



ARKANSAS HISTORY COMMISSION NEWS ARKANSAS'S STATE ARCHIVES

ISSUE 14

APRIL 2013

Dr. Lisa K. Speer Named New Commission Director



Dr. Lisa K. Speer

Dr. Ray Granade, chair of the Arkansas History Commission, and Richard Davies, Director of the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism, announced today the hiring of Dr. Lisa K. Speer as the new State Historian and Director of the History Commission. Speer succeeds Dr. Wendy Richter, who resigned in December, 2012.

Born in Fayetteville, Dr. Speer grew up near Malvern, graduated from Glen Rose High School and then from Ouachita Baptist University in 1988 with a degree in History. She earned an MA and PhD in American History from the University of Mississippi, where she worked as Curator of the Mississippi Collection in the University's Archives and Special Collections. She then earned an MA in Library and Information Studies with archival certification from the University of Alabama,

where she worked as an archival technician. For just over a dozen years, Dr. Speer has directed the Special Collections and Archives at Southeast Missouri State University.

Speer has published a half-dozen articles in scholarly journals and in the archival, library, and historical realms, authored at least forty book reviews, and produced essays for a forthcoming Mississippi Encyclopedia. An experienced presenter to academic and scholarly audiences, Speer is equally skilled in communicating to local historical, preservationist, and genealogical societies. She is an active member of the Society of American Archivists, serving on its membership committee and is a reviewer for *Choice: Current Reviews for Academic Libraries* and *American Reference Books Annual*.

"I am thrilled to have this opportunity to serve the people of Arkansas as State Historian and Director of the Arkansas History Commission and State Archives," Speer remarked. She continued, "I appreciate the confidence that the Commissioners have placed in me. During my interview, I was so impressed by the Board of Commissioners, all of whom made time to attend the interviews. That they would choose me from what I have been told was a strong field of candidates is humbling, indeed. The Arkansas History Commission has so many wonderful initiatives underway, like the "Documenting Arkansas" digital project and the Arkansas Records catalog, begun by my esteemed predecessor Dr. Wendy Richter. I look forward to continuing these initiatives and working with the talented and dedicated staff of the Arkansas History Commission to further the outreach and expansion of the AHC in Arkansas and beyond! As a native Arkansan, I'm also personally very happy to be returning home after being away some years. There truly is no place like home."

Commenting on the Speer's choice by the Commission, Dr. Granade stated: "The Commission searched for a rare combination of historian and archivist to be State Historian and Arkansas History Commission Director. We needed someone with background in and connections with all three of the archives, library, and history worlds. Dr. Speer was not only the best qualified applicant from a professional standpoint, she also interacts well with a wide variety of the public. She is someone who obviously wants to serve the people of Arkansas and whose priority is to serve the best interests of all Arkansans."

"Speer has the education, experience, and personality to lead not only the archives, but will be a capable and effective advocate for Arkansas history," said Richard Davies, Director of the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism. Liz Robbins, Commissioner from Hot Springs and Executive Director of the Garland County Historical Society, stated that "...her talents as a scholar, archivist, and administrator will help the AHC serve the state, historians, and genealogists. The AHC is an outstanding organization and we are confident that her leadership will guide it to even greater achievements."

Chosen unanimously by the seven-member Commission from a pool of 20 applicants, Speer will start work at the Commission on June 3. Jane Wilkerson will continue as Interim Director of the History Commission until Speer begins her duties.

In Remembrance Debuts As Comprehensive Online Index of Arkansas Deaths from 1819-1920

The Arkansas History Commission is pleased to announce the launch of *In Remembrance*, an online database of Arkansas deaths from 1819-1920. Designed to supplement Arkansas's vital records service which began in 1914, *In Remembrance* provides researchers with the location of death records in early Arkansas. The data has been collected from numerous sources including church publications, cemetery records, mortality censuses, newspaper obituaries, or county and local records from the AHC's extensive holdings.

Easily found as a link under the CARAT icon on the History Commission's website, www.ark-ives.com, the *In Remembrance* database provides information about family and historical figures from every area of the state, showing the name attached to the death record, the source in which to find the death record,

and the record's date. In the case of obituaries and similar records, the recorded date is the day on which the obituary was published, not necessarily the day the person died, while cemetery records show the date listed on the person's gravestone. Duplicate entries from different sources are also included in the database to aid researchers in finding multiple records for one individual. For example, in the image above there are two entries for one A. Jones with a death date of August 17, 1902. One record is from the Arkansas Census of Cemeteries, Faulkner County, while the other is from the Arkansas Confederate Pension Records, indicating that A. Jones was a Confederate veteran.

