THE ARKANSAS ARCHIVIST

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2015

The AHC Bids a Fond Farewell to Richard Davies

Calendar of Events

November 23—December 18
The Great War: Arkansas in World War I Exhibit
Riley-Hickingbotham Library
Ouachita Baptist University
Arkadelphia

December 5
AHC Friends Group
Organizational Meeting
AHC Conference Room

December 10
Arkansas History Commission
Meeting
AHC Conference Room

December 12
Black History Commission of Arkansas
Grants Workshop
AHC Conference Room

At the end of November, the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism (ADPT) will lose its long-time Executive Director when Richard Davies retires. For Davies, it has been a long and fruitful tenure. Davies graduated from the University of Arkansas in 1972 with a journalism degree. His writing skills served him well when he became administrative assistant to Bill Henderson, director of the ADPT. Parks were already in the Davies blood line. His grandfather was the first director of Arkansas State Parks and his father had worked on Petit Jean State Park.

Davies dons an apron to do a little grilling at one of Arkansas's state parks

Among Davies' many accomplishments has been the development of Arkansas's state parks system. When he first began with the agency, there were around 15 state parks. Today, there are 52 parks. Additionally, Davies' tenure has witnessed the growth of Arkansas tourism into a multi-million dollar industry, rivaling agriculture as the state's top industry. After 42 years of shepherding the department, Davies is retiring, and leaving a void that will not be filled easily.

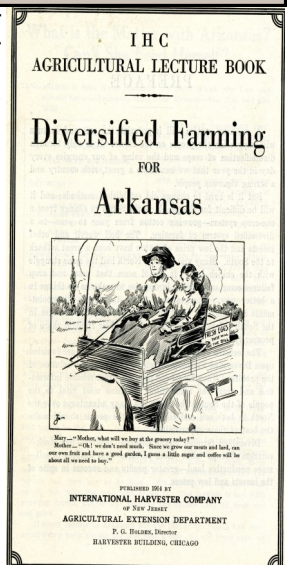
Davies shaking hands with Governor Bill Clinton during a ceremony honoring Arkansas's state parks

Dr. Lisa K. Speer, Director of the Arkansas History Commission, says of Davies' retirement: "Richard Davies has been a great friend to and advocate for the Arkansas History Commission during his time as Executive Director of Parks and Tourism. In the short 2 ½ years that I have had the pleasure of working with him, I've grown to rely on him for straight answers, sound advice, and usually an entertaining story. The very best thing about working with Mr. Davies – and there are many good things about working with him – is that he is a straight shooter. He may not always tell you what you want to hear, but you can always rely on him to tell you the truth and keep his word. He's been an excellent mentor and boss, and I'll miss him tremendously."

Davies leaves behind a strong legacy for his successor, Kane Webb, who will take over the agency on December 1. We look forward to working with Mr. Webb, and wish Mr. Davies a fond farewell!

Agricultural History Highlighted in New Digital Collection

"Let us view Arkansas of the present. Let us go out into the ripening orchards, the green fields, the grassy meadows, and, if you will, among the herds and flocks, and see what advanced agriculture and the two-horse plow have brought to one of the greatest farming States in the Union." So begins a pamphlet published by the Missouri Pacific Iron Mountain titled, "The Homebuilder in Arkansas," designed to attract farmers to Arkansas. The AHC is lucky to have a wide range of resources for those wanting to study the history of agriculture in the state. Our collections include farm ledgers, information about land values, farming techniques, and promotional material about the state's agricultural possibilities. A selection of these resources are included in one of the AHC's newest digital collections, "From Swamps to Farms — A History of Farming in Arkansas," available on our digital collections website at http://ahc.digital-ar.org/.



IHC
AGRICULTURAL LECTURE BOOK

Diversified Farming
FOR
Arkansas

Mary.—"Mother, what will we buy at the grocery today?"
Mother.—"Oh! we don't need much. Now we grow our meats and lard, can our own fruit and have a good garden, I guess a little sugar and coffee will be about all we need to buy."

PUBLISHED 1914 BY
INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER COMPANY
OF NEW JERSEY
AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION DEPARTMENT
P. G. HOLDEN, Director
HARVESTER BUILDING, CHICAGO

Some of the more interesting items in our collection regarding farming are promotional pamphlets. The number of pamphlets from the late 19th century targeting farmers in the South suggests that there was a wide range of people coming to Arkansas during this period. A pamphlet titled, "Arkansas: The Southern Farmer's Guide," published around 1890, was aimed at drawing farmers from the midwest into Arkansas. The author assured midwestern farmers that, "Here he will find water plentiful and excellent, rains seasonable, irrigation unnecessary, winters short, summers delightful."

