



Arkansas Historical Association Newsletter

VOLUME 32, No. 1

SPRING 2015

West Memphis Hosts 74th Annual Conference, April 9-11

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The City of West Memphis will host the Annual Conference of the Arkansas Historical Association, April 9-11, 2015. This will be the first time the city has hosted the AHA.

This year's conference theme is "To Bind Up the Nation's Wounds." Sessions will focus on the final year of the Civil War in Arkansas and the struggle Arkansans faced to find healing amidst the suffering brought on by four years of conflict, and on other aspects of healing and health care in Arkansas's history. Highlights include:

Keynote Addresses: *Friday*—Dr. Sarah Hudson Scholle,



"Disparities in Health Care: How Far Have We Come?"

Saturday—Mark Christ, "More Ride with the Devil than Gone with the Wind: Commemorating Arkansas's Civil War"

Receptions: *Thursday*—Inclement Weather plan: Comfort Suites (850 Stephen Blvd.)

Friday—Southland Park's Starting Gate banquet room (1550 N.

The Wilson Company Power & Light Company Ice Plant (built ca. 1930), a National Register Property, in downtown West Memphis will be part of Saturday's Walks in History. tour

See CONFERENCE, page 2

Arkansas Collections Await Discovery in West Memphis and Memphis Archives

Several Mid-South libraries collect and maintain Arkansas related books and manuscripts. Your best bet for Arkansas records are profiled here.

The Forest Jenkins Family Room of the Woolfolk Library in Marion holds collections of books and manuscripts related to Crittenden County history. The library, located at 100 N. Currie St., is also near the Crittenden County Courthouse. A branch of the Crittenden County Library System, has a number of works by the library's namesake, Margaret Elizabeth Woolfolk. Woolfolk authored *A History of Marion* (1982) and *A History of Crittenden County, Arkansas* (1991). Other resources



The Forest Jenkins Family Room in the Woolfolk Library, Marion specializes in the history of Crittenden County.

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Ingram)

Banquet & Awards

Presentation:

Southland Park's Starting Gate banquet room (1550 N. Ingram)

Friday Bus

Tours: West Memphis and the Blues led by Dale Franklin (pre-registration required).

Tracing the Last Journey of the *Sultana* led by Jerry Potter (pre-registration required).

Saturday:

TWIN: The Collaborative Art of Terry and Jerry Lynn will be at the Donald W. Reynolds Center, Mid-South Community College (2000 W. Broadway). (Free, viewable during conference breaks on Saturday and following lunch).

Saturday Post-Conference Activities: Walks Through History, a bus tour of the busy West Memphis Commercial Historic District, led by Rachel Silva of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program. Departs at 1:30 p.m. from Magruder Hall, Mid-South Community College.

Great River Lodge Skeet Shoot. Skeet shooting at one of Crittenden County's newest hunting resorts (264 Looney Lane, Proctor, AR). \$35-\$30 per session and \$7 for each additional box of shells. Contact Cory Scarbrough, 870-514-6268 by April 8, to book a session. For more information about the venue, visit thegreatriverlodge.com.

Josh Williams of the Historic Washington State Park, served as chair of the annual conference committee. Committee members include Simon Hosken (local arrangements chair) of Arkansas State University; Susan Young (program chair) of Shiloh Museum of Ozark History; and Rachel Silva of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program.

Sponsors for the conference include: Arkansas Distributing Company, Butler Center for Arkansas Studies, City of West Memphis, Delta Ice, Eugene Woods Civic Center at RiverPac, Port of West Memphis, Mid-South Community College, Mind Over Data, Regions Bank, Southland Park, University of Arkansas Press, J. William Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences (UAF), and the West Memphis Advertising and Promotion Commission.

The conference is also supported through funds from the Arkansas Humanities Council and the National Endowment for the Humanities.



Wonder City Café, a mid-1930s building and former restaurant, will be part of Saturday's Walks in History tour.

