grove, the final home of Louisville's founder George Rogers Clark, and to tell the stories of all the individuals who lived and worked here, both free and enslaved, cultivating a deeper understanding of the present through a richer understanding of the past.

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# HISTORY & HERITAGE

## FROM BONDAGE TO BUSINESS: The Remarkable Life of Samuel “Sam” Croghan

Kaitlyn Tisdale, M.A., Director of Mission

*From enslaved laborer to restaurateur and Navy veteran, Sam’s story is one of perseverance, adaptability, and quiet revolution.*

But when the Civil War erupted, Sam took off his chef’s apron and picked up a uniform. He joined the U.S. Navy in 1863 and served as a seaman and steward aboard the USS Owasca and USS Lackawanna. He served in the critical Battle of Mobile Bay and the blockade that helped seal the Confederacy’s fate.

After the war, Sam opened an ice cream parlor in Memphis, Tenn. However, his success did not come without struggle.

His establishment became the target of arson — twice in one week — illustrating the dangers that a free Black citizen faced in Reconstruction-era South. Undeterred, Sam reopened and expanded, gaining praise in the local press as a skilled cook and “upright man.”

Sam later returned to New Orleans, where he ran a boarding house and restaurant with his second wife, Jane. Their “Oriental Dining Saloon” offered both food and lodging in a bustling part of the city. A newspaper in 1879 praised Sam’s cooking. Ads show that his building had space for 50 boarders and even housed a prosthetics shop for Civil War veterans.

Samuel Croghan died on December 14, 1889, in New Orleans after living a life that defied the limitations forced upon him. His legacy lives on through research and remembrance, especially in places like New Orleans’ Oretha Castle Haley Boulevard where Sam and Jane fed their community.

Today, it’s home to the Southern Food & Beverage Museum, a fitting tribute to a man who fed the body and soul of a post-war South hungry for change.

*New Orleans’ St. Charles Hotel in the 1860s – across from which Sam Croghan operated his successful “Oriental Dining Saloon.” Photo courtesy of the Library of Congress.*

Born into slavery around 1819, Samuel “Sam” Croghan’s life journey carried him from the oppressive bonds of slavery to becoming a respected entrepreneur, restaurateur, and Civil War veteran.

Enslaved by the Croghan family, Sam was no stranger to a life of grit and uncertainty. Like many enslaved men and women of the early 19th century, Sam was frequently leased out for his labor. His bondage passed from person to person until Dr. John Croghan sold him to Louisville hardware magnate W.B. Belknap, who later emancipated him in 1853.

Once free, Sam didn’t waste time carving out a new life for himself. He opened a restaurant in downtown Louisville that quickly became known for its hearty fare — fine game, fresh oysters, meats, and ice cream. Originally named the “Ladies and Gentlemen’s Restaurant,” he later rebranded as the “Citizen’s Exchange.” This was more than just a place to eat; it was a symbol of Sam’s transition from enslavement to entrepreneurship.

In 1859, Sam moved to New Orleans and launched the “Oriental Restaurant” directly across from the elegant St. Charles Hotel — a prime location that brought him considerable success.

*A HANDSOME LUNCH.—We received yesterday from Sam Croghan, of the new and capital restaurant on Fourth street, a handsome lunch—that might well pass for a handsome dinner—that included duck, beef-steak, oysters, &c., all cooked in the finest style of the culinary art. No man in Kentucky, colored or white, can furnish a more delicious repast than Sam, and none can do the honors in a more courteous and gentlemanly fashion. We are glad to learn that he is warmly appreciated, his establishment being daily patronized by the best men in the city.*

*Courier-Journal, Jan.13, 1855*

*ATTEMPTED INCENDIARISM.—Another attempt was made last night, about 9 o’clock, to burn the building on Gayoso street near Main, occupied by Sam. Croghan as an ice cream establishment. A hole was cut through a partition and a fire kindled with some kind of inflammable liquid. It was discovered and extinguished by officers Brandy and Thurston. This is the same building which was fired on Saturday morning, and which two previous attempts were made to destroy.*

*Memphis Daily Post, July 22, 1867*

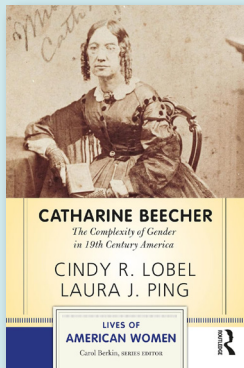
## AFTERNOON LECTURE SERIES

Hear a variety of speakers on topics rooted in history and culture. Lectures are held on the first Wednesday of most months; check our website ([www.locustgrove.org](http://www.locustgrove.org)) for specific dates and times. Guests are welcome to enjoy drinks and dessert when doors open at 1:00 p.m. Admission: \$8 for non-members, \$6 for members.

