

The Ruffian

Vol. 37 No. 2 (Winter 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

At the end of a year marked by so much change, I find myself searching for small, familiar joys. Today's find is the vast catalog of Johnny Cash Christmas songs. The troubadour from Dyess, Arkansas is on heavy rotation as I write to you all this cold, sunny morning. Hope you and your loved ones are well, finding your own small, familiar joys during this holiday season. Good things are happening at the Arkansas Historical Association! We welcomed five new members to our board of trustees this past summer: Kwami Abdul-Bey of Little Rock, John Beller of Cave City, Kathleen Cande of Fayetteville, Brian Mitchell of Little Rock, and Janine Parry of Fayetteville. When not rescuing historic properties as director of Preserve Arkansas, new Vice President Rachel Patton has worked magic on the AHA's local arrangements committee, finding a covered outdoor venue on the outskirts of Little Rock in the event that we can hold the June conference in person. We are grateful to trustee Kelly Houston Jones (also editor of this fine publication) for returning to chair our 2021 conference committee after the pandemic ransacked her thoughtful planning for last year's meeting.

The annual meeting abides! Mark your calendars for Thursday, June 3 through Saturday June 5, 2021. Next month we will let you know whether we will meet on Zoom or under a pavilion in rural Pulaski County. Our theme, "Collective Memory in the Natural State: Commemoration, Preservation, and Reconciliation," seems especially appropriate after a year that has been historic in so many ways, from record-setting wildfires and a global pandemic, to nationwide protests for racial justice and the recent rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine. Our presenters' topics range widely from ghost towns and women homesteaders to archival footage of nightly news during the 1970s. But they share a common question: How have we and other generations of Arkansans used the past to make sense of the present? And what impact have these stories had on our communities? Three people who contributed in various ways to the cause of making meaning of our past were lost to the Arkansas history community in 2020—life member Ellen Compton, prolific *AHQ* contributor Edwin Bearrs, and permanent member and benefactor John G. Ragsdale.

As I look back on the losses and transformations of 2020, I also look forward to the creative ways our association will advance its mission in 2021.

Story Matkin-Rawn, 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

Story Matkin-Rawn, Conway smatkinrawn@uca.edu

Vice-President

Rachel Silva Patton, Little Rock rpatton@preservearkansas.org

Secretary-Treasurer

Patrick Williams, Fayetteville pgwillia@uark.edu

Board of Trustees

Kwami Abdul-Bey, North Little Rock
kwami@wfymlc.org

Kathy Anderson, Little Rock
kanderson@philander.edu

John Beller, Cave City
jbeller@bkcc.net

Kevin Butler, Pine Bluff
butlerk@uapb.edu

Kathleen Cande, Fayetteville
kcande@uark.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

Brian Mitchell, Little Rock
bk Mitchell@ualr.edu

Chris Mortenson, Arkadelphia
mortensonc@yahoo.com

Janine Parry, Fayetteville
parry@uark.edu

Rachel Silva Patton, North Little Rock
rpatton@preservearkansas.org

Blake Perkins, Lynn
bperkins@williamsbu.edu

Brian Robertson, Cabot
brianr@cals.org

Bill Shrum, Stuttgart
williamshrum1@gmail.com

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

Robert Thompson, Paragould
rft3@paragould.net

Donna Ludlow, Fayetteville
Business Manager dludlow@uark.edu



The "MOVIE" Grocery Ideally Combines
CONVENIENCE and ECONOMY in the Sale
of Groceries.

**The "Movie" Grocery
Comes to You!**

—The MOVIE Grocery is a specially built, compactly and completely stocked Grocery Store on wheels. Six of these giant truck stores are now being operated by us and more will be added as soon as we can build them.

**Nationally Known Food Products
at Savings of 10% to 20%—**

—THE MOVIE Grocery sells only highest quality groceries, and at 10 per cent to 20 per cent saving over the prices quoted by ANY other stores which deliver! Your first purchase from the MOVIE Grocery will make you a REGULAR customer.

**Phone Main 6052 If You Wish
Any Further Information—**

—The MOVIE Grocery Stores cover regular routes each day. If you wish to secure any information regarding them, phone our warehouse.

**Little Rock
Movie Grocery Co.**

Above: Little Rock Movie Grocery, a mobile grocery service that may seem especially appealing 100 years later, advertised in the *Arkansas Gazette* in December 1920.

recognition of excellence in Arkansas history. Visit the awards page on our site for all the details: http://arkansashistoricalassociation.org/?page_id=19.

I Tell You What:

On January 19, 2021, the day after Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, the State of Arkansas will observe the “**National Day of Racial Healing**.” The Arkansas Peace and Justice Memorial Movement—in its efforts to create a more accepting and courageous environment for dealing with, and healing from, historical racial violence in Arkansas—has joined with the UCA, the UAMS School of Public Health, the UA-Clinton School of

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.

