

Newsletter

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AHC Takes Visitors “Across the Bayou”

Linda McDowell

Arkansas History Commission



Grady resident Amy Lewis, ca. 1938. Arkansas History Commission/Cornelia Kirkley Foster, photographer

While you're in Little Rock for the Arkansas Historical Association annual conference, I hope you will drop by the Arkansas History Commission and take a look at our new photograph exhibit, *Across the Bayou: The African American Community of Grady, Arkansas*. Featuring 40 photos taken by Grady resident Cornelia Kirkley Foster during the Depression, the exhibit offers rare scenes of African Americans engaged in the everyday world of agriculture, education, domestic life, business and religion. Artifacts from the History Commission's museum collection help tell the story.

Located on the Choctaw Bayou in southeast Arkansas's Lincoln County, Grady is about 25 miles south of Pine Bluff, near the neighboring towns of Gould and Varner. Grady is home to a relatively large African American community. The town's population numbered about 500 in the 1930s; it remains about that size today.

Cornelia Kirkley Foster moved to Grady with her parents in 1910. During the 1930s, she spent much of her time documenting African American life in Grady, taking dozens of pictures and collecting biographical information about the people she photographed. Cornelia Foster later moved to Camden, where she owned Foster's Business School. She died in Camden in 1971.

Cornelia Foster's photos and original manuscript stayed tucked away in a cedar chest until the manuscript was recently donated to the Arkansas History Commission by her son, W.F. Foster of Pine Bluff. Mr. Foster remembers his mother as a very talented artist and a musician. He does not know how or why she became interested in the project of photographing and collecting biographical information of Grady's black residents, except to say that "everyone in the community seemed like family."

Cornelia Kirkley Foster documented life in Grady at a time when African Americans there owned a variety of businesses such as

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Have you registered yet?

By now you should have received your 2007 AHA annual conference registration packet, and if you have looked it over (you have looked it over, haven't you?) you surely know that this year's conference promises to be one of the best ever. As a way to whet your conference appetite, here's a few highlights:

- Thirty sessions presented by speakers from across the country
- Keynote speech by former U. S. Senator Dale Bumpers
- Evening receptions—three of them!
- Tours of Clinton Presidential Library and Central High School
- Awards banquet in the Clinton Library Presidential Ballroom
- A chance to climb aboard the *USS Razorback* submarine

If you haven't sent in your registration yet, do it right now! The deadline is April 13. Questions? Contact Donna Ludlow, AHA business manager, at 479/575-5884; dludlow@uark.edu.



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Grady

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stores, cafes, dance halls, molasses mills and auto repair stations. Church and religion played a major role in the community where ministers preached from the pulpit and gifted musicians and choirs played and sang old hymns. Other scenes of schools, teachers, farm life and community events weave a wonderful story of African American life in a small rural community.

The style in which Foster gathered her material closely resembles the work of the Federal Writers' Project. She collected information about several former slaves not identified or interviewed for the WPA's Arkansas Slave Narratives project. One ex-slave, Amy Lewis, was born in South Carolina in 1850 and died in 1944. Amy's descendants in Grady told Foster of Amy being sold away from her family in South Carolina at the age of eight years old, with her name changed to keep her family from tracing her. After Amy Lewis was freed at age 15, she was sent to Arkansas Post to work as a farm laborer. It was there that she married and started a family.



Katie Johnson stands in her wedding gown as Emogene Carthan holds the train. *Arkansas History Commission/Cornelia Kirkley Foster, photographer*

W. F. Foster published his mother's unedited manuscript entitled *Across the Horizon* in 2006. In the book's foreword, Foster points out that his mother's manuscript was "written in a different time and world than we now know." Thanks to the Foster family, we have a unique opportunity to look back at life "across the bayou" in Grady, Arkansas.

After you view the exhibit (which is on display through June), stop by and take a look at the incredible renovations made in recent months to the History Commission research room, including open book stacks, a new exhibit area, and an archival viewing room.

The Arkansas History Commission, located on the second floor of One Capitol Mall in Little Rock, is open Monday through Saturday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. For more information, call 501-682-6900.

Linda McDowell is the Arkansas History Commission's coordinator of African American history.



Grady baseball team. *Arkansas History Commission/Cornelia Kirkley Foster, photographer*

If These Walls Could Talk

Shay Hopper

Woodland Junior High School

This lesson plan is based on “Arkansas Listings in the National Register of Historic Places” by Elizabeth James published in the Winter 2006 edition of the *Arkansas Historic Quarterly*.

