THE ARKANSAS ARCHIVIST

MAY 2015

Roots of African American Foodways Symposium to be held June 6

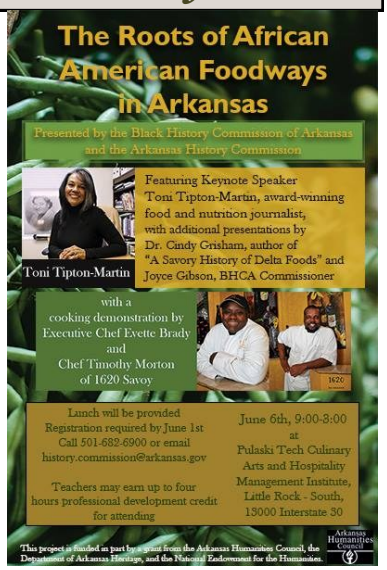
Calendar of Events

May 5—22
African American Legislators, 1868—1893 Exhibit
Nevada County Depot and Museum, Prescott

June 9—26
Fought in Earnest: The Civil War in Arkansas
Nevada County Depot and Museum, Prescott

June 6
10:00 am—3:15 pm
The Roots of African American Foodways
Pulaski Technical College Culinary Arts and Hospitality Management Institute, Little Rock

The Black History Commission of Arkansas and the Arkansas History Commission will be hosting a symposium from 10 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. on Saturday, June 6, at the Pulaski Technical College Culinary Arts and Hospitality Management Institute in Little Rock. The symposium's theme, "The Roots of African American Foodways," will feature award-winning food and nutrition journalist, Toni Tipton-Martin; historian and author, Dr. Cindy Grisham; Executive Chef Evette Brady and Chef Tim Morton from 1620 Savoy in Little Rock; and BHCA Commissioner Joyce Gibson.



Ms. Tipton-Martin will speak about her upcoming book, *The Jemima Code: Two Centuries of African American Cookbooks.* Dr. Grisham will present, "Organic, Wild Harvesting, Heirloom Vegetables and Meats: Trends or Tradition?;" and Joyce Gibson will present, "To Protect and to Serve," on an historic apron collection. The day will conclude with a cooking demonstration by Chefs Brady and Morton, which will bring all the research elements presented during the day to a tasty conclusion. A lunch based on the workshop theme will be prepared by PTCC chefs and provided for the first 120 people to register for the workshop.

The event will also feature a scanning booth. Participants are invited to bring in material pertaining to African American foodways for digitization, including recipes, menus, photographs, and documents. An AHC archivist will scan and save to CDs copies of scanned material for the participants, who will be asked to share the digital copies with the History Commission for research, exhibits and publication.

The seminar is free but registration is required. Check-in will begin at 9:00 a.m. Teachers can earn up to four professional development hours through attendance. Registration is limited and the deadline for registration will be June 1, so be sure to make reservations soon!

For more information about the symposium or to register, contact us at history.commission@arkansas.gov or call us at 501-682-6892. The symposium is funded in part by a grant from the Arkansas Humanities Council, the Department of Arkansas Heritage, and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

AHC Announces $241,400 in Grant Awards

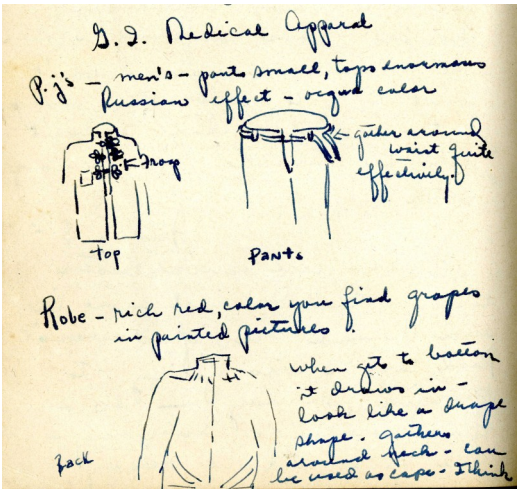
May was a very good month at the AHC! The Arkansas History Commission received three grant awards from the Arkansas Humanities Council and the Arkansas Cultural and Natural Resources Council (ANCRC) totaling $241,400. Dr. Lisa K. Speer, AHC Director, says of the recent grant awards, "They are a blessing. The Commission's appropriation isn't adequate to meet all of our agency's operational needs. The ANCRC grant will allow us to address an important project in our microfilming department that we've had to defer due to lack of funding, while the Humanities Council grants provide us with funding for some wonderful collaborative programming in the 2015 calendar year. We are very excited to have this additional funding at a critical time for our agency."

