

The Ruffian

Vol. 37 No. 1 (Spring 2020)

Newsletter of the Arkansas Historical Association

Fearlessly grappling with all the latest history doin's pertinent to the discerning Arkansawyer, about twice a year. Send news and events to kjones116@atu.edu.

President's Message

As the readers of this newsletter likely already know, the 2020 Arkansas Historical Association conference has been cancelled because of the ongoing public health crisis caused by the COVID-19 virus. As secretary-treasurer Patrick Williams noted, the only other thing that has prevented our meeting was World War II.

This year's conference was indeed star-crossed, or perhaps more appropriately, as a colleague observed, snake-bit. The original plan was to hold it in Russellville, but the abrupt closing of the planned conference facility followed by the loss of all available hotel rooms because of a major maintenance project at the nearby nuclear plant led to a scramble to move it to Conway, which was successfully executed under great duress. And then came the coronavirus. I want to commend the conference committee—Steve Kite, Kelly Houston Jones and Blake Perkins, with spiritual assistance from Susan Young and Story Matkin-Rawn—for the extraordinary effort they put into the conference. Trustee Jones, in particular, would be wearing a Medal of Honor if the AHA had such things.

We will send awards to all winners in the many categories the AHA honors, and those winners will be recognized in the Spring 2020 issue of the *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*. Let me recognize here, though, those selected for Lifetime Achievement Awards: Rex Nelson for his tireless promotion of Arkansas history, Pat Ramsey for her decades of dedication to Arkansas History Day, and Bill Gatewood for his stewardship of one of Arkansas's most important historic sites, the Old State House. They will receive their awards at next year's conference in El Dorado.

Efforts are being made to record many of the presentations that would have been given in Conway and we hope to present a "virtual conference" via the AHA Facebook page or YouTube. More to follow on that.

Four AHA Trustees are finishing their second three-year terms and will be leaving the board: Kyle Day of Monticello, Susan Young of Springdale, Maylon Rice of Fayetteville, and David Sesser of Arkadelphia. We are all grateful for their faithful service as exemplary members of the Board of Trustees. All AHA members will receive ballots outlining the nominees for new AHA trustees and new officers since we are unable to do the traditional voice vote during the annual business meeting.

And finally, the conference marks the end of my four years as president of the Arkansas Historical Association. It has been a signal honor to lead this remarkable organization and I look forward to participating in AHA activities for years to come.

So stay well, wash your hands, and I will see you in El Dorado.

Mark K. Christ, President

"The other man was a stalwart ruffian called 'Arkansas,' who carried two revolvers in his belt and a bowie knife projecting from his boot, and who was always drunk and always suffering for a fight. But he was so feared, that nobody would accommodate him."

-Mark Twain, *Roughing It*

Arkansas Historical Association

President

Mark Christ, Little Rock markkchrist@hotmail.com

Vice-President

Story Matkin-Rawn, Conway smatkinrawn@uca.edu

Secretary-Treasurer

Patrick Williams, Fayetteville pgwillia@uark.edu

Board of Trustees

Kathy Anderson, Little Rock
kanderson@philander.edu

Kevin Butler, Pine Bluff
butlerk@uapb.edu

John Kyle Day, Monticello
day@uamont.edu

Carl Drexler, Magnolia
cdrexler@uark.edu

Jami Forrester, Springdale
jforrester@nwacc.edu

Buck T. Foster, Clarksville
bfoster@uca.edu

Kelly Houston Jones, Russellville
kjones116@atu.edu

Steven Kite, Fort Smith
Steve.Kite@uafs.edu

Chris Mortenson, Arkadelphia
mortensonc@yahoo.com

Rachel Silva Patton, Little Rock
rpatton@preservearkansas.org

Blake Perkins, Lynn
bperkins@williamsbu.edu

Maylon T. Rice, Fayetteville
rice4arkhouse85@gmail.com

Brian Robertson, Cabot
brianr@cals.org

David Sesser, Arkadelphia
sesserd@hsu.edu

Bill Shrum, Stuttgart
williamshrum1@gmail.com

Christina Shutt, Little Rock
christina.shutt@arkansas.gov

Robert Thompson, Paragould
rft3@paragould.net

Susan Young, Springdale
syoung@springdalear.gov

Donna Ludlow, Fayetteville
Business Manager dludlow@uark.edu

County History Roundup

The Arkansas Historical Association seeks to gather and disseminate updated information about our state's county historical societies. Please send your association's updated contact information, including websites or pertinent social media pages, to trustee Rachel Silva Patton at rpatton@preservearkansas.org.