Overview and Background Information

Before reading the article, students will define the key terms that will help guide them through the activity.

Students will utilize resources identified in this lesson (books, websites, etc.) to create an overview of a registered historic building, home, monument etc., in or near their own community/county.

Individually, students will write a blurb on a selected property registered on the Arkansas or National listings. Students will offer a brief description of the property (community, county, designer/architect, architectural style, purpose of structure, when registered, new or advanced technologies use in design or construction, etc.) and identify the historic significance or contribution. Students will give a brief, in-class oral presentation about their property.

Students need to incorporate the element of tourism in to their discussions as well. Suggest to them that many communities promote restored elements of their towns and counties to tourists. Why is this important? How does it create an identity?

Students also need to consider the idea of progress and think of the following “Big Picture” questions while reading:

- Is progress always positive?
- Why are people/societies/communities resistant to change?
- Is it easier to merely do away with places or buildings that are considered “old” rather than restoring or refurbishing them? Why?
- Why must individuals, a people, a society, a nation, a world make continual progress to survive and succeed?
- How can the “old” be incorporated with new and still serve a useful and valuable purpose? Explain using specific examples and details.

Finally, students will reflect on the value and importance of restoration and preservation of community buildings, homes and other structures, as well as the importance of “recycling” or the re-use of existing structures for modern-purposes instead of over-development and urban sprawl.

Arkansas State Frameworks

History/Social Studies

Strand 1: Time, Continuity, and Change

Content Standard 1. Students will demonstrate an understanding of historical chronology, concepts, and relationships.

TCC.1.2. Explore, interpret, analyze, and evaluate multiple types of primary and secondary sources to show how traditions help people maintain continuity and ties with the past.

TCC.1.4. Analyze how past decisions and events affect subsequent decisions throughout Arkansas’s history.

TCC 2.1. Explore and explain the technological changes in areas such as agriculture, arts, communication, languages, literature, and transportation which affect Arkansas.

TCC.2.3. Use a variety of processes such as reading, writing, listening, speaking, debating, and role-playing to demonstrate continuity and change.

Strand 2: People, Places, and Environments

Content Standard 1. Students will demonstrate an understanding that people, cultures, and systems are connected and that similarities and differences exist among them.

PPE.1.1. Demonstrate an understanding that one’s identity is connected to ideals and traditions from the past and other cultures through activities such as role-playing and researching genealogy and other primary sources.

PPE 1.3. Examine and explain belief systems with respect to political, social, and aesthetic activities that make up Arkansas traditions.

Strand 3: Production, Distribution, and Consumption

Content Standard 1. Students will demonstrate an understanding of the economy of Arkansas and its relationship with other economies.

Research and describe elements in Arkansas’s economy tourism, recreation, agriculture, and natural resources.

Strand 4: Power, Authority, and Governance

Content Standard 1. Students will demonstrate an understanding of our national, state, and local government and of the rights and responsibilities of participating in a democratic society within Arkansas.

PAG 1.2. Explain the historical and current impact of American public policy on Arkansas’ political, racial, religious, geographic, ethnic, economic, and linguistic diversity.

Strand 5: Social Science Processes and Skills

Content Standard 1: Students will demonstrate critical thinking skills through research, reading, writing, speaking, listening, and problem solving using the tools of social sciences.

SSPS 1.1. Identify primary and secondary and sources.

SSPS 1.2. Analyze artifacts, oral histories, photographs, landmarks, literature, and the arts to understand Arkansas' culture by using a variety of methods (e.g., simulations, field studies, library research, debates, presentations, role playing, projects, portfolios, synthesis, etc.).

SSPS 1.4. Develop creative and critical thinking skills.

Objectives

Students will examine, determine, and understand the purpose and appreciate the meaning of a home, building, statue, etc., listing on the National or State Registers of Historic Places.

Students will evaluate how this designation benefits an entity, as well as the community in which it is located.

Students will be exposed to historical architecture and the "recycling" of buildings and properties.

Students will consider the positive and negative aspects of progress and discuss in a collaborative setting.

Students will establish the importance of historic places in a community as contributors to tourism and the economy.

Suggested Levels

Grades 6 – 9

Time Frame

Lesson plan can be used at any point in the Arkansas History curriculum, however, during the study of the late 19th century or anytime during the study of the 20th and 21st centuries is suggested.