**Sheba's Kitchen:****Tigrayan Cuisine & Ethiopian Coffee****Wednesday, September 3, 1:15 PM**

Embark on a culinary journey to Tigray, Ethiopia, with **Mahder Tella**, the writer and creative director behind "Sheba's Kitchen." The cookbook celebrates the rich history of Ethiopian cuisine with a special focus on the distinctive dishes of Tigray. Ms. Tella reveals the rich cultural heritage and

historical significance of these flavors.

**Catherine Beecher:****The Paradoxes of Gender in the 19th Century****Wednesday, October 1, 1:15 p.m.**

Step into the mid-1800s as Bellarmine University history professor and author **Dr. Laura Ping** reveals insights into Catharine Beecher — an education reformer and author. Beecher's writings describe a domestic role for women. But Beecher's own life as a career woman did not match her advice. Dr. Ping, co-author of a book on this forward-thinking woman, will show how Beecher's career shaped the culture of femininity at a time when conservative and radical figures disagreed on where women fit into society.

**A Tragedy on River Road****Wednesday, November 5, 1:15 PM**

Early one October day in 1935, a body was discovered near the intersection of Blankenbaker Lane and River Road. It was Evelyn Sliwinski, wife of a local tailor, who was last seen "making the rounds" across Louisville hotspots. A witness identified the man she was with — that year's Triple Crown-winning jockey, William

"Smokey" Saunders. Local author **Ronnie Dreistadt**, Locust Grove's director of education, follows the twists and turns of a saga that gripped the Great Depression public and ended with a surprising conclusion.

## MUSIC UNDER THE PAVILION

*Appalatin (Latin/Bluegrass)***Tuesday, August 5, 6:30–8 PM (Seating opens at 6 PM)****A free official LOUGRASS event of Louisville Tourism**

Appalatin's arousing foot-stomping, hip-swinging music unites Appalachian folk and high-energy Latin music. Their name, Appalatin, reflects the unexpected fusion of Kentucky-raised musicians and masterful Latin émigrés of Ecuador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala.



**Many thanks to Louisville Tourism — a BRAVO sponsor!**

BIG SUMMER BOOK SALE'S  
20TH ANNIVERSARY**Members' Preview: Thursday, Aug. 21****Public Sale: Friday–Sunday, Aug. 22–24****10 AM – 5 PM Each Day**

**"Outside of a dog, a book is man's best friend. Inside of a dog, it's too dark to read." – Groucho Marx**

You'll be smiling at all the great books and bargains at Locust Grove's big Summer book sale! Browse thousands of books across every genre and uncover

hidden literary gems. Perfect for back-to-school prep or refreshing your summer reading list. Memberships will be available in the lobby on Members' Preview day. (See back cover.)

## FALL ANTIQUES MARKET

**Sunday, September 28, 10 AM – 4:30 PM****Admission: \$10, adults; 18 and under, FREE**

Featuring dozens of professional dealers from around the region, the Antiques Market offers fine and country furniture, books, textiles, jewelry, ephemera, silver, china, and much more. There's something for everyone! Admission includes the historic house museum.





# EVENTS

## FEEDING OUR ROOTS

*Praisesong for the Kitchen Ghosts*

Thursday, October 9, 6:30 – 9 PM

Admission: \$25, non-members; \$18, members

Limited seating available. Reserve tickets online at [www.locustgrove.org](http://www.locustgrove.org)

Join us for the launch of Locust Grove's **Feeding Our Roots** — a new initiative exploring the deep connections between food and family, memory and culture.

Award-winning author and Kentucky Poet Laureate **Crystal Wilkinson** will share stories from her memoir *Praisesong for the Kitchen Ghosts*. The book is a “culinary journey that explores the hidden legacy of Black Appalachians, through powerful storytelling alongside nearly 40 comforting recipes.” Local book influencer **Dawnshae Reid** will moderate the evening. A book signing and light refreshments will follow. (See Front Cover for further information.)



