

Then and Now

by M. A. Zurbrick

When Old Stagecoach Stop (OSS) volunteers share more than a century of the building's history with visitors, we often point out the cost of items and services "back then". Today, you cannot turn on the television, pick up a newspaper, or scan a news website without seeing or hearing the word INFLATION. So, let's go from room to room and review what things cost back then and what that same item or service might cost today.

William Walton McDonald bought a lot off the courthouse square and built a log cabin that was both his family's home and also a stop on the stagecoach route between Rolla and Springfield in the late 1850s. In addition to taking care of the stagecoach company's horses and passengers, W.W. also looked after the two-story brick courthouse across the street. When not being used for government business, W.W. could open the building up for religious services,

free of charge. Folks wishing to have a "ball, dancing party, and exhibitory shows" could rent the courthouse for a fee of \$2.50. Today's courthouse has a room that can be reserved for community events, free-of-charge! If county officials decided to begin charging a fee for the use of this community room, today's inflation-adjusted price would be about \$88.

In 1859, South-Western Stage Company charged customers based on the distance to be traveled and weight of the passengers and/or freight. A 150-pound passenger was charged \$3.75 for the twenty mile, six hour ride between Arlington and Waynesville. Today's inflation-adjusted price would be nearly \$140 for a 20 minute trip on I-44.

At the end of the American Civil

War, a new nine-passenger Concord stagecoach along with four draft horses and harness could be purchased for about \$1,800. If a person

could still order such a vehicle today, they could expect to pay an inflation-adjusted price of more than \$36,000. Nearly 160 years later, a 400+ horsepower, nine-passenger, sport utility vehicle can be purchased for between \$30,000 and \$60,000, depending on features, accessories,



Concord stagecoach model by Jim Matthews on display in OSS.



BOW AND BARREL SPORTSMEN CENTER

FIREARMS • ARCHERY • INDOOR RANGE • TRAINING SERVICES

573-451-2129

M-F 10 am-8 pm

Sat 9 am-8 pm

Sun 12 pm-6 pm

22940 Harlan Lane
St. Robert, MO 65584

www.bowandbarrelsports.com

**THE PREMIER FORT LEONARD WOOD
COMMUNITY FIREARMS & ARCHERY RANGE**

VETERAN OWNED — FAMILY FOCUSED

M MEMORIAL CHAPEL

WAYNESVILLE/ST. ROBERT • RICHLAND

573-774-6111

Roubidoux Springs Crematory

Only On Site Crematory in Area

- Proud to Serve Our Veterans
at New Veterans Cemetery
at Fort Leonard Wood

www.memorialchapelsandcrematory.com

and dealer markup.

In 1863, the Federal government paid a soldier, posted at the fort overlooking Waynesville and the OSS, \$13 per month which would be \$316 per month in today's dollars. Today, an E-2, Private, who has graduated from basic training at Fort Leonard Wood is compensated \$2,150 per month, plus a host of other benefits that were unknown to Civil War soldiers.

Today, a visit to the dentist for a single silver filling, might cost more than \$250. Someone wishing to flash a gold crown smile could expect to pay in excess of \$1,500. In April of 1905, the National Dental Co. placed an ad in the *Pulaski County Democrat* newspaper telling sore-toothed folks wishing to "Save Time" and "Save Money" that Dr. Spencer was going to set up shop at the Black Hotel for ten days that spring. The company charged two quarters (\$0.50) for a silver filling 119 years

ago, which is half of the cost of a cavity-causing candy bar today. And how much could a Pulaski County resident get a gold crown for back then? Four bucks.

The Black family owned and operated the hotel longer than any other owner of the building. Mrs. Black was well known for her cooking. In the early 1900s, she would ring a bell around noon and serve up a meal which included two or three different meats and home baked breads for about 30 cents, which adjusted for inflation today would be about \$9.20. While Waynesville and St. Robert are blessed with dozens of great restaurants, one has to wonder how many are able to serve up a two meat and fresh baked bread meal for less than ten bucks.

The Black family operated the OSS as a hotel for nearly three decades around the turn of the twentieth

century. In today's Archeology Room is a collection of postcards sent to Amanda Black, daughter of the owners of the OSS. The postcards came from as far away as Niagara Falls to as near as Crocker; however, they all shared one feature—a U.S. Postal Service Stamp costing a single penny. Today, it costs fifty-one cents to mail a postcard from the post office just down the street from the museum.