Three to four, 50-minute class periods. Parts of the lesson will be done individually, and others in cooperative learning settings, as well as in the classroom, computer lab and/or library.

Materials Needed

Copies of the article, "Arkansas Listings in the National Register of Historic Places," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, Winter 2006.

Ivy, Robert Adams, Jr., *Fay Jones*. New York: McGraw Hill, 2001.

Jones, E. Fay, *Outside the Pale*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1999.

Internet, library, and computer access

arkansaspreservation.org
(Arkansas Historic Preservation Program)

cr.nps.gov/nr/
(National Register of Historic Places)

encyclopediaofarkansas.com
(Encyclopedia of AR History & Culture)

greatbuildings.com/architects/Fay_Jones.html
(Great Buildings Architects)

greatbuildings.com/architects/Edward_D._Stone.html
(Great Buildings Architects)

hgtv.com/hgtv/shows_hrezd/
(HGTV – Rezoned)

hgtv.com/hgtv/shows_ram
(HGTV – Restore America)

hgtv.com/hgtv/shows_wct
(HGTV – If These Walls Could Talk)

libinfo.uark.edu/SpecialCollections/manuscripts/FayJones/
(U A Special Collections - Jones)

thorncrown.com
(Thorncrown Chapel)

Notebook paper and pens/pencils, poster board, markers, scissors, gluestick, cardstock

Laptop w/ LCD projector

Terms

conventional, frieze, monolithic, mundane, parapet, pediment, pilaster

People to Know

E. Fay Jones, Edward Durrell Stone

Procedure

1. BACKGROUND READING & DISCUSSION. Have each student silently read the article, "Arkansas Listings in the National Register of Historic Places," by Elizabeth James. After all students have completed reading the article, discuss overall themes/key facts from the article and list on board.
2. RESEARCH. Assign individual student tasks:
 - a. every student will research and define each key term.
 - b. selected students will research and highlight Arkansas or regional US buildings or monuments listed on the historical registers (these can be teacher assigned, random assignment [drawn from a hat] or student selected.
 - c. selected students will research E. Fay Jones and Edward Durrell Stone, Arkansas's most well-known architects
3. Each student will create a poster, PowerPoint, a 3-D or show mounted photos of their assigned historic building or Arkansas architect.
4. GROUP DISCUSSION and PRESENTATIONS. Each student will present a brief synopsis, accompanied by a visual aid (poster, PowerPoint, photos, etc.) to the class of what was learned about their buildings or architects from the individual research assignments listed above. Students in the "audience" will be expected to take notes during other presentations.
5. DISPLAY. Students work as a whole to create a classroom display (bulletin board, hallway display, library, etc.) to

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showcase and highlight their research.

Evaluation

Students will write an individual reflection (discussion paragraph) on Big Picture/Essential Questions:

- a. Is progress necessary? Is preservation necessary? Why or why not? Use specific examples in your discussion
- b. Why is it critical for citizens to work to preserve historic properties, homes, building, monuments, and so on?
- c. In your opinion, what is the best example of a preserved building or monument and why?

Additionally, students can be tested on key terms listed above and/or on facts recorded during others' presentations. The teacher can evaluate accuracy and effort on research presentations as well.

Extensions

Periodically quiz students to see if they have noticed any historical register plaques or signs around their local community or in their travels. Remind them that history is all around us.

After working for numerous years as a corporate educator in the optometric field and a medical marketing designer, Shay Elizabeth Hopper is enjoying her "second career" as an 8th grade Arkansas History, 8th grade Introduction to Journalism and 9th grade Yearbook teacher at Woodland Junior High School in Fayetteville. Shay is a board member of the Arkansas Council of Social Studies, and a member of the National Council for Social Studies, the National Council for History Education, the Journalism Educators Association and the Junior League of Northwest Arkansas. Shay also serves as the teacher consultant/author for the University of Arkansas Press in the revision of the textbook, An Arkansas History for Young People.

Commemorating 50 Years Later

Spirit Trickey

Central High School National Historic Site

This is an exciting year for Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site, as the construction of a new Visitor Center steadily moves forward, and the 50th anniversary of the 1957 desegregation crisis at Central High School approaches.

Central High School became the quintessential symbol of school desegregation resistance in 1957, as Governor Orval Faubus ordered National Guardsmen to surround the school and prevent nine black students, later known as the Little Rock Nine, from entering the school on September 4, 1957. Television, then a brand new medium, newspapers and radio catapulted the images of well dressed black teenagers being turned away from Central High School, and hundreds of jeering white protesters, into living rooms around the world.