Archival Technician Bryson Caudle reviews newspapers waiting to be microfilmed at the AHC.

The Commission received a major grant for public programming from the Humanities Council. The grant will support events during the 2015 calendar year. These events include the upcoming June 6 foodways seminar, a World War I seminar in August, and a documentary film festival in October, as well as others. All of these events will be held in collaboration with other Arkansas archives and museum. Also from the Humanities Council, the Black History Commission of Arkansas received an African American Heritage Program minigrant for the June 6 foodways workshop for expenses not included in the major grant.

The ANCRC grant, totaling $216,000, will allow the Commission to tackle a backlog of newspaper filming and duping, add copies of regional newspapers to the branches at NEARA and SARA, purchase digital microfilm scanners for the regional archives, and conduct a complete inventory of the microfilm vault to ensure that all newspapers currently held in the vault are copied and available in the AHC's research room, as well as to conduct preservation assessments on the master film negatives. The AHC is excited about these projects and grateful to the funding agencies for their support!

World War II Letters of Marion Reed Biddle



Drawing from Biddle's diary she made while in the hospital suffering from a severe cold. Boredom apparently led her to sketch ideas for medical apparel.

One area in which historians are beginning to take an interest is the history of women during World War II. Not only did women perform clerical duties, but many also enlisted in the army to serve their country. We have a collection of letters about a woman who did just that. The World War II Letters and Diary of Marion Reed Biddle span her service in the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAACs), later renamed the Women's Army Corps (WACs), the women's branch of the United States Army.

Biddle was born in Heber Springs in 1919 and joined the WAACs in 1942. She served as in the Cook and Baker division before getting a chance to become an officer at Officer Candidate School in Des Moines, Iowa, in February 1943. "We are to be ladies at all times and always look just so-so-," she wrote in a letter to home, "but with only 4 shirts it's a problem." Also, it was the first time she had ever given orders. She wrote to her family, "Every two days the girls are appointed for Co. officers—give commands etc. and that scares me half to death. I know I can yell but whether I can yell on the right foot or not is the question." Despite her worries, she graduated Officer Candidate School and became a lieutenant.

One of her first duties as a lieutenant was to transfer from Des Moines, Iowa, to Louisiana to assist in recruiting young women for the WACs. She spent the rest of the War performing this duty. Another interesting aspect of the collection is that it contains her diary, which she kept until the end of 1943. After the war, she was stationed in Frankfurt, Germany. She ended her time of service in 1946 and a year later she married Robert Guy Biddle. She died in 1997. Her diary and letters present a very intimate look into a side of the Second World War that not many historians have studied. The collection is a particular favorite of Archival Assistant Elizabeth Freeman. "Marion was a fascinating and rather funny woman who had a real knack for writing." Elizabeth muses, "Her diary gives you a amazing look at what her life was like as a part of the WACs."

Black History Commission News

From l to r: AHC African American History Program Coordinator Tatyana Oyinloye, BHCA Commissioners James Lawson, Dr. John Graves, Mr. and Mrs. Marion Butler, BHCA Commissioner Rev. Barry Dobson, and AHC Director Dr. Lisa Speer

This month we bid a fond farewell to one of our commissioners, Marion Butler. Mr. Butler has served on the BHCA from 2008-2015. The AHC hosted a reception in Butler's honor on May 13. Fellow Commissioner Rev. Barry Dobson presented Mr. Butler a plaque in honor of his hard work and leadership on the commission. Commissioner Dr. John W. Graves said of Mr. Butler, "He's honest and forthright and made a terrific contribution. We are going to miss him."

