Arkansas History Commission News

Arkansas's State Archives

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AHC Website Named in 2012 Top Websites

FamilyTree magazine, one of the top genealogy magazines in the United States, has named the Arkansas History Commission's website, www.ark-ives.com, as one of its "101 Best Genealogy Websites."

The magazine ranked websites in 13 different categories with www.ark-ives.com taking top honors in the "Midwestern US Genealogy" category. It is the only website in Arkansas recognized for this honor.

Calling it a "gorgeous site," the magazine went on to praise the website's content, including the one-stop search of county records. 2012 marks the third year in a row that the AHC's website merited inclusion on *FamilyTree's* "Best of The Web" yearly awards. The listing of all the winning websites can be found at http://www.familytreemagazine.com/article/101-best-websites-2012.

New Reproduction Order Forms Effective December 1

Beginning December 1, 2012, new order forms for photocopies will go into use for reproduction services requested from the Arkansas History Commission. The new forms are available online at http://www.ark-ives.com/research/order_forms.aspx.

The restructured forms make the ordering process easier for patrons to request copies of county records, newspaper articles, manuscript material, pension records, military records, microfilm rolls, and photographs from the Commission's holdings. In particular, the photograph order form is much simpler and more straightforward than the previous document.

The new pricing schedule reflects changes in costs due to fluctuating supply costs for printing of different formats. Most charges remain the same, with decreasing costs for newspaper article copies and increased costs for microfilm rolls. For example, patrons may now order a single newspaper article for $5, the previous minimum charge was $10.

From the Director

Each month I am always pleased and quite frankly, a bit surprised by the number of events listed in the "Bringing the AHC To You" calendar. I am extremely proud of the AHC staff and their work, not only on-site at each of our locations, but their efforts to be "out and about" to meet with you at various events all across our state.

"Fought in earnest," our traveling Civil War exhibit, continues to be extremely popular, showing at three different venues this month. You will have plenty of opportunities to view this exhibit during the Civil War Sesquicentennial.

As the year comes to a close, we at the Commission will say good-bye to Paula Taylor, who is retiring at the end of November. In her eighteen years at the Commission, Paula has done great work to process several large collections and help untold numbers of patrons with their research projects. She certainly will be missed, and all of us at the Commission wish her the best as she starts on a new life adventure.

With the holidays quickly approaching, I encourage you to consider giving our publications as presents for those Arkansas history buffs on your list. Both *Documenting Arkansas: The Civil War 1861-1865*, and *The Journal of Captain Henry Brockman* are in-stock and can be purchased on-line here.

Bits and Bites this month focuses on our web resources. Bring your leftover turkey sandwich and join us on November 30 to learn how to fully utilize all the great information at your fingertips!

From all of us at the Commission, Happy Thanksgiving to you and your family!

BRINGING THE AHC TO YOU

Through November 15	*"Archives in Motion: There and Back Again"* *Exhibit* *Arkansas State Capitol, First Floor Rotunda* *Little Rock*
November 3	*Booth* *Black Rock Pioneer Days* *Black Rock*
	1861 Constitution Display *Civil War Days* *Historic Washington State Park* *Washington*
Through November 5	*"Fought in earnest"* *Exhibit* *Historic Washington State Park* *Washington*
November 6	*Presentation* *"1940 Census"* *Clark County Historical Society* *Arkadelphia*
November 8-20	*"Fought in earnest"* *Exhibit* *Arkansas State Library* *Little Rock*
November 10	*Meeting* *Black History Commission of Arkansas* *Arkansas History Commission* *Little Rock*
November 12	***AHC, NEARA, SARA Closed*** ***Veterans Day Holiday***
November 17	*Booth* *Cemetery Resource Fair* *Trinity Episcopal Church* *Little Rock*
	Presentation *Committee of 100 Meeting* *Ozark Folk Center* *Mountain View*
November 22-24	***AHC, NEARA, SARA Closed*** ***Thanksgiving Holiday***
November 29-December 2	*"Fought in earnest"* *Exhibit* *Prairie Grove Battlefield State Park* *Prairie Grove*
November 30	*History Bits and Bites* *"AHC Resources at Your Fingertips"* *Arkansas History Commission* *Little Rock*

News from NEARA

Sometimes a bit of information can send us on a journey of discovery. Two 1821 burglary indictments contained in the Lawrence County Collection at NEARA against John Johnson led to such a journey.

John Johnson is referred to in the documents as a "Mulotto" man, meaning he is of mixed African American and white ancestry. To tell the story as it unfolded, we begin near the end…with the court records.