In response, President Dwight D. Eisenhower called in the U.S. Army's 101st Airborne Division, which consisted of 1200 soldiers from Fort Campbell, Kentucky. He also federalized the

Arkansas National Guard to ensure the safety of the Little Rock Nine and keep the peace. In a televised speech Eisenhower asserted, "Mob rule cannot be allowed to override the decision of our courts." Melba Pattillo, Elizabeth Eckford, Ernest Green, Gloria Ray, Carlotta Walls, Terrence Roberts, Jefferson Thomas, Minnijean Brown and Thelma Mothershed completed their first day of classes on September 25, 1957 under the protection of the 101st Airborne.

Throughout the year, the nine students braved death threats, name calling, and physical harassment. Also, many of their parents suffered economic retaliation as they jobs were threatened, and some lost. The nine students persevered maintaining non-violence as a defense mechanism. Ernest Green was the first black student to graduate from the formally all white Central High School in May, 1958.

All public high schools in Little Rock were closed during the 1957-58 school year, as the citizens of the city voted to delay desegregation. This year became known as the "Lost Year." An organized group of concerned white women, called the "Women's Emergency Committee

to Reopen the Schools" (WEC) worked diligently to get the schools reopened the following year. They were successful and the schools were reopened in 1959, and have been functioning ever since.

In 1998 Central High School was designated a National Historic Site, joining 390 units of the National Park Service nation wide. "The fact that this site is a National Historic Site is recognition that what happened here changed our nation, ultimately for the better. It forced us to look at what was going on here and say, that's not right," said Laura Miller, Chief of Interpretation and Cultural Resources at the site. "National Parks preserve places because they're scenic, beautiful, protect fragile ecosystems or because they're the most significant sites in the country."

When the current visitor center, which is housed in a historic Mobil gas station, first opened in 1997 there were only about 750 sq. feet of exhibit space. "Those involved had to make hard decisions as to how to tell the story in the space, and what we had to leave out," said Miller. "It was a very difficult process. But, it was just a

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starting point. We knew we wanted to do more, and do a better job of telling the story in the larger context.”

The new visitor center will have 3000 sq. ft. for exhibits, allowing for the more stories of the crisis and the overall civil rights movement. Other components of the exhibits include a multipurpose room to host more on-site programs, and expanded space for the site’s archive and artifact collection.

“The new visitor center will not only provide for enhanced learning opportunities, it will also function as a gateway to the neighborhood. This historic site is unique in that it includes a still-functioning high school, and is within a living neighborhood,” said Michael Madell, superintendent of the National Historic Site. “We want visitors to walk the sidewalks and to reflect on the events and emotions that filled the school and neighborhood just fifty years ago.”

Miller added, “The visitor center will put what happened in Little Rock in the context of the founding of the country, and within the larger civil rights movement.

‘We the people’ must include all of us, or it doesn’t include any of us.”

In September, the world will once again watch as the Little Rock Nine return to Little Rock to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the 1957 desegregation crisis at Central High School. Today, Central is a concrete testament of the legal elimination of segregation in education. It is the only functioning high school within the boundaries of a National Historic Site.

The formal dedication of the new visitor center is planned for the morning of Monday, September 24, 2007. The dedication will be part of a week-long series of events throughout the Little Rock community that will commemorate the 50th anniversary. Georgia Congressman John Lewis, who fought for civil rights in the movement, will join members of the Little Rock Nine as he delivers the keynote address.

Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site is located at 2125 Daisy L. Gatson Bates Drive, (across the street from Central High School). The visitor center is open from 9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Monday through Sunday. The park is closed on Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year’s Day. Admission is free.

For more information, call 501-374-1957; chsc_visitor_center@nps.gov.

Spirit Trickey is a park ranger at Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site.

Did You Know?

When it was built in 1927, the American Institute of Architects named Central High School “The Most Beautiful High School in America.”

— Central High School National Historic Site, www.nps.gov/chsc

Join the Arkansas Historical Association

Membership includes four issues of the *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* per year, as well as the Association’s newsletter.

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Send this form along with payment to:

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Downtown Grady, Arkansas, ca. 1938. Saturday nights and Sundays were busy in downtown Grady with locals gathered to socialize and shop. See story on page 1. *Arkansas History Commission/Cornelia Kirkley Foster, photographer*

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