Agriculture has been our number one economic activity throughout the history of this state. We are proud of our agricultural heritage and hope that researchers will explore our resources — available online and in our research room — to better understand Arkansas's agricultural legacy. Search "agriculture" in CARAT to see the wide range of resources available at the AHC!

The Augustine 'Gus' Fredrich Collection

Donor Augustine Frederich, Jr., and AHC Director Lisa Speer review a copy of Be A Good Soldier and Take Care of My Babies

Augustine Fredrich was a salesman for the Nabisco company when he was drafted into the army in 1944. When Gus left for the war, his wife, Barbara "Bob" Fredrich, was pregnant. Since he had a family already, he was drafted as a non-combatant. He trained in Mississippi and then went to Europe. He served throughout the remainder of the war, ending his service in September 1945 overseeing refugee camps in Augsburg, Germany. After the war, Gus returned to his family in Little Rock to resume his career as a salesman for Nabisco. His time was short, however. He died trying to save a drowning child during a boating accident four years after returning from the war. He left behind his wife and five children.

Included in Gus's legacy were over two hundred letters he sent to Barbara during the war. Due to the personal nature of many of the letters, Gus begged Barbara to discard the letters after she read them. Luckily for us and for future generations, she disregarded his request. Barbara placed the letters into a box, and for years the box remained on a shelf in a spare bedroom. When Barbara died in 1994, the children found the letters as they were cleaning out the house. Gus' son, Augustine Fredrich, Jr., took the letters home and started reading. He found the letters so interesting that he started transcribing them. Eventually, he published them in a book, *Be a Good Soldier and Take Care of My Babies: Letters from an Arkansas Soldier, April 1944 – September 1945*. The title comes from the line Gus used to close all of his letters home to Barbara. Recently, Fredrich donated the collection of letters, a copy of the book, and some World War II artifacts, including a canteen and Nazi banner to the Arkansas History Commission.

Many of the letters describe life in refugee camp, the hours of training, and pranks played on his fellow soldiers. What becomes really clear in the letters is that Gus had genuine love for his wife, often writing her twice in a day. The only gaps that seem to appear in the collection were when Gus' unit was traveling from one location to another. A theme running through most of the letters was the longing to see his family again. On May 17, 1945, Gus wrote, "Well sweet I don't know a thing except that 'I Love You' and I told you that a thousand times. I would like to be where you could hear me say it. I wish I could see the kiddies. I know they are growing like weeds."

The collection has letters almost exclusively from Gus, save for one fragment of a letter from Barbara. In the fragment, it is clear that she worried about the war as much as Gus did. She wrote, "This seems like the end of the world to me, and I know it will to you also. Lets [sic] try and be brave and not think ahead too far. Things will work themselves out some how. Wherever you go and what ever you do, just remember I love you more than any thing in this world, and I'll be praying for you constantly."

We are lucky to have this rare glimpse into the life of an American soldier and his relationship with his wife and family. We thank Augustus Fredrich, Jr., for donating this interesting collection to the AHC.

Black History Commission News

Carla Coleman and Tatyana Oyinloye stand next to a marker commemorating the location of the first Freedmen's Bureau

The Afro-American Historical & Genealogical Society held their 36th National Conference in Richmond, Virginia. The theme for the event was "*Virginia, Where African American Roots Run Deep: Family History and the National Narrative*." Carla Coleman, Chair of the Black History Commission of Arkansas, and Tatyana Oyinloye, African American History Program Coordinator, were in attendance at the conference.

Tatyana Oyinloye says this was one of the best conferences she has attended thus far. Speakers ranging from local dignitaries to Keyantta Berry, one of the hosts of Genealogy Road Show, led sessions at the conference. Sessions included: *Mapping the Freedmen's Bureau*, *Getting Started in African American Genealogy*, *Finding White Fathers of Enslaved Children*, and *Using Archival Documents in Genealogy to Native American Genealogy*. Tatyana says, "Four days was not enough time to capture the rich history that Richmond has to offer, but it did help me appreciate the African contribution to America even more. The things I learned will help me better assist patrons at the Arkansas History Commission and around the state."

When Carla Coleman was asked what she took from this conference she stated: "Virginia has such a historical significance to African Americans in this country and Arkansas. I always wanted to see the James River because I had heard so many stories about this river and the first Africans came into the Americas on this river. It made history more real to me and gave more meaning to what I do as a Black History Commissioner. My favorite session was led by Angela Walton-Raji, a native of Fort Smith, Arkansas, who presented on Native American genealogy. I met so many people with common ground and Arkansas ties." Their next Afro-American Historical & Genealogical Society conference will be held October 13-16, 2016, in Atlanta, Georgia. Mark your calendars!