Constitutional Amendment Awaits Membership Approval

Chastened by the pandemic, the board of trustees has proposed to amend Article 4, section 8 of the Association’s constitution to read:

“Nominees for membership on the Board of Trustees shall be presented to the board for approval at the last meeting prior to the annual conference. The membership will be notified of the names of the nominees as part of the president’s annual report. Persons may also be nominated from the floor at the annual conference. Nominees receiving approval from a majority of members present and voting at the annual conference will be elected. Should emergency prevent the Association from holding a conference, the membership may instead be polled by paper or electronic ballot. In selecting officers and trustees, consideration will be given to a broad representation of various interests and will include at least one representative from each congressional district.”

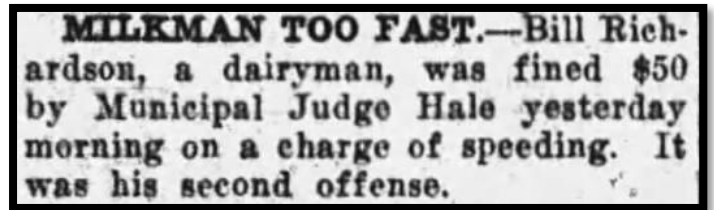
The amendment will be voted upon by the membership at the 2021 annual conference.

Association Awards

There’s still time! Several annual awards granted by the association have late winter and early spring 2021 deadlines, including student scholarships, the Atkinson teaching award, and a whole host of paper and journal awards. Throw your hat (or someone else’s!) in the ring for

Public Service, and the Arkansas Municipal League to prepare a virtual observance. One of the goals for the 2021 event is to have Arkansas become the first state where ALL of its mayors, county judges, school superintendents, college presidents, and university chancellors issue proclamations in support of racial healing. Gov. Hutchinson has already issued his 2021 proclamation (here's last year's: https://governor.arkansas.gov/images/uploads/proclamations/200121_2020_National_Day_of_Racial_Healing_in_the_State_of_Arkansas.pdf). Help the APJMM reach its goal by encouraging officials within your county and institution to send their proclamations to: Kwami Abdul-Bey, Co-Convenor, Arkansas Peace & Justice Memorial Movement, 2021 NDORH Proclamations, 2513 McCain Boulevard, Suite 2-221, North Little Rock, AR 72116.

The *Arkansas Women's History Institute* will soon announce its call for submissions for the Susie Pryor Award. The award is named in honor of Susie Hampton Newton Pryor—mother, community leader, local historian, and writer from Camden, Arkansas. The AWHI offers a \$1,000 prize for the best unpublished essay on topics in Arkansas women's history. Susie Pryor Award submissions are judged on their contributions to knowledge of women in Arkansas's history, use of primary and secondary materials, and analytical and stylistic excellence. The 2021 deadline will likely be set at mid-March. For more information, visit <http://www.arkansaswomen.org/entry-criteria.html>.



Above: Habitually hasty dairy deliverer pays up after high-tailin' it through Little Rock in 1920. His fine is equivalent to at least six hundred 2020 dollars.

The *Central Arkansas Library System* continues to collect oral histories, letters, photographs, and diaries for the Arkansas Vietnam War Project. It 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 visit www.butlercenter.org/arkansas-vietnam-war-project.

Still got cabin fever? We've got you (virtually) covered:

You can trace the dust you'll see kicking up all over Arkansas in 2021 to the folks at the *Arkansas Historic Preservation Program* who will continue "*Sandwiching in History*" all over creation. A mainstay of Arkansas history programming (which began as "Cornbread and Beans-ing in History" before it got all bougie), it has lately been a virtual event and will continue in that format for the foreseeable future. The tours premiere on Facebook at noon on the first Friday of each month and are afterward archived on AHPP's Youtube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/c/ARPreservation/featured>). A few early visits on 2021's plate: Jan. 9th-Baring Cross Bridge in Little Rock, Feb. 5-Toltec Mounds Archeological State Park in Scott, and March 5-Foster-Robinson House on Broadway St. in Little Rock. See the full calendar at <http://www.arkansasheritage.com/News-Events/calendar-of-events>.

Y'uns will want to keep those devices charged because 2021 also offers programming by the *Central Arkansas Library System's Encyclopedia of Arkansas* and Bobby L. Roberts Library of Arkansas History and Art—a series of virtual programs in February and March to celebrate *Black History Month and Women's History Month*. Each program begins at 6:30 p.m. and will be available via Zoom and/or Facebook Live. The schedule includes:

Feb. 1: Cherisse Jones-Branch on African Americans and the American Farm Bureau Federation, 1920-1966

Feb. 8: Richard Buckelew on lynching in Arkansas

Feb. 15: Brian Mitchell on Louisiana's Reconstruction lieutenant governor, Oscar Dunn

Feb. 22: Stephanie Harp and Kwami Abdul-Bey on the lynching of John Carter

March 8: Carmen Williams on how Black women authors portray Arkansas

March 15: Aleshia O'Neal on Charlie May Simon

March 22: Robyn Spears on women and foodways

Registration information will be available at <https://cals.org/events-classes/>.