"Seeing this massive project become a reality is very exciting," enthused Jane Wilkerson, Interim Director of the Commission. "Researchers who only have a name of an ancestor now have access to multiple sources in one easy search. Before *In Remembrance*, if you didn't know where your relatives settled, it could have taken days or weeks of labor-intensive searching through microfilm and publications to locate your ancestors. This database saves our patrons so much time and is easy to use," she continued.

In Remembrance is an on-going project. More than a year of planning and data entry by dozens of AHC staff and volunteers made this project a reality. Thousands of entries go into the database every month, currently the online index holds 118,786 entries. Volunteers occupy a special place in the *In Remembrance* project, working alongside AHC staff at their own pace, in many cases from their own homes, helping to add names to this extensive index. If you are interested in volunteering for the *In Remembrance* project, please email [Mary Dunn](mailto:Mary.Dunn@ark-ives.com), Archival Manager at the Commission.

Last Name	Date	Source
.....	Jones	1871 Nov 31 Arkansas Gazette Obituary Index 1870-1879
.....	Jones	1875 September 17 Little Rock Death Records
.....	Jones	1876 April 6 Arkansas Gazette Obituary Index 1870-1879
.....	Jones	1878 February 7 Arkansas Gazette Obituary Index 1870-1879
2nd Lewis, John C.	Jones	1912 November 9 Dallas County, Arkansas, Cemetery Records 1901
A.	Jones	1902 August 17 Arkansas Confederate Pension Records
A.	Jones	1902 August 17 Faulkner County, Arkansas Census of Cemeteries
A.S.	Jones	1887 May 28 Dallas County, Arkansas Obituaries and Death Notices
A.S.	Jones	1895 July 21 Faulkner County, Loose Papers, 1873-1917
A.S.	Jones	1882 April 1 Clark County Cemeteries, Volume 01, Antioch Area
A.S.	Jones	1901 September 21 Arkansas Confederate Pension Records

Over 100,000 death records are easily researched from the In Remembrance online database.

In Loving Memory Exhibit Opens



*Hair jewelry brooch
and pendant featured in
exhibit*

The Arkansas History Commission's new exhibit *In Loving Memory: Death and Mourning in Arkansas* opened Thursday, April 18, 2013 on the second floor of the MAC building, One Capitol Mall in Little Rock. The exhibit explores how the rituals surrounding death have changed over the past two centuries through the examination of death records, images, literature, and historical objects from the collections of the Arkansas History Commission.

Some common mourning customs of the past such as making human hair into jewelry, placing coins on the eyes of the deceased, covering mirrors after a death, or taking postmortem photographs may seem strange to us today, but were common practices in the past. As funerals held in the home with coffins quickly made by local carpenters have slowly been replaced by the modern funeral homes and embalmers, our views on dying have also changed.

The Arkansas History Commission has numerous death records, including death notices, funeral home records, obituaries, family bibles, cemetery records, military records, probate records, census mortality schedules, church records, pension records, and embalmers records. Not only do these records provide valuable historical and genealogical information about individuals and families, but they also offer insight into death and mourning practices in rural areas and cities in Arkansas. Mourning clothes and accessories, hair floral arrangements, death masks, and other featured objects provide a unique view of death practices prevalent during the 19th century. Correspondence, scrapbooks, diaries, songs, and literature present personal views on dying. Photographs capture grieving funeral attendants, decorated graves, gravestone symbolism, and the deceased.

The exhibit opening ties in with the launch of *In Remembrance*, a new online index of Arkansas deaths from 1819 to 1920. On display outside the AHC Research Room until the end of 2013, the exhibit is free and open to the public, Monday-Saturdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Internship and Volunteer Positions Available

Fascinated by history and historic research? Want to learn more about archives and how they operate? The History Commission and its two regional archives are seeking volunteers to work on various projects, including data entry for *In Remembrance*, processing of both paper and photograph collections, and various duties in the conservation lab and with museum collections. Interested applicants should contact Jane Hooker at (501) 682-6900 or by email at state.archives@arkansas.gov.

