

## OZARK CULTURE HITS CYBERSPACE WITH STATEOFTHEOZARKS.NET

HOLLISTER, MISSOURI (July 28, 2009) -- Modern problems, modern politics, modern issues.

All affect the Ozark Mountains of Missouri, Arkansas and Oklahoma, but beneath is a culture and heritage that reminds us of a simpler age. A can-do attitude and deeply rooted faith still draws travelers, many of whom choose to retire in communities like Branson, Missouri, and Mountain View, Arkansas.

Yet many do not even know the geographical boundaries of the Ozarks. Some scarcely know the history of this mountainous region of the United States.

Very little quality information existed online as — until recently — most internet resources were little more than advertising sites or student projects. On September 17, 2007, the website [www.StateoftheOzarks.net](http://www.StateoftheOzarks.net) was launched to counter this problem.

Developer, Joshua Heston, explains, “I grew up with books like the *Foxfire* Series and magazines like *National Geographic*. I fell in love with the Ozarks back in the late 1990s, but there really wasn’t online information about the area — at least not the kind of information I was looking for.”

Heston, an Illinois native with a strong background in graphic arts and journalism, chose to build the type of resource for which he had searched.

“I don’t really think there’s another site out there quite like StateoftheOzarks,” he notes. “We’ve got one of the richest single regions for uniquely American culture and yet nobody is highlighting it on the internet.

“It’s time people started focusing on the web for this type of information. The internet is seen as high-tech, but it is really just a great communication medium. This type of information — culture and history and heritage — is something we should celebrate and preserve. I’m just glad the idea has been so well received.”

Reception has been good indeed.

StateoftheOzarks, which began as a simple project of Heston’s graphic arts studio, Lucky 13 Studios, has grown rapidly over the last year.

In June, Heston partnered with native Ozarkian, Dale Grubaugh, forming State of the Ozarks Media Inc., a Hollister, Missouri-based company.

“It really made sense to incorporate,” notes Heston. “Folks here in the Ozarks love the site, which really is now a full-fledged publication. It’s very gratifying.”

Grubaugh, a Southern Baptist pastor and employee of *Presley’s Country Jubilee* in Branson, was drawn to the publication in large part due to the vision of its creator.

“Josh came to the Ozarks with a love for the region. It’s the love that drew me to *Shepherd of the Hills Country* from Cuba, Missouri. And he wrote to preserve our history and culture in a big way. It was just something I wanted to be involved in.”

In addition to providing research, Grubaugh is the publication’s first columnist, writing as “Elias Tucker from the Holler.” His articles have been well received by the community of StateoftheOzarks’ readers.

“Dale’s a great writer, but he writes as though he were just talking. It makes for a really great read,” notes StateoftheOzarks subscriber, Arlin Houck of Branson.

Much of the publication’s readers comes from a dedicated email list Heston maintains regularly.

“I knew the site would falter if I couldn’t communicate with others when new things were published. So I started a free email mailing every Sunday night. The *Weekly* really keeps me busy, because it now dictates the publishing schedule: something new every Sunday. Folks really look forward to it though. I’m about to write the 90th issue, so that translates to a lot of new stories.”

Since September 2007, the site, or publication as both Heston and Grubaugh refer to it, has grown to nearly 160 pages. What’s the future of StateoftheOzarks?

“I hope we get to be the *Wikipedia* of the Ozarks,” says Heston. “But more importantly, I hope people visit StateoftheOzarks to be reminded that we have an amazing culture made up of amazing people; that we still have a beautiful region here; that despite the economic issues and crime and concerns we have, there’s still a lot of good in this world.

“And that good deserves to be celebrated.”

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**Dedicated to the celebration and preservation of Ozark culture and heritage.**

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