

## State Archives Introduces Main Street Arkansas Materials

### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**October 29**

Using Archival Records to Preserve  
Historic Structures  
*North Little Rock Heritage Center*

**November 9**

State Agencies Records  
Preservation Workshop  
*MAC Building, 4th Floor*

**November 3—20**

The Great War:  
Arkansas in World War I  
*Magale Library*  
*Southern Arkansas University*  
*Magnolia*

**November 14**

Black History Commission of  
Arkansas  
Quarterly Meeting  
*ASA Conference Room*

As you may have noticed in last month's issue, October is American Archives Month. Every year, we focus on a different aspect of the archival craft, and this year we are focusing on the role of archives in preserving historic properties. The Arkansas State Archives holds a wide variety of resources useful in researching and documenting private and commercial structures around the state.

The past twenty years have witnessed a revitalization of many of Arkansas's historic downtowns. What were once neglected and blighted areas have been restored to bustling commercial and residential areas. Many Arkansas downtowns have been helped by the Main Street Arkansas program, part of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program at the Department of Arkansas Heritage. The ASA has a collection of architectural drawings created by the Main Street program. The collection contains approximately 874 mixed media drawings and plans, primarily on regular and vellum paper. Towns represented in the collection include Arkadelphia, Batesville, Blytheville, Dumas, Little Rock, North Little Rock, Osceola, Ozark, Paragould, Russellville, and West Memphis. The drawings often help to visualize how buildings will look once they are restored. The sketches treat the buildings for what they are: architectural works of art.

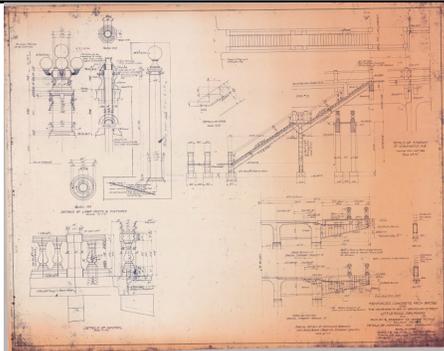
Over the years, the ASA has been a resource for agencies such as the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program for information about properties. Researchers can find information about the history of a building or area by searching through newspapers, Sanborn Fire Maps, and city directories at the ASA. Ralph Wilcox, National Register and Survey Coordinator for the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, has used the ASA for much of his research, mostly in looking at our newspaper collection on microfilm. Wilcox explains, "The process of preserving buildings or nominating buildings to the National Register often starts with either an interest I might have or

perhaps a constituent might come in to the office. After some quick online searches, I will usually go to the ASA to look at newspapers." Since the ASA began filming newspapers in 1957, it has amassed the largest newspaper collection in the state. "I get a lot of information from looking at old newspapers. A lot of times I can find out who the architect for the building was or details about the construction of the structure. Newspapers are really crucial for the work," says Wilcox. Wilcox recalls that the newspapers were instrumental in his work on the Perryville Commercial Historic District. "The newspapers at the ASA were our main source for information for the project," Wilcox recalls. "We could not have been as successful on the project without those newspapers." We are glad to have been included on such projects and welcome future opportunities to partner with them.



1986 sketch of the Kress Building in Blytheville,  
Main Street Arkansas collection, ASA

## Goodbye Broadway Bridge



Blueprints showing the design of the staircase from Washington Street in North Little Rock and details of the bridge's railings

On October 11, 2016, residents in and around Little Rock held a collective breath. The work in offices ground to a halt as employees gathered around computers; shoppers at malls stopped to stare at the tiny screens of their cell phones; and those at home found themselves glued to their television sets. They waited in rapt attention for the demise of one of Little Rock's most historic landmarks, the Broadway Bridge. Engineers declared that the bridge was too old, decrepit, beyond repair, and needing to be replaced. Those of us watching that day lacked the engineering background to disagree. However, there was one agreement: Despite a massive explosion, the bridge declared that it was not ready to go into that good night. It decided that it wanted to stick around a little while longer.