In November 1821, Johnson was indicted by the Grand Jury for two burglaries. One charge claimed that "John Johnson, a man of color in Spring River Township…with force and arms at…the storehouse of James L. Houston did break and enter with intentions of stealing...carry away a large sum of money." In the other case, the Grand Jury found that, "John Johnson, a man of color in Spring River Township…with force and arms…the office of Henry Sanford feloniously and burgloriously (sic) did break and enter with the intention of stealing…and did carry away a large sum of money."

On December 4, 1821, Johnson pled guilty to both charges. As a punishment for the two crimes, Johnson's sentence was to "be whipped publicly four stripes on his bare back between the hours of four and five oclock (sic) this morning" and "be sold by the coroner within thirty days on a credit of twelve months."

Curiously, the judgment in both cases shows the case as United States vs. John Johnson, a Mulatto slave. There was no mention in the judgment of an owner, no indication that anyone's property was on trial, nothing more to support slave status. In the indictments, however, the phrase "owned by Joseph Hardin" had been written in, and then crossed out, following the description of "a man of color." This begged the question, was he actually a free man of color, or was he a slave owned by someone not referenced in the judgment? The quest begins.

On the surface, the story of John Johnson seems to be not much different than of any slave caught breaking the law. However, there are many oddities contained in the records that must be addressed.

When property is sold, the county sheriff typically conducted these auctions. Why, then, does the judgment for each case call for the auction to be held by the county coroner? This becomes even more questionable when we consider that the winning bidder, in fact, the only bidder, was Joseph Hardin, the county sheriff. At a time when slave values were typically more, Hardin purchased Johnson for the bargain price of $100.

The question remains – was John Johnson a free man sold into bondage or was he a slave being sold with no regard to ownership? The answers lie in county records dated just a few months prior to the indictment. On October 20, 1820, John Johnson signed an indenture with St. Genevieve County, Missouri Territory resident John Kinnison. In that contract, Johnson agrees to work for Kinnison in the "capacity of slave or servant" for a term of 20 years in exchange for an up-front payment of $400. One could only guess at his motives. Perhaps Johnson had a family to support and this was his way of ensuring their security. Regardless, he was a free man engaging in a long-term business contract. The next day, Kinnison sells his contract to Lawrence County, Arkansas Territory sheriff Joseph Hardin. Among the witnesses to both transactions is James M. Kuykendall – the county coroner who "sold" Johnson at public auction. In addition to being county coroner, Kuykendall was also deputy sheriff and, following Hardin's death in 1826, he ascended to that office. There are no slave assets included in the Hardin probate.

John Johnson was a free man. Although an indentured servant with limited freedom, he was not a slave until he was sold in to slavery in 1821 on charges that still seem a bit thin and under circumstances that still seem contrived by some very powerful white men in Lawrence County.

Know your Commissioners

Arkansas History Commission

Ms. Dorathy Boulden, El Dorado
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

Mr. Marion Butler, Sherwood
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

Commissioner Spotlight

Newly appointed to the Black History Commission of Arkansas, Joyce Gibson is a native of Dumas, a retired Home Economics teacher, and former Nevada County Librarian. She currently lives in Prescott where she is active in her church, Kiwanis, and the Nevada County Depot and Museum board.

"Joyce brings a great deal of educational and community service experience to the Black History Commisison that will provide a fresh perspective," stated Dr. Richter. She continued; "I look forward to working with her to promote Arkansas's African-American heritage."

News from SARA

The Robert B. Walz Collection of photos is one of the stars in the crown of the Southwest Arkansas Regional Archives (SARA). With some 2500 to 3000 photos and negatives, it is the largest single collection of photos at SARA. Recently SARA received approximately 88 5x7" glass negatives from the early 1900s and five other acetate negatives in varying sizes from Southern Arkansas University.

The glass negatives were made by the Stanley Company and its successor Eastman Kodak headquartered in Rochester, NY., and by the Hammer Dry Plate Company in St. Louis, Missouri. All the plates are still in their original boxes. All had been collected by Robert B. Walz in the last twenty years of his life.

Dr. Walz was professor of history for many years at South Arkansas University in Magnolia. He taught American History to thousands over the years. His wife Curtistine was executive secretary to then President Imon Bruce in the 1960s.

A native of Richmond in Little River County, Robert B. Walz (1918-1988) studied at Magnolia A&M, got his B. A. at Henderson State College in 1941, did graduate work at LSU and served in the U. S. Army Air Corps during World War II. He eventually completed his Ph.D. at the University of Texas at Austin in 1958. Dr. Walz returned to teach at his old college in Magnolia in 1958 where he spent the rest of his career. He began collecting photos in 1968 to preserve the history of southwest Arkansas, the region of his birth and to whose history he was devoted.

The photograph with this article is illustrative of Dr. Walz's desire to document the activities of ordinary people. This example of a peddler with his Rawleigh products wagon is from the Shover Springs area in Hempstead County. Cummings Byers, the peddler, traded his products for chickens and eggs when cash money was not available and traveled around to his rural clientele selling spices, flavorings, herbal cures, sewing needs, food stuffs and a variety of items.