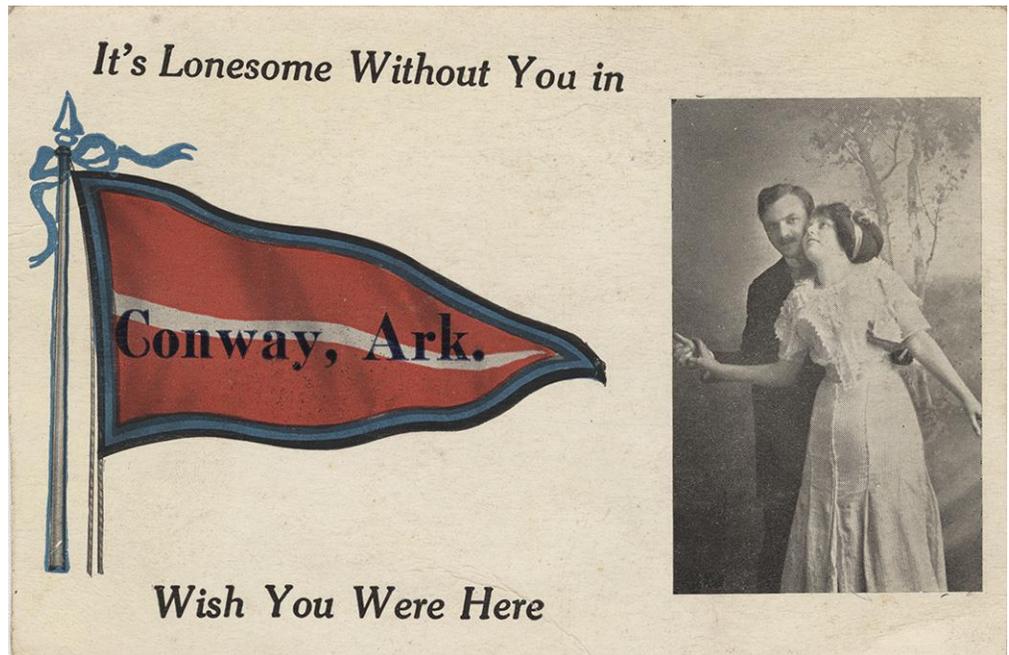
We'll Visit Directly: Featured Exhibit at Hendrix

One of the aspects of the canceled Conway meeting that Arkansas history folks had been looking forward to was a mixer at Hendrix College's Bailey Library where the gracious keepers of the Archives and Special Collections were to feature the library's new permanent display on Hendrix authors.

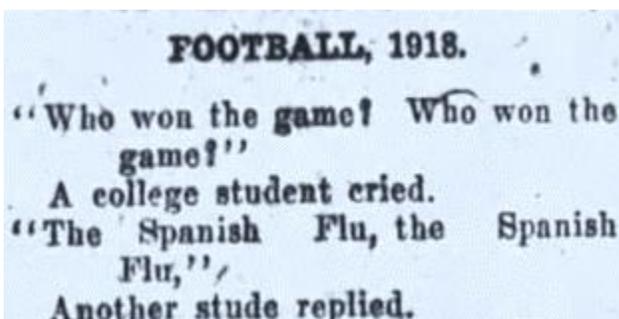
Of particular note within the collection is the work of George H. Thompson, a former president and trustee of this association, who passed away in 2018. Thompson was born in Tylertown, Mississippi in 1923 but grew up in Little Rock, graduating from Little Rock High School (now Central). As a young man, he enrolled at Cincinnati

Conservatory of Music before withdrawing to volunteer in the US Army Air Transport Command, where he served from 1942-1946. Thompson graduated from Hendrix College in 1948 and 1949 with degrees in business and history. Earning a Master's degree from Columbia University, he returned to Arkansas to join the Hendrix faculty in 1952. Along the way, Thompson earned his PhD from Columbia University. His book, *Arkansas and Reconstruction*, was based on the dissertation he completed in 1968. In addition to his service to the Arkansas Historical Association, Thompson was active in the Faulkner County Historical Society. He helped establish the Faulkner County Museum and served as its first director.