Arkansas Historical Association

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Announcements and Upcoming Conferences

- The Arkansas Civil War Sesquicentennial Commission will hold “Let Freedom Ring!” events throughout the state on Tuesday, April 14 at 1:00 p.m. The event commemorates the Arkansas General Assembly’s ratification of the 13th Amendment to the United States Constitution abolishing slavery. At 1:00 p.m. museums, churches, schools, public buildings, and individuals are encouraged to ring a bell or bells thirteen times. The Commission will hold a bell-ringing event at that time on the steps of the State Capitol in Little Rock. For more information and a list of participants visit, <http://www.arkansascivilwar150.com>.
- The Arkansas History Commission, in honor of its 110th anniversary, will host an open house on April 27 from 10 a.m. until noon. On display in the History Commission’s research room will be some of the state’s most significant historical documents. Staff will also be available to share and discuss how the History Commission has been a vital part of preserving Arkansas history for well over a century. As part of its celebration, each Friday in April, between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m., the History Commission will host a digitization clinic in its conference room. Archivists will scan and save material for the public. For additional information on the Arkansas History Commission and these events, call 501-682-6900 or email state.archives@email.com.
- The Arkansas Genealogical Society with the Arkansas History Commission will host free workshop, “Beginning Genealogy: Climbing the First Branches of Your Family” on May 2 from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. in Room 171 of the Arkansas State Capitol. The AGS will also host a 2015 Fall Conference on October 2-3. The featured speaker will be genealogist, D. Joshua Taylor. For more information, check the Society’s website at <http://agsgenealogy.org>.
- Historic Washington State Park will host the 9th Annual Red River Heritage Symposium on July 25. The Symposium will focus on the beginning of Reconstruction in the Great Bend Region of the Red River. Teachers can receive up to six professional development hours. Register by July 22. Call 870-983-2684 or email HistoricWashington@arkansas.com for more information and costs.

- The Historic Preservation Alliance of Arkansas’s Fall Ramble will take place on November 7. The all-day bus tour will visit historic sites in southeast Arkansas associated with WW II. A Preservation Libations at the Lakeport Plantation will conclude the evening. For costs and other questions call 501-372-4757, email ayancey@preservearkansas.org or visit, <http://preservearkansas.org>.
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Taken in ca. 1948, this photograph from the Memphis *Commercial Appeal* morgue collection at the University of Memphis looks east from the Arkansas side of the Mississippi River toward Memphis. From left to right is the Harahan Railroad Bridge, the Frisco (railway) Bridge and, under construction, the Memphis-Arkansas Highway Bridge. *Courtesy of Preservation and Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Memphis.*

Join the Arkansas Historical Association

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

Membership Levels

- ☐ Individual, one year.....\$20
- ☐ Individual, two year.....\$35
- ☐ Family, one year.....\$30
- ☐ Family, two year.....\$45
- ☐ Foreign, one year.....\$30
- ☐ Student, one year.....\$15
- ☐ Contributing, one year.....\$50
- ☐ Sustaining, one year.....\$100
- ☐ Supporting, one year.....\$200
- ☐ Life Membership.....\$500
(payable over three years)
- ☐ Permanent Membership.....\$1000
(payable over five years)

One-Year Corporate/Business Memberships

- ☐ Sponsor.....\$100
- ☐ Patron.....\$500
- ☐ Benefactor.....\$1000

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Send this form along with payment to:

Arkansas Historical Association

History Department, Old Main 416

University of Arkansas

Fayetteville, AR 72701

Renewal and new memberships can be paid online using Paypal; visit the AHA website <http://arkansashistoricalassociation.org> and click "Membership."

Mid-South Archives, cont. from page 1

include scrapbooks, cemetery records, manuscript histories, and regional history books.