In addition to the volunteer positions, the Southwest Arkansas Regional Archives, in partnership with Historic Washington State Park and the SARA Foundation, is offering a paid summer internship. Job duties consist of transcribing handwritten historic documents from the Freedman's Bureau Records and research on historic figures related to Washington. Work starts June 4 and continues through August 10. An interest in historic research, good computer skills and a college degree or degree in progress are the minimum requirements for applicants. Compensation package includes salary, housing within the park and paid utilities. Letters of application, along with a resume and references should be sent to [Peggy Lloyd](mailto:Peggy.Lloyd@arkansas.gov), SARA Archival Manager.

From the Interim Director



The culmination of a large project always makes me reflect on the process of taking an idea and turning it into reality. This month, the AHC unveiled the *In Remembrance* death index database. This year-long project involved everyone on staff at the AHC, plus more than a few volunteers. I want to commend Jo Blatti, Lauren Jarvis, Mary Dunn, Elizabeth Freeman, and Hannah Charlton for their diligence, hard work and just plain grit to move this project to completion. I truly believe this is one of the most important data collections we have. Entering volumes of information and searching through innumerable rolls of microfilm to produce a comprehensive searchable database of Arkansas's deaths from 1819-1920 is a monumental task, but will make it much easier for researchers to find their ancestors. While the content of *In Remembrance* is fluid and ever-increasing, its usefulness to you our patrons, is constant.

On a personal note, it has been an honor to serve as Interim Director of the Commission during this transition time. I want to be the first to welcome Dr. Speer to the Commission and back home to Arkansas. All of us at the Commission are looking forward to her leadership and vision to move the Commission forward to serve all Arkansans.

Be sure to attend one (or several!) of the events and exhibits listed in this month's calendar. We'd love to see you soon!

BRINGING THE AHC TO YOU

<i>Through April 22</i>	<i>"Fought in earnest" Exhibit Delta Cultural Center Helena-West Helena</i>
<i>April 20</i>	<i>Presentation Greene County Heritage Fair Paragould</i>
<i>April 26</i>	<i>Bits and Bites AHC Conference Room Little Rock</i>
<i>April 27</i>	<i>"Fought in earnest" Exhibit Fort Lincoln Freedom Fest Prairie County Community Center DeValls Bluff</i>
<i>Through May</i>	<i>"African American Legislators" Exhibit Eddie May Herron Museum Center Pocahontas</i>
<i>May 2-14</i>	<i>"Fought in earnest" Exhibit Faulkner County Library Conway</i>
<i>May 2-4</i>	<i>Booth Pioneer Days Garland Country Fairgrounds Hot Springs</i>
<i>May 2</i>	<i>Presentation Arkansas Pioneers Association Fletcher Library Little Rock</i>
<i>May 4</i>	<i>Presentation Ozark Hellbender & Founders Day Pocahontas</i>
<i>May 16</i>	<i>BHAC Meeting AHC Conference Room Little Rock</i>
<i>May 21-27</i>	<i>"Fought in earnest" Exhibit Ozark Folk Center Mountain View</i>

KNOW YOUR COMMISSIONERS

Arkansas History Commission

Ms. Dorothy Boulden, El Dorado

Dr. Ray Granade, Arkadelphia

Dr. Ruth Hawkins, Jonesboro

Dr. Robert Sherer, Little Rock

Mr. Michael Lindsey, Fayetteville

Mr. Robert McCarley, Little Rock

Ms. Elizabeth Robbins, Hot Springs

Black History Commission of Arkansas

Mr. Marion Butler, Sherwood

Ms. Carla Coleman, Little Rock

Rev. Barry Dobson, El Dorado

Mr. James Lawson, Jacksonville

Ms. Joyce Gibson, Prescott

Dr. John W. Graves, Arkadelphia

Mr. Myron Jackson, Little Rock

News from NEARA

Most of us think of slaves' rights and Arkansas history as an oxymoron. During that time in our nations' history, slaves were not citizens and did not have legal rights or protections enjoyed by Americans of European ancestry. If enslaved persons committed crimes and were punished or executed for those crimes, Arkansas did not reimburse slave-owners for the loss. This practice could result in a substantial financial cost for the owner. Even in instances of violent crimes, owners might appeal to the courts to spare a slave from execution in order to protect their investment. That is just what happened to an Independence County slave named Austin in 1853.