Don't fret, because although the COVID-19 pandemic delays our ability to visit, this exhibit will keep! Contact Britt Ann Murphy, murphyb@hendrix.edu, for information on future availability. In the meantime, you can browse the finding aid of the University of Central Arkansas Archives' George Thompson manuscript collection from the safety of your home at <https://uca.edu/archives/m11-02-george-thompson-collection/>.



Courtesy Butler Center for Arkansas Studies, Central Arkansas Library System.



Our **Membership is Voting** on a slate of officers and trustees circulated in the mail. Simply return your paper ballot marked "approve" or "disapprove" to our office at 416 N. Campus Drive, MAIN 416, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR 72701 or respond with your choice via email to Donna Ludlow, Business Manager, at dludlow@uark.edu by April 15th.

Left: *The Arkansas Gazette offered some levity during the "Spanish" flu epidemic, October 24, 1918.*

Looky Here!

Conway Steam Laundry.

Courtesy Butler Center for Arkansas Studies, Central Arkansas Library System.



I Tell You What:

The ***Yellow Rose Project***, an initiative of the Arkansas Women's Suffrage Centennial Commemoration Committee, plans to plant a yellow rose in every Arkansas county before the 100th Anniversary of the 19th Amendment, August 26, 2020. Is your county represented? For more information, contact ARvotesforwomen@gmail.com.

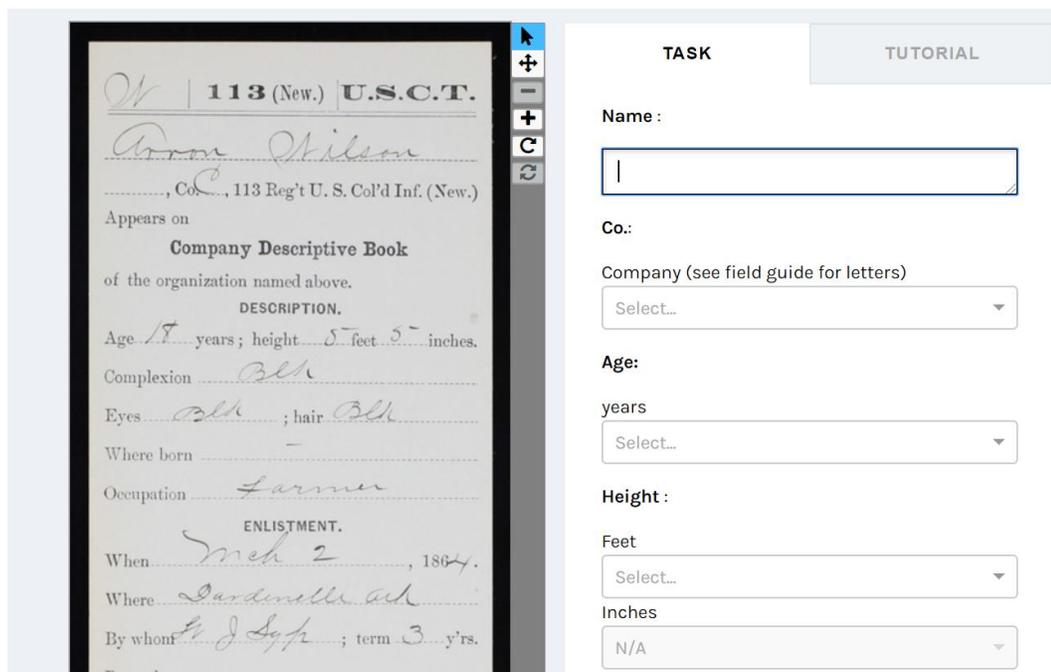
The ***Central Arkansas Library System (CALs)*** recently launched the Arkansas Vietnam War Project to collect oral histories, letters, photographs, and diaries from Arkansans who served during the conflict, from family members of veterans, and from civilians who want to share memories of the war. The CALs Butler Center especially seeks to record oral histories with Arkansas Vietnam War veterans. To participate in such an interview, contact Brian Robertson at brianr@cals.org or (501) 320-5723. For more information about the Arkansas Vietnam War Project, take a gander at www.butlercenter.org/arkansas-vietnam-war-project.