Those interested in the history of the bridge and what it was that made it so difficult to blow up might be interested to learn that the ASA has original blueprints from the old bridge. The blueprints, dated 1919, show the different stages of construction of the bridge and offer a glimpse into the construction techniques at the time. The ASA welcomes our readers to come have a look at this unique part of Little Rock's history.

As a side note to the history of the bridge, on the day it opened, March 14, 1923, in front of an audience of as many as 50,000 people, George Donaghey, former governor and then current chairman of the Broadway Bridge Committee, told the crowd in regard to the bridge, "It will last, so far as we know, barring earthquakes, as long as time itself." The bridge almost succeeded.

## Black History Commission News



Unidentified women next to an 1952 Oldsmobile 88 Rocket, circa mid 1950s

There is no question as to the power that photographs hold in helping us recount our past. We are certainly glad that the ASA and the BHCA have been able to collect so many photographs through the years. This month, we wish to highlight a collection of photographs taken by an African American photographer from Helena, Arkansas.

Rogerline Johnson was born in 1927 in Columbus, Hempstead County. After completing high school in Hope, Arkansas, he attended Arkansas Agricultural Mechanical and Normal College (now the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff). He became interested in

photography during his college years and upon graduating in 1948 briefly taught science and coached football in Marianna before pursuing a career in photography. In 1952 he opened John's Studio in Helena. Active in community life, Johnson ran for public office on three separate occasions, but did not win any of the campaigns. He continued to be active in the local community, as reflected in his photography subjects. Johnson died in November 1996.

A few months ago, Archival Assistant Adrienne Jones, discovered the photographs while searching through a collection of Sykes Grant material. She was intrigued by the photographs and decided that it would be helpful for researchers if she would gather all related photographs together into a collection. When she found the photographs, they were in a binder. Adrienne then sat down to compile the photographs. Once collected, they present a view of eastern Arkansas that has often gone unnoticed. We are happy to present these priceless photographs!

## KNOW YOUR COMMISSIONERS

### Arkansas History Commission

Ms. Mary Dillard	Malvern
Mr. Michael Lindsey	Fayetteville
Mr. Robert McCarley	Little Rock
Ms. Elizabeth Robbins	Hot Springs
Mr. Rodney Soubers	Mountain Home
Dr. Robert Sherer	Little Rock
Mr. Michael Whitmore	Rogers

### Black History Commission of Arkansas

Ms. Carla Coleman	Little Rock
Ms. Joyce Gibson	Prescott
Dr. John W. Graves	Arkadelphia
Ms. Elise Hampton	Conway
Dr. Cherisse Jones-Branch	Jonesboro
Mr. Myron Jackson	Little Rock
Rev. Frank Stewart	Conway

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# From the Director



American Archives Month is a great time to raise public awareness of the important role that record-keeping agencies play in our society, as well as the necessity of preserving records, historic and official. Records, and the repositories that preserve them, provide us with a connection to our past, both on a personal level and collectively. Preserving records that document the work of our government — city, state or federal — protects us as citizens and promotes transparency among public officials.

Sometimes overlooked in the Archives Month commemorations that focus on the records and the role of records in our society, are the *recordkeepers* — an essential element to identifying, preserving and providing access to the resources found in archives.

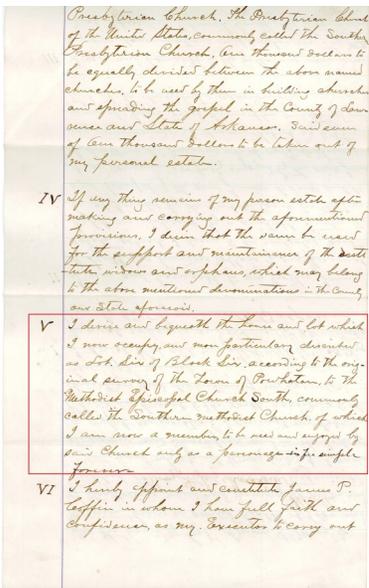
Professional archivists and record managers may be the Rodney Dangerfields of the information management world, simply not getting the respect they so deserve — that is until you need their help. Archivists and recordkeepers help citizens everyday by providing access to: vital records required for veterans' benefits and burials; birth and death records; plats, deeds and maps needed to establish property rights; probate records and wills that establish inheritance; laws and court records that protect civil rights; and historic maps and blueprints that may save buildings, or lives in cases of disasters. The examples can go on and on.

