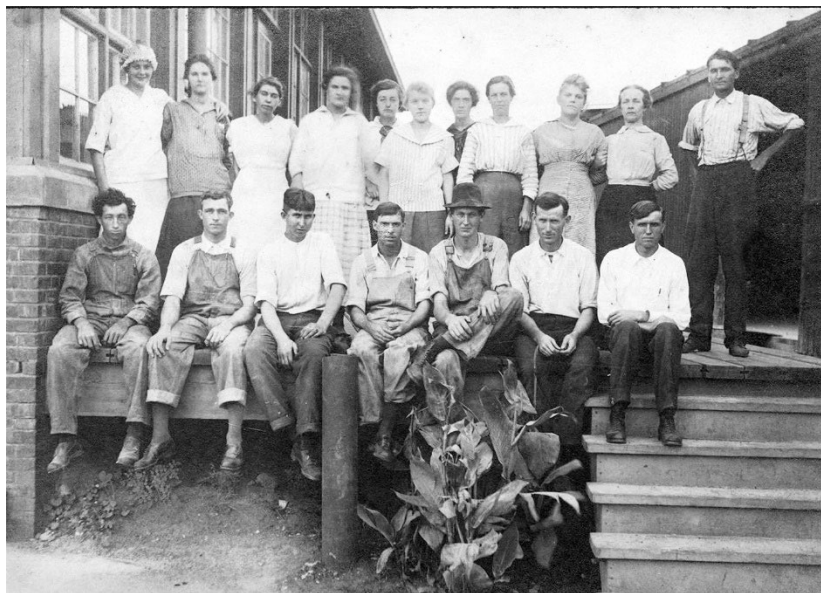


ARKANSAS HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

Eighty-Fifth Annual Conference

Arkansas at Work:
Histories of Labor, Land, and Learning



April 9-11, 2026
Monticello

The Conference in Brief

Thursday, April 9

“Arkansas’s Labor History: An Archival View”: 1:00-3:30 p.m.
**Capitol Room, John F. Gibson University Center, University
of Arkansas at Monticello (UAM)**

Reception: 6:00-7:30 p.m.
UAM Trotter House

Friday, April 10

Registration: 7:30 a.m.

Welcome: 8:00 a.m.

Sessions: 8:20 a.m.-12:20 p.m.

Luncheon and Business Meeting: 12:30 p.m.
Green Room, Gibson University Center, UAM

Tour Departs: 2:30 p.m.

Reception and Awards Banquet: 5:30 p.m.
Monticello Country Club

Saturday, April 11

Sessions: 8:20 a.m.-12:20 p.m.

Luncheon: 12:30
Green Room, Gibson University Center, UAM

Cover image: Cotton Mill Workers, Monticello, n.d.
*Courtesy: Butler Center for Arkansas Studies, Central Arkansas
Library System*

Arkansas at Work: Histories of Labor, Land, and Learning

The eighty-fifth Arkansas Historical Association (AHA) annual conference will be held in Monticello, April 9-11, 2026.

Monticello, the county seat of Drew County, was incorporated in 1852, and is popularly believed to be named after Thomas Jefferson's estate in Virginia.

The conference will kick off on Thursday afternoon with informational presentations and discussions on archival holdings of various statewide institutions relevant to this year's theme of labor, land, and learning. The opening reception on Thursday evening will be held at the UAM Trotter House, an 1896 Greek Revival structure now operating as a university-owned bed and breakfast.

On Friday afternoon, attendees may participate in a tour to the historic Taylor House at the former Hollywood/Valley Plantation. The Taylor House, built in 1846, is one of the state's few remaining examples of pre-Civil War vernacular architecture. Matthew Rooney, Station Archeologist at the University of Arkansas at Monticello, will lead the tour. Two 11-passenger vans will be available for those who do not want to drive themselves.

Most of the conference sessions and meals will be held in the Gibson University Center on the University of Arkansas at Monticello campus. The Friday night reception and awards banquet will be at the Monticello Country Club.

The conference committee members are Tim Nutt, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences; Ruth O'Loughlin, Lakeport Plantation; Matthew Rooney, University of Arkansas at Monticello; and Lisa Speer, Ouachita Baptist University.

Lodging: Attendees may reserve rooms at the Hampton Inn, 480 US-425, Monticello, AR 71655 at the rate of \$125 per night plus tax by calling 870-367-6600, or by booking online with the code AHA at hilton.com/en/hotels/pbfmohx-hampton-monticello-ar/ by March 13.

Registration: Members may complete the form received in the mail and send it with check or money order to the Arkansas Historical Association, Department of History, 416 N. Campus Drive, Main 416, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR 72701, or register online at arkansashistoricalassociation.org. The registration fee is \$25. The deadline for registration with meals is **March 31**.



Monticello, Arkansas, 1879.