One of the many stories associated with the OSS involves the public hanging on the courthouse square in 1905. Mrs. Black and daughter, Amanda, both made and sold tickets that would allow the purchaser a hotel balcony view of the execution. While you will have to visit the OSS to hear the rest of the story, we will tell you that tickets were sold for a dime apiece, which if adjusted for inflation, would sell for about \$3.25 today. Yet, today you can receive a

guided tour of the entire OSS, including the balcony, and hear about the hanging at an inflation-fighting cost of — \$0.00. Yep, every Saturday, April through October the OSS is open to the public FREE OF CHARGE.

Once you have heard the "hanging story" on the balcony, a visitor will enter a sleeping room on the second floor. Through most of the 1930's, many people from around the world had been suffering from a general economic decline, called the Great Depression. Work and jobs that could support a family were hard to find and keep in America. Near the end of this economically difficult decade, many countries were plunged into armed conflict that became the Second World War. As part of the mobilization for war, a number of training facilities were established throughout the United States, one of which was located in the Missouri Ozarks. A massive influx of

Drachenfutter
COFFEE & CAFE
MISSOURI
66
Fresh & Delicious

• Dine in house
• Get it to go
• Catering

Food made fresh from scratch in house
Just for You.

- Craft Coffee
 - Loose Teas
 - Energy drinks
 - and more

307 Historic 66W
Waynesville, MO
(573) 232-1402

Congratulations Col. Minnow

Retired

Seeger Toyota of St Robert, MO
We Set The Pace!

2024 Tacoma

SeegerCare+

On All New Engines for Life

- No Cost Maintenance 4 Years
- Exterior / Interior Protection
- Car Wash With Service
- Service Loaners
- Seeger Service Advantage Up To \$500 Trade Credit With Service Used

SeegerCare

On All Pre-Owned Engines for Life (Must Qualify)

- 3 Oil Changes
- Full Tank Of Gas
- Service Loaners
- Car Wash With Service
- Lifetime State Inspections
- Multi Point Inspections With Every Service

Serving the area for over 55 years
Here Yesterday/Today/Tomorrow

Seeger
TOYOTA of St Robert

SATURDAY SERVICE 8AM-4PM

Toll Free: 800-844-6026 Next to Walmart, St Robert | 573-338-7111 | SeegerTOYOTA.net

cash-strapped workers flocked to the area to help build this new Army base. While these folks were happy to have a job, it was somewhat hard to find a place to lay one's head at the end of the workday, given that there were only three hotels located in Waynesville. At the time, the OSS was called the Tourist Hotel, and had four sleeping rooms on the second floor. Each of these relatively small rooms had not one, but three, double beds per room. Worse yet, a place in one of those two-person beds rented not for the entire night, but for only eight hours. Given that crews were working around the clock at the fort, as soon as one worker was ending his eight-hour rest, another worker was arriving to take that same spot in the same bed.

The government was paying these workers six dollars per shift and they were in turn giving the hotel a dollar for the privilege of sharing a double bed for eight hours. Today, if a

person could find a two-person bed, the inflation-adjusted price would be about \$21. A recent on-line review of more than twenty local hotel/motels, found an abundance of rooms with a king-size bed that a couple could rent for 24-hours for between \$55 and \$159, with an average rate of about \$100.

As mentioned earlier, construction workers felt fortunate to have a source of income and be able to send some of their wages home to their families. If adjusted for inflation, the \$0.75 per hour wage for a civilian worker at Fort Leonard Wood in 1941 would be about \$15.55 in 2023. Interestingly, today the minimum wage in Missouri is \$12.00, with a relatively unskilled laborer making about \$15.00 per hour.

Sitting on the table in the OSS's 1950s Apartment is a 6.5 ounce pale green glass bottle of Coca-Cola. Bot-



tled in nearby Lebanon, this popular soft drink sold for a nickel back then. Today, the iconic cola is bottled in Springfield and now comes in an eight-pack of 12 ounce clear plastic bottles, with a per bottle cost of at least 75 cents (depending on where you purchase it). So while inflation has increased by more than 1000 %

in the past 70 years, the price of a Coke (and no doubt other soft drink brands) has increased by only 700%!