Mr. Butler, upon receiving his plaque, told those gathered, "I was just doing my job. My time on this commission has left memories in my heart that will last forever." He said that his time serving had been a valuable education. He'd learned so much about African American history. "I met some of my heroes," he reflected. "I met Robert Bob Whitfield who organized the first sit in at the Woolworth's in Pine Bluff. I met Milton Crenshaw who trained the Tuskegee Airmen. It was an amazing experience serving on this board and it really made me proud to be an African American."

Dr. Lisa K. Speer, Director of the AHC, said of Butler, "The BHCA will miss Marion Butler's influence. He pushed for strengthening and clarifying the [Curtis H.] Sykes grant guidelines, and has been a driving force in working with the ADE to promote the teaching of African American history in Arkansas's public schools. He's someone I've been able to turn to for advice in my two years here. I'm personally going to miss him a great deal."

Know your Commissioners

Arkansas History Commission

Ms. Mary Dillard	Malvern
Dr. Ray Granade	Arkadelphia
Dr. Ruth Hawkins	Jonesboro
Mr. Michael Lindsey	Fayetteville
Mr. Robert McCarley	Little Rock
Ms. Elizabeth Robbins	Hot Springs
Dr. Robert Sherer	Little Rock

Black History Commission of Arkansas

Ms. Carla Coleman	Little Rock
Rev. Barry Dobson	El Dorado
Ms. Joyce Gibson	Prescott
Dr. John W. Graves	Arkadelphia
Mr. Myron Jackson	Little Rock
Mr. James Lawson	Jacksonville
Rev. Frank Stewart	Conway

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Closed State Holidays

From the Director

Last month, the AHC celebrated its 110th anniversary of collecting and preserving Arkansas history with an open house and the unveiling of an Arkansas history mural. The staff at the AHC appreciated the support of friends and colleagues in the history, archives, museum, and library communities who turned out to celebrate the occasion with us. One of the high points of the day was the unveiling of the mural, preceded by remarks from State Representatives Karilyn Brown and Warwick Sabin, AHC Commissioner Ray Granade, ADPT Director Richard Davies and myself. For the AHC, the mural represents more than just an attractive covering for a previously *very brown* wall. The mural was a group effort among AHC staff to sift through about 30,000 of our half a million photographs to ultimately select nine images to represent the history of Arkansas. The nine images that made the final cut are the Hoxie Mule Car Line (Lawrence County), late 1890s; the *President* Steamboat at Osceola (Mississippi County), 1960s; a group of people searching for diamonds at Crater of Diamonds (Pike County), 1920; a plane in the air over Eberts Field (Lonoke County), 1918; a family enjoying an overlook at the White River (Jackson County), n.d.; the Grady baseball team (Lincoln County), 1930s; workers picking peaches at Siloam Springs (Benton County), circa 1900; coal miners at Paris (Logan County), n.d.; and a suffrage rally at the State Capitol in Little Rock, 1918. *Like our mission, our collections, and our outreach, the AHC staff wanted this mural to be representative of all areas of our state and of all Arkansans.* I think we succeeded quite well. Inevitably and despite our best efforts, someone will look at this mural and wonder, "Why didn't they include . . . ?" In all truth, the mural was up about 10 minutes the first time a passerby stopped and asked about something they thought should have been included. The group that selected the images and designed the mural – yes, we created this design in-house – had gathered in front of it at the time the passerby dropped what I'm sure seemed to them a perfectly innocent question. They were unaware of the many hours that had gone into the selection, scanning, cropping, and manipulation of images. My response, and one that I have repeated on several occasions since, is that the great thing about working in a 1970s government building is that we have almost endless possibilities for bringing life to our orange and brown hallway walls with the AHC's amazing collection of Arkansas history images. We hope you'll come in and see the mural, but here's preview in case you can't get here soon! — Dr. Lisa K. Speer

News from NEARA

Students from Arkansas State University's History MA program recently volunteered at NEARA to gain experience in archival processing. The students, all members of a class in Archives and Manuscripts, each worked on collections that provided experience in a variety of skills needed for this type of work. The students conducted research related to the collections to help them understand the context in which they were created or compiled, and why they were important to understanding the region. They also engaged in simple conservation measures to help ensure the longevity of the donated materials, arranged the materials, and produced finding aids to help patrons to use the collections.