Based on 1850 Census data, it appears that Austin was probably about 29 years old the year he killed Hiram Payne. According to the September 1853 Independence County Grand Jury indictment, on August 2, 1853, Austin and his owner, Benjamin Watson, were engaged in a "conversation" in which Austin was speaking disrespectfully to Watson. He allegedly was telling Watson that he was not going to be whipped, when Payne decided to intervene. Austin had been cutting roof poles and was holding an axe when Payne swung a pine plank with the intention of beating him for being disrespectful of his master. Austin blocked the blow with his left arm and swung the axe with his right – the blade of the axe lodging three inches into Payne's head. Payne died the following Saturday, August 6, from the injury.

Austin was tried, convicted, and sentenced to death for his crime. However, with the support of his owner, Austin's attorney appealed the conviction to the Arkansas Supreme Court. There, the judges ruled that Independence County had erred in not allowing Watson to testify on behalf of his slave and that he should have a new trial. Austin's attorney immediately requested and was granted a change of venue from the Supreme Court. The trial was to be conducted in nearby Lawrence County rather than returning to Independence County.

The retrial took place in May 1854 at Smithville. Watson was allowed to testify in this new trial, where the argument was made that Austin was guilty of no more than manslaughter, certainly not premeditated murder. Despite the best efforts of his owner and attorney, once again, Austin was found guilty of murder. He was sentenced to be hanged on June 9, 1854 "at some convenient or suitable place...between the hours of ten o'clock (sic) in the forenoon and three o'clock in the afternoon."

Although Austin was to be hanged, there is no recorded confirmation the sentence was carried out. However, there is no evidence that he escaped hanging either. While one might wish the outcome had been different, that an argument for self-defense would have held up, at that time and place the result was as expected. What makes the case extraordinary in the history of this area is that Austin was able to garner the support of his owner and the judicial system to challenge his fate.

According to Dr. George Lankford, past president of the Independence County Historical Society and author of numerous books and articles, there was no information about the case in Independence County. This case, as with so many in our collections, represents new territory for research on life in northeast Arkansas.

History Bits and Bites April 26

Want to find your WWI ancestors or know more about their service in the Great War? Then don't miss Brian Irby's presentation on Arkansas's Doughboys for the April 26 Bits and Bites program. Irby, Library Technician with the History Commission will also include an overview of the AHC's extensive WWI poster and photograph collection.

A monthly lunch program, Bits and Bites is held the last Friday of each month, beginning at 12 noon in the AHC conference room on the second floor of One Capitol Mall. The program is free, but registration is requested. Bring your lunch and a drink and join us for this interesting look at Arkansans in WWI.

*Register for
"History Bits
and Bites"
[here.](#)*

*Registration
deadline:
April 24th*

News from SARA

Arkansas has a very active Civil War Sesquicentennial Commission to commemorate the 150th anniversary of that pivotal event in our nation's and state's history. We are now nearing the midway point of the Sesquicentennial which began in 2011 and will continue to 2015, with multiple events and activities planned to run through 2015. Archives and museums across the state are highlighting items in their collections that tell the story of Arkansans in the war. SARA's collections feature numerous personal accounts of the war, but none as poignant as James Tillman Kidd's memoir.

Kidd (1837-1917) of Spring Hill wrote of his experience in the bloodiest war in American history. He penned it many years after his war experience, and the memoir covers the period of his military service from March 18th 1862, until May 29th, 1865. Many died in the Civil War. Some survived the war by only a few years, some were amputees, and others lived out their lives with their health broken. Kidd was one of the more fortunate.

He begins with these words: "On May 18th, 1862, I left Washington, Hempstead County, Ark., in Capt. Jones' Company, composed of 72 enlisted men, 3 lieutenants, 3 sergeants, 4 corporals, making 83 all told, of which number 6 are alive today, from Washington to Arkadelphia, from Arkadelphia to Little Rock thence to DeValls Bluff. Were organized, sworn up and formed the 20th Ark., CSA Volunteers for one year."