Memphis libraries also offer an interesting set of resources for Arkansas historians willing to cross the Mississippi River. The Memphis Public Library collects all things Memphis and Shelby County for its Memphis/Shelby County Research Room. They do not actively collect Arkansas material, but, due to proximity, Arkansas material has entered into the archive. Many images, maps, and all of its manuscript finding aids are available on [Dig Memphis](#), the library's digital archive. Wayne Dowdy, collections manager for the Memphis Room, says "a search for 'Arkansas' in Dig Memphis gives an accurate overview of our Arkansas holdings." Collections in the Memphis Room, located on the 4th floor of the Benjamin L. Hooks library, include the *Hallelujah!* Collection—primarily photographs related to King Vidor's 1929 film *Hallelujah*. The film featured an all black cast and was filmed on location in Memphis and Arkansas. In the collection are several images at the Wilson Plantation in Mississippi County.

The E. H. Porter Collection is another significant Arkansas-related collection at the Memphis Public Library. While president of the Memphis & St. Louis Railroad Company from the 1850s to the 1880s, Porter and his company had extensive business dealings in surrounding states, including Arkansas. The collection includes records related to one of

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Mid-South Archives, cont. from page 4

the company's largest projects—the construction of a levee system along the St. Francis River in eastern Arkansas in the 1870s.

On the Dig Memphis website, are hundreds of digital resources for Arkansas historians, including: Civil War maps of Arkansas counties from the Colton Greene Collection, images from the 2011 flood, clippings for the West Memphis Three, and all the finding aids to manuscripts in the Memphis Room. The Memphis Room maintains the same hours as the main library throughout the week—Monday through Thursday, 10 a.m.-8 p.m.; Friday & Saturday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Sunday, 1 p.m.-5 p.m.

Special Collections at the University of Memphis, located on campus on the 4th floor in the McWherter Library, is another archive with Arkansas related material. According to curator Ed Frank, the bulk of Special Collections' holdings are designated the "Mississippi Valley Collection." Frank describes the collection as "a multi-format regional history and culture collection" with considerable material--scholarly and popular, maps, photos and manuscript collections—related to eastern Arkansas.

In the MVC are the morgue files for two large Memphis newspapers that cover eastern Arkansas: the *Commercial Appeal* and the defunct *Memphis Press-Scimitar*. Both morgue files have good coverage from the 1930s through 1985. The *Press-Scimitar* morgue files, acquired in the mid-1980s, have extensive clippings and photographs originally organized and indexed by newspaper staff. The *Commercial Appeal* files are a recent acquisition, came unorganized, and now are mostly indexed by Special Collections staff.

Manuscripts in MVC devoted to Arkansas include: Arkansas State Bureau of Immigration Scrapbook with newspaper clipping from 1888; literary correspondence of Charlie May Simon; and the papers of the Socialist Party of Tennessee and Arkansas, and Southern Tenant Farmers' Union. Several Civil War manuscripts are owned as well: the James K. Ferguson Diary covers 1862-1863 for the Indiana-born junior officer of the 19th Arkansas Regiment (CS); the Griffin A. Stanton Journal covers 1862-1865, while he served in the 4th (later 15th) Illinois Cavalry and scouted eastern Arkansas; and the Vermillion and Kittredge Civil War Letters cover 1863-1865, while the two served in the 36th Iowa Infantry and saw extensive service in Arkansas, including at the Battle of Helena and during the Camden Expedition.

Visiting Special Collection at the University of Memphis does not require an appointment. During the academic term, Special Collections is open Monday through Thursday, 8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.; Fridays, 8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.; Sundays, 1:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. For questions, call 901-678-2210.



From the *Hallelujah!* Collection: King Vidor, director of *Hallelujah!*, and actress Fanny Belle deKnight pose on location in the fall of 1928 at the Wilson Plantation in Mississippi County, Arkansas. *Courtesy of Memphis and Shelby County Room, Memphis Public Library & Information.*



The Plantation Inn was a popular West Memphis lounge and Go-Go club from 1926 to 1965. Photographed here on March 18, 1966, shortly before the club was razed, Lois Graham, secretary for Berger Enterprises, is dressed in a toreador go-go outfit worn by the go-go girls at the nearby Toro lounge. This photograph is from the *Memphis Press-Scimitar* morgue file at the University of Memphis. *Courtesy of Preservation and Special Collections, University Libraries, University of Memphis.*