By the early 1980s, the OSS had been abandoned for nearly twenty years and was deteriorating to the point that the City of Waynesville had condemned the building and ordered the absentee owners to either bring it up to a safe condition or remove it completely. The building was bought in 1984 for \$40,000 and it took another ten years of volunteer labor and costly renovations to allow the OSS to reopen

to the public. The detailed who, what, where, when, why, and how of the building being saved from the wrecking ball is chronicled in Terry Primas's 350-page book *Doorways to the Past* (hard copies for sale at the OSS, or via a free download from our website at <https://www.oldstagecoachstop.org>).

So, how much is the OSS worth today? Rather than examining past expense ledgers, ordering a real estate appraisal, or applying an inflation calculator, we will close by stating that a dollar figure can't be placed on this priceless piece of history, and invite folks to visit us on a summertime Saturday and determine the value of the Old Stagecoach Stop for themselves.

Mark A. Zurbrick is a retired fisheries biologist. He is a volunteer at the Old Stagecoach Stop, serving on the Foundation's Board of Directors and also as a tour guide.

CARLA HARDCASTLE

REALTOR®

702-788-5111



I look forward to helping you find your first home, your work home or the home of your dreams.

JADE
Realty

920 Missouri Avenue
St. Robert, MO 65584
Office: 573.336.2041

Carlahardcastle@gmail.com
www.CarlaHardcastle.com
Carla.jaderealtymo.com



BELL'S EXTENDED STAY AND SUITES

Owned & Operated by Retired Military

Indoor Pool and Fitness Center, 24 Hour Convenience Store
Free Breakfast - Free High Speed Internet - Daily Housekeeping

One Mile from Main Gate of Fort Leonard Wood

One Bedroom Suites have kitchens with full size appliances,
washer/dryer, living room and separate bedroom.

Junior Suites have kitchenettes with ceramic cooktop,
refrigerator and microwave.



116 Bell Drive
St. Robert, MO 65584

573-451-2222

www.stayatbells.com





We have many pictures in our collection that do not fit in our articles but that we just like. Sometimes they are big pictures that need a lot of space. This is a 1968 UPI Telephoto of the 177th Replacement Company from Fort Leonard Wood enplaning on a DC-8 Super 61-F cargo-passenger jet at Lambert-St. Louis Airport. The 239 servicemen were flying to Fort Lewis, Washington, on the first leg of a trip for deployment in Korea.

KEVIN HILLMAN



Prosecuting Attorney
Pulaski County, MO

*Thank you for the opportunity to
serve the people of Pulaski county
as Prosecuting Attorney.*

Post Pawn Store

First pawn shop outside Main Gate
Since 1959

573-336-3441

Mon-Fri 10-6 Sat 9-4

- Guns, Ammo and Gun Repair
- Military and Black Powder Supplies
- A-V Electronic Equipment
- Guitar and Dart Supplies

**1018 Missouri Avenue #1
St. Robert, MO 65584**

Women's Clothing Boutique



**115 N. Benton St. Suite 4
Waynesville MO**

Store Hours: Tuesday-Friday 10-6, Saturday 10-4, Closed Sun & Mon
Visit our website: shoptheriversideshop.com



Clean, Convenient, Secure

Climate-Controlled

RV and Boat
Storage

Vehicle Storage

Parcel Pending
Package Lockers

Moving boxes and
supplies

U-Haul Trucks and
Trailers



617 Old Route 66 | St. Robert, MO 65584

855-585-STOR | 573-336-3221

Office@StRobertsselfstorage.com

STROBERTSELFSTORAGE.COM

Bassett

Insurance Agency

573-336-4337

Fax 573-336-5930

P. O. Box 1144
St. Robert, MO 5584

Email: Katrina@Bassett-ins.com



DEDICATED TO SERVICE



Pulaski Fine Arts Association

312 Old Rt 66 East Waynesville, MO

2025 Season at Theater on the Square

Ticket Reservations www.pfaa-tots.com

The Beverly Hillbillies

by David Rogers rated PG
March 14,15,16,21,22,23

Aladdin

By Tim Kelly rated PG
June 20,21,22,27,28,29

Murder at the Orient Express

By Craig Sodaro rated PG
September 14,15,16,21,22,23

Christmas Miscreants

By Bill Hand rated PG
December 12,13,14,19,20,21