The one year stretches into three. Kidd continues to recount his experiences in Tennessee and in Mississippi in the campaign around Corinth, at Champion Hill, and in the Vicksburg campaign. Taken prisoner at Vicksburg, he manages to escape and make his way back to Arkansas where he fights in the Red River Campaign against General Steele and the Camden Expedition. Weary of war and anxious to reunite with his wife and family, Kidd concludes his account with a description of the latter days of the war and the dedication of his memoir to his family:

"I was sick of war and saw a chance to get a rest. They passed an act in the C.S.A. Congress allowing a man 60 days furlough to put in a boy under 18 years. I hired a boy, gave him \$1,000.00 in C.S.A. money and \$10.00 in gold, got my furlough and went home. I stayed there until General Lee surrendered. I then went back to see what would be done. I found the army melting away. General Smith [Kirby Smith—Commander of the Trans-Mississippi] wanted the troops to go with him to Mexico but very few went. At Tillar, Texas, they gave all hands furloughs just some showing so as to not be called a deserter. There my soldiering ended, Thank God.

I could have extended this much further. I have not said anything about all the men who were shot for desertion, seven, at Tupelo, three at Camden, and seven at Lewisville. I thought it might be unpleasant to you.

I hope this will give you some reading and some pleasure; I hope so, for I had but little pleasure during the time. I dedicate this to Bonner P. Kidd and family, also to the rest of the Children."



The Kidd Family, circa 1914. J.T. Kidd shown on back row, second from right.

J. T. Kidd

Hope, Arkansas

J. T. Kidd returned to his wife Jane after the war. They farmed and raised a large family near Spring Hill, Arkansas. Kidd died in 1917 and is buried in the Anderson Cemetery south of Spring Hill with his wife and other family members. A copy of this memoir was donated to SARA in 1982 by Nedra McKelvey. Members of the Kidd family still live in Hempstead County, Arkansas.

Memoirs like this one give us a personal glimpse into past events. SARA is publishing the full transcript of Kidd's memoir in installments in the Hope Star over the next few weeks. Kidd's words resonate today as we commemorate this crucial event.

Spring Exhibit Locations

The AHC's traveling exhibits are covering the state this spring from the Delta byways through the Arkansas River Valley, and to the foothills of the Ozarks. Be sure to make your plans to visit these exhibits in your area!

"Fought in earnest" will be in Helena-West Helena, DeValls Bluff, Conway and Mountain View during the months of April and May. The Eddie May Herron Museum in Pocahontas will host the "African-American Legislators" exhibit during the month of May. For specific locations and dates, see the events

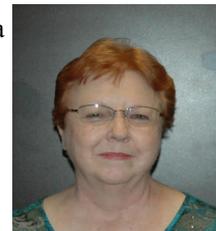


calendar above or email julienne.crawford@arkansas.gov for more information.

**Mark the 150th
Anniversary of the
Civil War by reserving
"Fought in earnest"
for your site
today!**

The AHC Team

Gail Martin is one of those rare individuals who turned a volunteer position into a full-time vocation. Martin first volunteered to work at the Southwest Arkansas Regional Archives in 1988 where the late Mary Medearis trained her to process simple files and answer research inquiries. After a ten-year stint as a part-time employee, Martin began working at the archives full-time in 2002. She currently holds the title of Administrative Assistant III, but anyone who knows Gail, knows she's the heart and soul of SARA.



Gail has called southwest Arkansas her home, except for five years as a youngster, when her family lived in Dallas, TX. She was born in Magnolia, lived in Waldo, (Columbia County) for most of her childhood and has spent her adult life in Hope. Martin's grandfather's family was in the Waldo area by 1825, so much of her interest in Arkansas history focuses on that area and time period. Martin joined the USAF after high school and worked in reconnaissance - in her words, "to keep an eye on the Commies."

Historic photographs are Gail's specialty area of interest. "Photographs are like frozen moments of time in people's lives; I always wonder what they were thinking at the moment the photo was taken," she stated.

"Gail's years of experience at SARA make her uniquely qualified to provide top-notch assistance to patrons and those needing information about SARA's collections," stated Jane Wilkerson, interim AHC Director. Her knowledge of SARA's holdings is so impressive and it benefits the whole Commission," she continued.

Martin's hobbies include spending time with her seven grandchildren, gardening and reading.

**ONE CAPITOL
MALL
ROOM 2B-215
LITTLE ROCK,
ARKANSAS
72201**

**Arkansas
Records Catalog**
ark-cat.com

WWW.ARK-IVES.COM



**PHONE:
501.682.6900**

**EMAIL:
[STATE.ARCHIVES
@ARKANSAS.GOV](mailto:STATE.ARCHIVES@ARKANSAS.GOV)**

To subscribe, please [click here](#).

To remove your name from our mailing list, please [click here](#).

Questions or comments? E-mail us at state.archives@arkansas.gov or call 501.682.6900