Their experience involved working with several recent donations, including the Devoe Hedrick papers, Clover Bend records, Dowell Land Company records, and Barney Sellers photographs. For several, this work is only the beginning of continued study that should, in time, lead to public exhibits, research papers, theses, and dissertations based on the projects they began this spring.

Many thanks from us at NEARA and the Arkansas History Commission to Monica Campbell, Rachel Hendrix, Brian McInturf, and Kristyn Watts for all the hard work!

News from SARA

This lovely lady is Lucetta Stuart Johnson Walker (1801-1884) of Columbus, Hempstead County, Arkansas. Born in Christian County, Kentucky, she was the daughter of Abraham Stuart and his wife Mary Kuykendall. The Stuarts came to Territorial Arkansas about 1818. On June 22, 1820, Lucetta married Edward Johnson, Jr. (1798 -1838), the son of another early settler.

Edward Johnson, Jr. was an energetic entrepreneur who made money supplying food to the Choctaw during Indian Removal in the 1830s. He used his profits to buy more land and slaves before his death on November 12, 1838. He left Lucetta a well-to-do, attractive widow with ten children.

It was not long before Lucetta became the third wife of Dr. James H. Walker (1800-1861), a neighbor of the Johnsons. Dr. Walker was a prosperous planter. With his own slaves and those of his wife totaling about 250, Dr. Walker was at the time of his death one of the largest slaveholders in the Red River Valley.

Lucetta lived until the 1880s, dying at Woodlawn, the home of her son Major Johnson. Today, Woodlawn has been moved to Washington and renovated by the Pioneer Washington Foundation. It stands on Highway 195 on the south side of town.

Lucetta is buried in a raised brick tomb in the Mounds Cemetery near Columbus with the raised tombs of her husbands on either side of her. The Mounds Cemetery is now on the National Register of Historic Places. This image of Lucetta comes from a daguerreotype in the Bertha Moore Collection at SARA.

Staff Picks

This month we feature Curator Julienne Crawford's choice, a violin made by George Thomas Shrader.

Who was George Thomas Shrader? He was a train conductor for the Rock Island Railroad who built violins in his free time. He was well known for his craftsmanship. He eventually retired from the railroad and made violins full time. He lived in Little Rock before moving to Texas in the 1920s where he later died. He built this violin around 1919. What is amazing is that he was a self taught violin maker. Plus, he did not even play the instrument. Yet, those who did play the violin all praised his work. Shrader made the instrument out of Arkansas sycamore and maple and left it unvarnished to show off the wood.

Did his violins receive any national attention? He exhibited two of his violins at the Panama-Pacific International Exhibition in San Francisco in 1915. He won a silver medal for these instruments.

How does it sound? I don't play personally, but we once had a professional musician try it and he said that it is a wonderful instrument.

How can the public see the violin? Soon it will be on display at the State Capitol as part of a joint exhibit celebrating the 110th birthday of the AHC. The exhibit will run from June to August.

New at the AHC

April Donations and Accessions

AHC

National Guard Records, 56 cu. ft.

SARA

Original Hempstead County Marriage Licenses from 1875 to 1900 and into the 20th century. 3 cu. ft.

We always receive more material than we are able to list in our newsletter. For a full listing, see our webpage (www.ark-ives.com) and our Facebook page.

We appreciate the generous support of our donors!

May and June are often a turning point in the lives of many young people as they graduate from high school or college and begin new chapters in their lives. As we salute this milestone in many people's lives, we present this selection of graduation photographs from our collection.

Rex and Ray Wehrfritz, Little Rock High School, 1917

Amity High School 1942 graduating class

Viola Schader in her graduation dress, 1912

Walter G. Kirst, graduation portrait

Meriye Fujiwara speaking at her high school graduation at the Jerome Japanese Internment Camp, 1943