Know your Commissioners

Arkansas History Commission

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

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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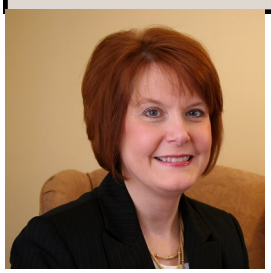
From the Director



When AHC staff member Brian Irby lets me know that it's time to provide him with my column for the newsletter, sometimes I have to ponder for a few days what I want to write about. I've known all year what the subject of the November column would be, and yet I've delayed starting it. Not because I didn't know what I wanted to say, but because starting this column would require me to acknowledge (once again) a sad occasion facing the agency at month's end. If you've read or perused this month's newsletter, you probably noticed our feature article on the retirement of Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism (ADPT) Executive Director Richard Davies. Mr. Davies is retiring after a long and distinguished career – almost 43 years – with ADPT. For the last 21 years, he's served as Executive Director of Parks and Tourism, and before that as State Parks director. Parks and Tourism has not been just a job for him – it's who he is. If you don't know his story, his grandfather, Samuel G. Davies, became the first director of Arkansas State Parks in 1937, after working as a civil engineer for the National Park Service to develop Petit Jean State Park. Mr. Davies' father, Ladd Davies, also worked on the Petit Jean project, and designed the Cedar Creek Bridge. His father later served as the director of the Arkansas Department of Pollution Control and Ecology from 1962-1976. Protecting our state's resources – natural and historic – runs in the Davies family.

While it might be common knowledge that the Arkansas History Commission is administratively under the umbrella of ADPT, it's probably not common knowledge what that means for our agency. Although the History Commission retains its status as an independent agency, we have historically relied on ADPT for many things. To put it bluntly, we've relied on them to keep our doors open. From our inception, the History Commission has been woefully underfunded in comparison with other state archives across the nation. Even today, our $1.9 million dollar appropriation mostly goes to personnel expenses and rent, leaving us with only about $225,000 to operate our three facilities each year. I have no doubt that without the support of the ADPT that our situation would be far worse than it is today.

In the 2 ½ years that I've been History Commission Director, I've seen ample evidence of the difference that the support that ADPT makes to our existence, from providing new computers in years when we could not afford to replace them out of our own budget to paying for our website maintenance costs. Additionally, ADPT provides support for us with hiring processes, information technology, payroll and accounting, and other administrative functions that, as a small agency, we do not have the staff capacity to manage. This support makes it possible for the History Commission staff to do our jobs more effectively, and routinely provides tangible benefits to the public we serve.

Then there is the support provided for our regional archives, both of which are located in Arkansas State Parks. Greg Butts, the Arkansas State Parks Director, is the other hero in this story, and he is also retiring at the end of this year. State Parks provides the facilities to house our regional archives; and that doesn't mean they just gave us buildings and said, "Good luck." Greg Butts and his excellent staff at Powhatan Historic State Park and Historic Washington State Park provide ongoing maintenance for those facilities, including sometimes costly repairs like roof and HVAC replacements. And then there's the day-to-day support that Parks personnel provides and which I don't always see, but I hear about from the History Commission staff at those facilities. It would be hard to put a dollar figure on the value of the support that ADPT provides for us each year, but I would confidently estimate that it's a six figure number.

So, all of this is to say that the History Commission will greatly miss Richard Davies and Greg Butts, both of whom have been tremendous friends and supporters of our agency. I am grateful to them both for all they have done to preserve Arkansas history. They will be sorely missed; but I hope they will both keep in mind that the History Commission accepts volunteers. —L. K. Speer

News from NEARA

As the weather gets chilly and the leaves dawn their brilliant autumn colors, it is time once again to start thinking about… getting your submission for the NEARA Award ready!

Since the last submission cycle, we have processed more than 1000 additional documents – meaning there are many more stories, many more cases, many more potential supporting records available to help with the research. Are you interested in territorial-era commerce? Foodways? Religion? Textiles? Arts and crafts? Road development? River trade? There is something in the collections to help with your research.

Endowed by the family of Eugene Sloan, the NEARA Award encourages research among the earliest of Arkansas's records housed at the Arkansas History Commission's branch archives at Powhatan. These records include criminal and civil court cases, probate records, and other records from the territorial courthouses in Lawrence County (Davidsonville, Jackson, and Smithville).