Got cabin fever?

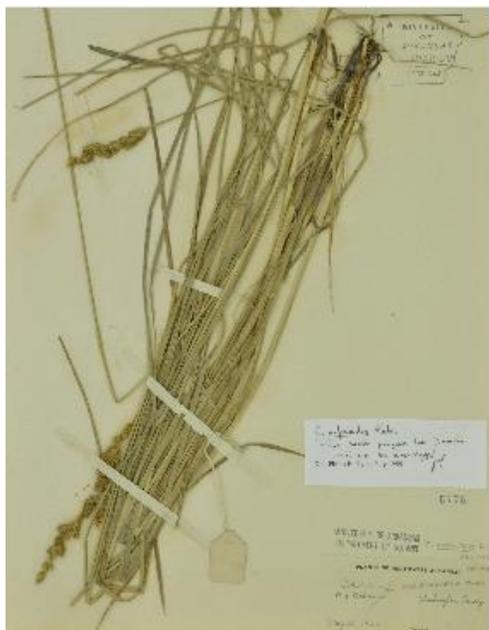
Crank up the computer and enjoy some ***premium Arkansas history virtual content*** via several web exhibits offered by the ***UALR Center for Arkansas History and Culture***. Ualrexhibits.org provides a front-row seat to the history of the Civilian Conservation Corps in Arkansas, insight into our state's experience of the suffrage movement, and presents a sobering reminder of the Elaine Massacre. Another central Arkansas institution, the ***Old State House Museum***, has several short videos on its past exhibits on their Youtube channel, <http://www.oldstatehouse.com/About-Us/videos>. The ***Shiloh Museum of Ozark History*** promises to soon launch a series of videos called "Minute-History," featuring local buildings and places of Northwest Arkansas. Keep an eye on Shiloh's social media for announcements, and peruse existing videos at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCntmqmZhXlRY386XBvo4x9Q>.

Another way folks can get through “corn teen” is to **enjoy some hands-on history fun from home** with the help of Zooniverse, a website that gathers several ongoing crowd-sourced research projects, including several with history missions. One of our favorites is the African-American Civil War Soldiers project, an ongoing effort where anyone, after reading over the steps, can transcribe information from the service records of African American men who enlisted, about 5,500 of whom were Arkansans.

The project creators’ pledge is to “make all the information that we are collecting available to the public on a



The screenshot above shows what it looks like to transcribe a card on the site, this one generated from the service record of Aaron Wilson, a soldier born in Dardanelle.



Above: A page from the University of Arkansas Herbarium’s collection, with notes from the 1920s, 1970s, and 1990s—all transcribed into the “Plants of Arkansas” project.

searchable database hosted at the website of the African American Civil War Museum. The website will also feature interactive maps, animations, and tables, allowing users to trace the history of African American soldiers via the data that we are collecting. Finally, we will make the entire database available to be freely downloaded by historians, social scientists, and genealogists.” Have a look at <https://www.zooniverse.org/projects/usct/african-american-civil-war-soldiers/>.

If Arkansas’s natural history better suits your fancy, the ongoing “Notes from Nature” project, also hosted by Zooniverse’s site, invites your contributions to “Plants of Arkansas,” a collaboration between the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission and several partners. Designed much like the African-American Civil War Soldiers’ project, participants flip through natural history collectors’ notes, inputting the information into prepared fields, “releasing 150 years of accumulated biodiversity.” Try your hand online at <https://www.zooniverse.org/projects/md68135/notes-from-nature-plants-of-arkansas>.

Finally, we offer the same request made in World War II-era issues of the AHQ, “If you think it tolerable, speak kindly about it to your friends and invite them to join the Association.”



Join the Arkansas Historical Association and receive four issues of the *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* per year, as well as the Association's newsletter for the following rates:

Individual, one year for \$20; Individual, two year, for \$35;

Family, one year for \$30; Family, two year for \$45;

Foreign, one year for \$30; Student, one year, for \$15;

Contributing, one year, for \$50; Sustaining, one year for \$100;

Supporting, one year, for \$200;

Life Membership for \$500 (payable over three years)

Permanent Membership for \$1,000 (payable over five years)

Renewal and new memberships can be paid online using Paypal;
visit the AHA website arkansashistoricalassociation.org.