Dailey Cummings Byers was born in Nevada County in 1877 to J. J. and Charlotte Byers. His father was a farmer and prominent leader in the Baptist Church in the region. By the time he married Rachel Ward on March 12, 1899, he was living in Shover Springs near Hope. He farmed and peddled, building the wagon seen in this picture. He used the staff with the crooked neck to catch the chickens that he took in trade.

He and his wife were the parents of nine children. Cummings died on January 4, 1928, at the age of 50. Many of the family members are buried in the Shover Springs Cemetery just southeast of Hope.

Orie Byers, a son of Rachel and Cummings, would later serve as county judge of Hempstead County from 1961 through 1966. Ellen Byers Smith gave this picture of her father to Robert Walz for copying and enlargement. It is one of many in this large collection that chronicles the lives of ordinary working people in southwest Arkansas.

Paula Taylor Retires

Paula Kyzer Taylor, an 18 year veteran of the History Commission is retiring at the end of November and moving to Oceanside, California, near San Diego. "I will miss my family and friends here in Arkansas, but am looking forward to entering this new phase of my life," she stated. Taylor lived in northern California in her early adult years and has many friends in the area.

"Paula's cheerful disposition and her expertise of our collections will be missed," said Dr. Richter. "Her work on the WPA records and the George Rose papers are just two examples of collections she has processed that will benefit the Commission for years to come. All of us at the AHC wish her the best as she embarks on a new adventure," she continued.

Taylor's last day with the Commission is November 30. Please come by to wish her well!

November Locations for "Fought in earnest"

As the holidays approach, mark your calendars and take your family and friends to view "Fought in earnest," the AHC traveling Civil War exhibit. Three different locations will host the exhibit in November - Historic Washington State Park, the Arkansas State Library, and Prairie Grove Battlefield State Park.

November 5 is the last day to see the exhibit at Historic Washington before it moves to central Arkansas at the Arkansas State Library from November 8-20. The exhibit then moves north to Prairie Grove Battlefield State Park where it will be on display from November 29-December 2. Locations across Arkansas will host the exhibit during the Civil War Sesquicentennial giving all Arkansans a chance to learn about our state's role in the Civil War.

Mark the 150th

Anniversary of the Civil War by <u>reserving</u>

"Fought in earnest" for your site

today!

History Bits and Bites - November 30

The AHC's resources are just a click away, but do you know how to access records from each section of our website? November's Bits and Bites will teach you how to do just that!

Archival Manager Mary Dunn will present "AHC Resources at Your Fingertips" November 30 from 12 - 1 p.m. in the AHC conference room on the second floor of the Big Mac Building. Parking is available in the Wolfe Street lot and the program is free. Along with website resources, Dunn will present information about how to order photocopies online and fun ways to keep up with current projects and events at the Commission.

The presentation is free, but registration is required. As always, bring your lunch and a drink to join us for this informative program.

Register for "History Bits and Bites" <u>here</u>.

Registration deadline:

November 29

The AHC Team

November's employee spotlight focuses on Archival Manager Jane Wilkerson. Since 2001, Jane has served in various capacities at the AHC and currently oversees the Research Room and collections management.

Jane received both her B.A. in History and M.A. in Public History from UALR. A native of Harrison, she loves genealogy and art. She holds a minor in Studio Art and enjoys drawing in her spare time. Wilkerson feeds her passion for genealogy by serving on the Arkansas Genealogical Society's Board of Directors.

Expressing that "old stuff is cool," Wilkerson says that the most enjoyable part of her work at the commission is looking at the handwritten documents of long ago, admiring the beautiful penmanship and the challenge of reading each unique script. "Writing styles really let the personality of the individual come alive," she stated.

Her least favorite task? "Leaving research undone - I want to find all the answers!" she exclaimed.

"Jane is a valuable asset to the Commission. Her management of our collections, research room, and acquisitions is an integral part of our services to our patrons," said Dr. Richter. "Jane handles a large workload with tenacity, focus and a good sense of humor," she continued.

Wilkerson appreciates the growth opportunities she has experienced at the Commission. Her ultimate dream for the Commission? "A new facility, with room to spare for collections growth." Spoken like a true collections manager!

Collections Spotlight

Curious to know what was happening during the Civil War in Arkansas? The AHC's Document a Day project contains letters, records, programs, handbills, etchings, military board minutes, articles, and other archival documents for each day of the War.

Found on the bottom of our homepage, www.ark-ives.com, the feature will run through the duration of the 150th anniversary of the Civil War in Arkansas.

The feature is searchable by date and topic. Be sure to visit this section of our website to view these firsthand accounts of life in Civil War Arkansas.

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