Winning papers for the first two years focused on industry and the roles of women in northeast Arkansas during the territorial period. What will you focus on for your submission for the third annual NEARA Award? Look past the visions of Thanksgiving turkeys and Christmas celebrations to your inspiration before the February 1 submission deadline for this $1000 prize.

More information and submission instructions for the prize are available at http://arkansashistoricalassociation.org/?page_id=19. Awards will be presented in April 2016 at the 75th annual Arkansas Historical Association Conference in Little Rock.

News from SARA

Arkansas 4th District U.S. Rep. Bruce Westerman visited several areas of the 4th District Tuesday, October 13, 2015. One of his stops included Washington where he toured Historic Washington State Park and the Southwest Arkansas Regional Archives. The Park staff provided refreshments at SARA. We were glad to meet him and hope he visits again.

Among the collections at the Southwest Arkansas Regional Archives are images of historic structures that no longer exist. Regrettably, they burned, collapsed as a result of neglect or were torn down at some point in the past. One of these images is of the Blevins house, which was located near present-day Blevins in northern Hempstead County.

Constructed by an unknown builder, this large log house had one and a half stories with a central dog trot hall and a winding staircase leading to the upper floor. Two large rooms were on either side of the central hall, and the home had four stone fireplaces. Large pine trees standing at its gate gave the house its name of "The Pines".

Hugh A. Blevins acquired the house about 1845. Blevins had been a youthful veteran of the War of 1812 and was in early Arkansas by the 1830s. He became well-to-do with land interests in Hempstead, Nevada and Little River Counties. He had a large family, and his home became a gathering place for the community and a stopping point for travelers on the old military road going toward Washington and points south and west. The railroad town of Blevins emerged about 1900 and took its name from this early family. The Blevins house stood for many years. Unfortunately, it was torn down in the 1940s.

Staff Picks

This month we feature the pick of Archival Assistant Elizabeth Freeman. Her pick is a scrapbook of the Home Demonstration Club from 1933.

What was the Home Demonstration Club? It was an organization set up by the US Department of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service in order to teach women better techniques that they could use around the house. The club emphasized canning, dress making, and other things that would help around the household. Besides the practical aspect of the club, it was also an important social gathering place for women.

What kind of material is in the scrapbook? There are a number of images of activities that were common in the Home Demonstration Club. For instance, there are images of dresses that club members made. It is a goldmine for people wanting to see what life was like in the 1930s in Arkansas.

How did you become interested in this scrapbook? The Home Demonstration Club is still active and I remember going with my mother to their meetings. At one of the meetings, I won a quilt in a raffle. So, when I was looking for items to digitize as part of a women's history online exhibit, this scrapbook stood out to me.

Are there any other collections like this in our holdings? There are a number of collections like this, but this is the most complete that I've seen.

New at the AHC

September and October Donations and Accessions

AHC

Augustine "Gus" Fredrich Papers, 1 cu. ft.
John Pope Collection Supplement, 1 cu. ft.
Arkansas State Land Surveyors Records, 7 cu. ft.

SARA

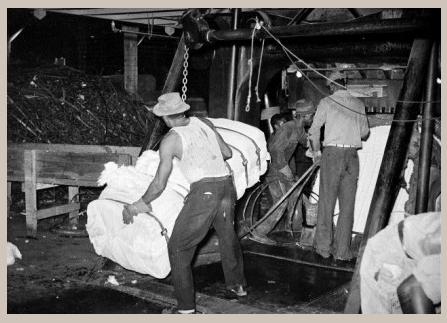
Hope/Hempstead County Library Genealogy Room Collection, 270 cu. ft.

We always receive more material than we are able to list in our newsletter. For a full listing, see our blog (http://arkansasstatearchives.blogspot.com/2015/11/octobernovember-2015-acquisitions-and.html) and our Facebook page.

We appreciate the generous support of our donors!

This time of year, farmers reap the rewards of a year's worth of hard labor. We honor those who have made agriculture their lives' work.

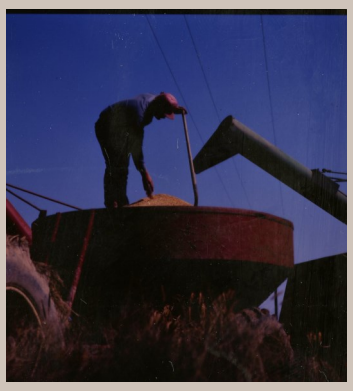
Plowing outside the Jackson County Courthouse, Jacksonport, 1930s.



Cotton gin workers, circa 1930

Fresh cut hay, circa 1930

Harvesting corn near Wilson



Harvesting rice near Stuttgart, 1970s

Crop dusting near Wilson