At the Arkansas State Archives and its associated regional Archives — NEARA and SARA — our staff is composed of 25 dedicated professionals who manage our collection of documents and artifacts and work with the public (onsite and remote) to provide the broadest possible access to our resources. Most of them are in the field of archives for two reasons: (1) they are interested in history; and (2) they like to help people. Archives, like librarianship, is a service-oriented profession. According to 2015 stats from the US Department of Labor, the median pay for Archivists was \$46,710 annually or \$22.46 an hour. In Arkansas state government, the starting salary for an entry-level archival professional is almost half that amount, or \$13.39 an hour, considerably less than starting salaries for comparable positions even within the state.

So next time you visit an archives, say “thanks” to an archivist for the work they do! Knowing they helped you makes their day better!

— Dr. Lisa K. Speer

## News from NEARA



Probate file for Mary E. Morrison, 1895

As many veteran researchers know, answers can come in unexpected places. NEARA has been slowly and steadily unlocking the secrets of Powhatan Historic State Park through the court records, aiding the park staff in illuminating the fascinating history of Lawrence County's 4<sup>th</sup> county seat. Recently, the park acquired an original 1890s Methodist Church. Wanting to interpret and preserve the structure as ably as possible, NEARA has been assisting in the research of the church. The big question that needed answering was how the church originally acquired the land it rests upon. Church records didn't detail this transaction. The index to deeds didn't list anything either, so being especially thorough, park staff combed through several years' worth of deed records in case the notation was missing from the index. But it was

nowhere to be found! Finally, park staff began investigating the previous plot owners that were on record. This led them to a probate file at NEARA for Mary E. Morrison in 1895. In the file was Mary's will, giving the plot of land and money to the church expressly for building a new structure. Since the land was given by will, there was never a deed created to document the transaction! With this piece of the puzzle from an unexpected source, the story of Powhatan and the Methodist Church becomes clearer. For help with your own history mystery, visit or contact NEARA today- [northeast.archives@arkansas.gov](mailto:northeast.archives@arkansas.gov) or 870-878-6521.

## News from SARA

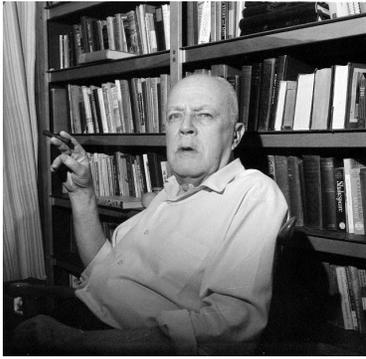
ar-chive 'är,kiv: *noun* a collection of historical documents or records providing information about a place, institution, person, or group of people

Many people don't realize how important the existence of an archive can be for them. Would you like to find a family member who's been lost to the memories of generations past? Or would you like to know who originally

owned the piece of property you recently purchased? Perhaps you'd like to write a paper on the lasting impact of World War II on a particular area of Arkansas. Whether it's searching for a family member, details about property ownership, or the impact that world events have had on our daily lives, archives serve as a vital tool to bridge the gap between the present and the past. Here at the Southwest Arkansas Regional Archives (SARA), one can find answers to these questions and more through the materials SARA holds on a wide array of subjects. A look through census or military records might help locate that lost family member. Deed records and tax rolls are helpful for property information. Newspaper accounts and government records on the Southwestern Proving Ground detail the impact that World War II had on Hempstead County. Whatever it is you may be searching for, celebrate archives during Archives Month, or any time of year, with a visit to SARA to search our holdings of microfilm, books, and archival materials across the twelve counties of Southwest Arkansas.