## FRANKENSTEIN

*Performed by Kentucky Shakespeare*

Mid-October: Stay tuned for date!

7 - 9 PM (Seating opens at 6:30 PM)

Admission: \$25, non-members; \$20, members

Join us for a hauntingly memorable evening as Kentucky Shakespeare presents a staged reading of Mary Shelley's classic *Frankenstein* in the Pavilion at Locust Grove. This Halloween event promises to be a chilling and atmospheric experience. Immerse yourself in the eerie tale of ambition and monstrosity — the perfect way to celebrate the spooky season with a touch of literary drama.



# GARDENS & GROUNDS



## BLACK RASPBERRIES TO THE RESCUE

**Sarah Sutherland, Gardener**

A few years ago, I became concerned about erosion taking place around the spring that rises above our springhouse. I wanted to plant something there that would hold the bank's soil in sudden, hard downpours. It should be something that wouldn't grow tall enough to obscure the view. And at the same time, I wanted to add some wildlife cover and a productive crop.

After much research, the answer was bramble fruit — black raspberries in particular. I asked Locust Grove's grant writer to search for a conservation grant that would cover the modest cost of rootstock — and we got one!

With the help of my young garden volunteer **Ian Bryant**, we planted both sides of the spring bank above the springhouse with black raspberries. Success! This year we have a fabulous crop of berries.

What will Locust Grove do with these luscious berries besides snack on them and stain our fingers purple?

They are being stockpiled in the freezer with an eye toward future events. I am working with our Director of Engagement **Raina Melvin** to incorporate the berries in our upcoming **Feeding Our Roots** programs. (See front cover.)

Imagine having a mocktail made with Locust Grove-grown berries to serve at a concert . . . or a raspberry sauce to serve at a dinner event or tea.

I'm hoping to expand Locust Grove's agricultural offerings in the future, so our gardens and grounds have another way to enhance our visitors' experiences.

# EDUCATION

**Ronnie Dreistadt, Director of Education**

## NEW SCHOOL TERM TO BRING ELEVATED EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

### Collaborative Field Trips

Locust Grove is excited to announce that we now offer collaborative field trips with our neighbors at the Louisville Water Tower. After successful collaborations held this spring, we are partnering with other cultural sites to offer similar experiences during the 2025-2026 school year.

No Busses? No problem! Locust Grove brings these collaborative field trips to you on your favorite virtual platform.

### America 250

If the phrase “America 250” isn’t familiar to you, it soon will be! America 250 is a non-partisan, non-profit nationwide initiative commemorating and exploring the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Many people connected to Locust Grove were a part of that Revolutionary world, so we developed programs for students to explore the various challenges embodied in the Declaration. These specialized America 250 experiences will be added to our line-up of field trip options that explore the rich history of Locust Grove and of the nation.



***ABOVE: During field trips. Reed Martin demonstrates letter writing and sealing letters with wax. He also shows how young students learned penmanship.***

### Cross-Curricular Connections

Locust Grove educators are working hard on in-house and outreach programs that incorporate core subjects like math and science. We piloted four new programs for grades K-8, which were well received by many of our local schools.

Our goal at Locust Grove is to share history, but if we can combine history with math, science, literature, and practical living, then we can also provide cross-curricular connections and give real-world applications to our field trips.

### Expanding Our Reach

With field trip and bus budgets decreasing, Locust Grove recognizes how important it is to explore new ways to bring students to our site – or to bring our site to the students. We have developed several different outreach programs for grades K-5 to bring Locust Grove to their classroom, and with a discounted rate!

Locust Grove is excited to share all our new educational offerings and initiatives, but even more excited for the field trips to come in the 2025-2026 school year.

## FOURTH OF JULY ACTIVITIES SALUTE NEW CITIZENS, CELEBRATE INDEPENDENCE



On July 4th, 48 individuals stood beneath the Pavilion at Locust Grove, surrounded by family, friends, and neighbors, as the Honorable Judge **David Hale** opened the morning’s naturalization ceremony by transforming the space into a federal courtroom.

The newly sworn-in citizens came from Burundi, Jordan, Germany, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and 17 other countries from around the world.