Looky Here!

Let this photo of the Civilian Conservation Corps camp near Plainview (Yell County) in 1933 whet your appetite for the UA Little Rock's Center for Arkansas History and Culture's online CCC exhibit: <https://ualrehabits.org/ccc/home/>



Courtesy of the Butler Center for Arkansas Studies, Central Arkansas Library System

To beat the isolation blues, many of us have been shopping online for goodies to feather our “corn teen” nests. The **Historic Arkansas Museum’s** new online exhibit gives us a peek into the impulse buys of our predecessors. Feast your eyes on the “Conspicuous Consumption” of nineteenth-century Arkansans at <https://www.historicarkansas.org/Exhibits/conspicuous-consumption>. You might add a gander at a similarly-themed exhibit by the Shiloh Museum of Ozark History, “Prized Possessions,” found at <https://shilohmuseum.org/project/prized-possessions/>.

Speaking of, the **Shiloh Museum of Ozark History** will hold its annual “Cabin Fever Reliever” open house and collectors’ day in a virtual format in 2021, debuting on the website on Saturday, January 9. They’ll feature an online gallery of items from the museum’s founding collection, which belonged to Springdale attorney and municipal judge William Guy Howard (1876-1965), known to Springdale residents in his day as “the Judge.” Howard began collecting arrowheads as a boy and spent the rest of his life amassing a huge collection of prehistoric and historic Native American artifacts and more. Head over to ShilohMuseum.org.

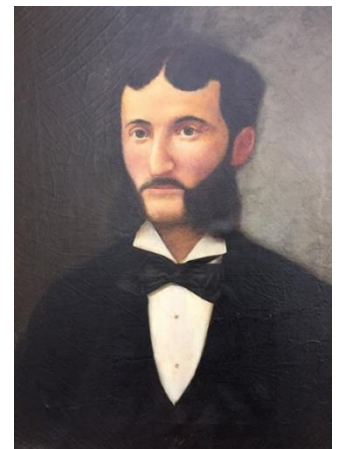
This one’s in person! The **Delta Cultural Center** has extended its exhibition of “1920: An Exceptional Election Year” through March 27, 2021. The exhibit marks two political turning points—the centennial of the 19th amendment securing woman suffrage and the campaign of Josiah Blount, an African-American man from Phillips County who ran for governor in 1920. The center is open from Tuesdays through Saturdays from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. Contact curator Drew Ulrich at 870-338-4350 or drew.ulrich@arkansas.gov for more information on availability and covid-19 protocols. You can still join in the fun from afar—if you’re not already

following the Delta Cultural Center on Facebook or Instagram, now's the time. Regular posts include "Main Street Monday" and "What is it? Wednesday," not to mention the famed "King Biscuit Time."

Below: One hundred years ago (December 1920), the Gus Blass Company advertised "super-excellent" chocolates to holiday shoppers in the *Arkansas Gazette*. By then, Gustave Blass, a Jewish German immigrant, had died and the business was run by his son, Julian. Established as Gus Blass Dry Goods Company in 1871, the venture eventually became the largest department store in Arkansas. Known for extravagant promotions, the Blass Company eventually merged with another, becoming Pfeifer-Blass. The store closed in the 1970s, but the grand 1913 building, listed in the National Register of Historic Places, still stands. Read all about it in Kathy Alpert's article in the *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*: <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/gustave-6537/>.

Here Is News That We Are Glad to Publish!
On and After This Date
Super-Excellent Chocolates
Will be priced, without change of quality or purity, **\$1.00** a pound, instead of \$1.25, as during the past year.
OUR STOCK of sugar and certain other essentials to high class Chocolates, bought in quantity when prices were unsteady, have been used up. The slate is washed clean for a fresh start, at a reduction from the price you have been paying for the past year.
We Hastened the Day of Reduction for the Benefit of Holiday Shoppers
Good candy is as much a part of Christmas as the Christmas spirit itself—and we want everybody to favor their sweet tooth this year.
At \$1 a pound, Super-Excellent Chocolates will be just as pure, just as delicious, just as well assorted as when we had to ask \$1.25 a pound. And that means the best Chocolates obtainable. Made as usual by Louis Schneider, and sold by—
The Gus Blass Co.

Below: Bertha and Gus Blass, high-profile Little Rockians, were known for their philanthropy. *Courtesy of Kathy Alpert for the Encyclopedia 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.