O.A. Graves home in Hope, Witt, Seibert, and Co. Architects, circa 1880



*Folk story expert Vance Randolph in his office in Fayetteville, circa 1970. Many of his studies of Ozark folklore make up the McNeill Collection*

As October begins to draw to a close and the air begins to cool and nights begin to get longer, for many Arkansans there is nothing more fitting than a roaring fire and a good story. Part of Arkansas's cultural heritage has been the tradition of storytelling. Stories have been handed down from one generation to the next – tall tales and folk customs have become ingrained in our society. Luckily, there have been a number of people who have spent their careers recording and cataloging our folk past.

Since 2006, the ASA has been proud to hold the William McNeill Collection. McNeill was one of Arkansas's foremost folklore scholars, collecting both music and books related to Arkansas folklore. His collection contains a large number of folklore-related items, from Vance Randolph's books about Ozark folk culture, to books about folk medicinal practices.

Albert Howard Carter, vice president of the Arkansas Folklore Society in the 1950s, wrote, "Folklore shares with all art the faculty of making people, events, ideas, and just plain things important to us... I am not sure that folklore makes things happen, but it does preserve for us the otherwise transitory feelings and aspirations of those before us."

**October  
Donations and Accessions**

**ASA**

- Korean National Museum Modern artifacts, 8 items
- Arkansas Food Hall of Fame apron, 1 item
- Arkansas History Commission shirt 1 item

**SARA**

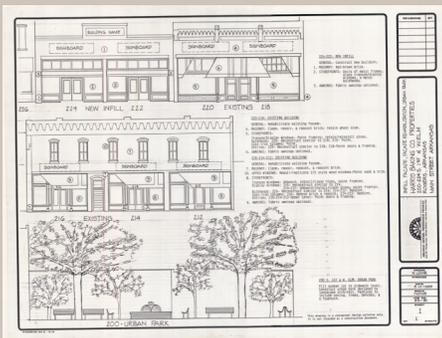
- Monroe Family of Washington, Arkansas photographs, 8 images
- Foster City Army Retirement, 0.01 cu ft.**
- Galester Family collection, 0.06 cu ft
- Rosemary Arnold collection, 8 items.

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/2016/09/september-2016-acquisitions-and.html>

**We appreciate the generous support of our donors!**

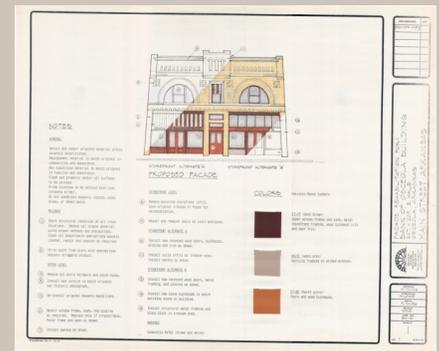
*As our readers may have read on the front page of this issue, we are focusing our October seminar on the topic of preservation. The ASA has been a great research resource for people studying the history of architecture in Arkansas. In the opening article of this month's issue, we discussed the Main Street Arkansas collection. This month we close this newsletter with some selections from that collection.*



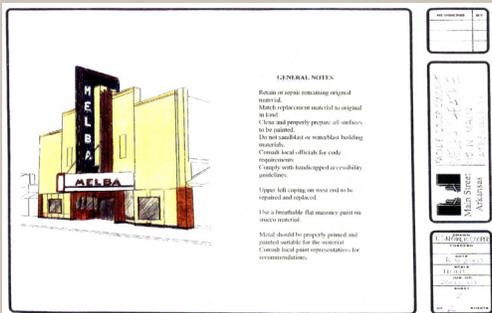
*Sketch of proposed urban park in Rogers, Arkansas, 1989*



*Sketch of the proposed facades on Broadway in West Memphis, 1991*



*Sketch of proposed facade rehabilitation on the Bank of Osceola, circa 1985*



*Sketch of restored Melba Theater in Batesville, Arkansas, 2000*



*Options proposed for Russellville, Arkansas, 1994*