The Brass Band of Louisville welcomed guests with music, followed by the Sons of the American Revolution, whose fife and drum corps and color guard rooted the ceremony in the traditions of the nation’s founding. Remarks from U.S. Representative **Morgan McGarvey** and Secretary of State **Michael Adams** highlighted the significance of the moment.

Around the property, guests tested their knowledge with a citizenship quiz, registered to vote with the League of Women Voters, played lawn games, ran through the sprinklers, and connected with 18th-century demonstrators. The Historic Flag Display and Flag Retirement Ceremony offered a quiet, reverent close to the day’s reflection on the meaning of civic engagement.

The day was a commemoration of independence and a celebration of inclusion, but it was also a tangible demonstration of citizenship through our shared rights and responsibilities. The meaning of the Independence Day was made both profoundly personal and powerfully collective.

We want to thank **Independence Bank** for sponsoring Locust Grove’s Civic Season, a national Made By Us initiative.





# SUPPORT

Donations received from March 1 through June 30, 2025. Many thanks to those who support Historic Locust Grove through membership and various giving. We depend upon and deeply appreciate your generosity and involvement.

If we've made an error in the list below, please contact Director of Development **Lydia Lewis** at [llewis@locustgrove.org](mailto:llewis@locustgrove.org) or by calling (502) 897-9845, ext. 1007.

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## IN MEMORIAM

**Joan Gaston**  
**Mary Ann Thorp**

We note with sadness the recent death of these members of our Locust Grove family. We treasure their generous contributions to Locust Grove of time, energy, support, and enthusiasm.

## In Memory of George Plager

Barbara & Frederick Johnson

## In Memory of Joan Gaston

Mrs. Edith Bingham  
Laurie Diebold

## Grants

Fund for the Arts Louisville

## Capital Campaign

The Alden Foundation

## Annual Fund Societies

**For people donating \$250 and more to Historic Locust Grove from March 1 through June 30, 2025**

## Clark Family Society (\$1,000-\$2,499)

Sally M. & Roscoe Willett

## Illinois Regiment Society (\$250-\$999)

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## Farewell and Thank You

Visitors to the Gardeners' Fair this spring missed the cheerful greetings and captivating laugh of **Joan Gaston**, who sadly passed away on May 18. An avid gardener, Joan had a booth at the fair for many years — selling tickets to the Kilgore Garden Tour to support one of her dearest organizations.

Joan volunteered and served on the Board of Directors for several vital organizations across Louisville. We remember Joan's wit, charm, and her way of making everyone feel as if they were the most important person in the room. Our condolences go to her family and husband **LaMar Gaston**, one of Locust Grove's most dedicated supporters.





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**September Antiques Market**  
**Sunday, September 28**  
**10 AM – 4:30 PM**

Summer 2025

**IT'S THE BOOK SALE'S 20TH ANNIVERSARY! AUG. 21-24, 10 AM-5 PM**



*ABOVE: Locust Grove's first book sale in 2005.*

*BELOW: Our Big August Book Sale in 2024.*



Twenty years! Historic Locust Grove is celebrating the 20th anniversary of our semi-annual Book Sale — a cherished tradition that brings book lovers together to find new homes for well-loved books.

**Join us Friday-Sunday, August 22-24, as we celebrate 20 years of good books, great deals, community, and a love of reading. As always, members have early access on Thursday, August 21. (Memberships will be available for purchase at the door on Thursday or by visiting [www.locustgrove.org](http://www.locustgrove.org).)**

What began as a moderate, volunteer-led event in 2005 has now grown into Locust Grove's largest fundraiser, with nearly 250,000 books donated each year. We gratefully receive all donations. Those we can't use, we donate to Kentucky Refugee Ministries and Goodwill. The Locust Grove Book Sale has grown into a community favorite now offered three times a year – Spring, Summer, and the Holidays. We offer gently used books in every genre — from fiction and history to cookbooks, children's stories, and beyond.

Sales from each book bring vital support to our educational initiatives, public programs, preservation, and outreach while creating a welcoming space for readers to connect and share in the joy of reading.

For those interested in donating books or sponsoring the Locust Grove Book Sale, visit [www.locustgrove.org](http://www.locustgrove.org) for more information.



HISTORIC LOCUST GROVE

**GROVE GAZETTE**