Courtesy:

Butler Center for Arkansas Studies, Central Arkansas Library System

Thursday, April 9

“Arkansas’s Labor History: An Archival View”: 1:00-3:30 p.m.
**Capitol Room, Gibson University Center, University of
Arkansas at Monticello**

Representatives from various Arkansas archival repositories and museums will discuss their holdings related to labor and other work-related topics. Moderated by Tim Nutt.

Reception: 6:00 p.m.

UAM Trotter House, 404 N. Main St., Monticello, AR

Hosted by:

Monticello Advertising & Promotion Commission, Commercial Bank, and Arkansas Women’s History Institute

Friday, April 10

Presidents’ Breakfast: 7:00 a.m.

Monticello Coffee Company, 316 Hwy. 425 S., Monticello

President Rachel Patton hosts this breakfast for former presidents of the association.

Registration: 7:30 a.m.

Welcome: 8:00 a.m.

**Capitol Room, John F. Gibson University Center, University of
Arkansas at Monticello**

Rachel Patton, AHA President

Hon. Jason Akers, Mayor of Monticello

Dr. Peggy Doss, Chancellor, UAM

Session 1A: 8:20-9:30 a.m., Capitol Room, Gibson University Center, UAM

Women's Labor and Community in the Arkansas Delta

Moderator: Chelsea Hodge, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

“Black Pioneers and Laborers in Arkansas: Post Emancipation Through the 1950s”

Donna Shelton, Arkansas State University

“Showers of Blessing: The Story of Myrtle Lawrence, Sharecropper and Social Activist, Photographed by Louise Boyle”

Janet Allured, McNeese State University, retired

“A Woman's Work is Never Done: The Legacy of a Black Northeast Arkansas Midwife”

Laura Hennings, Arkansas State University

Session 1B: 8:20-9:30 a.m., Conference Room A, Fred J. Taylor Library and Technology Center, UAM

Labor, Safety, and Illicit Economies in Arkansas

Moderator: David Sesser, Southeastern Louisiana University

“Wrenches and Warheads: Unsafe Labor Practices in Arkansas's Titan II Silos”

Michael Anthony, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

“The Greatest Men's Suit Sale in History”

Tom DeBlack, *professor emeritus*, Arkansas Tech University

“Rollback Savings on Labor! Walmart, the EFCA, and Union Busting”

James Kelly, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

Break: 9:30-9:50 a.m.

Hosted by the University of Arkansas Press and Society for the History of Medicine and Health Professions

**Session 2A: 9:50 -11:00 a.m., Capitol Room, Gibson
University Center, UAM**

Railroads, Labor, and Conflict

Moderator: Brian Robertson, Butler Center for Arkansas Studies,
Central Arkansas Library System

“An 1870s Board Camp for Railroad Builders: ‘The Hand that
Feeds Men’s Stomachs is the Hand that Moves the World’”

Lisa C. Childs, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

“Received as Strike Breakers, Discharged as Cream of ‘Crops’:
Prisoners of War Pitched Against Black Laborers in the Arkansas
Delta as Observed by a Young German Inmate, 1943-1946”

Michael Reinschmidt, University of Oklahoma

“Early Railroad Building in Southern Arkansas”

Austin Ebner, White County Historical Society

**Session 2B: 9:50-11:00 a.m., Conference Room A, Taylor
Library and Technology Center, UAM**

Timber, Labor, and Politics in Post Civil War Arkansas

Moderator: Kelly Houston Jones, Arkansas Tech University

“Counting the Changes: From Timber to Cotton in Number Nine,
Arkansas, 1900-1940”

Matthew Collier, Black River Technical College

“The Disunion of a Timber Town: The Great Georgia Pacific
Crossett Strike of 1985”

Revis Edmonds, Department of Arkansas Heritage

“The Unconditional Bliss: A Look at Arkansas’s First Lieutenant
Governor and his Unionist Newspaper”

Sonny Rhodes, independent scholar

Session 3A: 11:10 a.m.-12:20 p.m., Capitol Room, Gibson University Center, UAM

Education, Memory, and Institutional Change

Moderator: Joshua C. Youngblood, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

“The Arkansas Technical Assistance and Consultative Center and the Work of Desegregating Arkansas Public Schools”

Taylor Lawson, Ouachita Baptist University

“Portraits, Papers, and Perpetuation of the Lost Cause in Education: The Arkansas UDC’s Control of State Education from 1906-1940”

Jayme Rawls, Arkansas State University

“‘No Longer an Inmate of the Methodist Orphanage’: The Failed Merger of Hendrix, Henderson Brown and Galloway Colleges”

David Sesser, Southeast Louisiana State University

Session 3B: 11:10 a.m.-12:20 p.m., Conference Room A, Taylor Library and Technology Center, UAM

Labor, Exploitation, and Regulation

Moderator: Chris Mortenson, Ouachita Baptist University

“Killing for a Living: Arkansas Market Hunters and the Fight to Stop Them”

Buckley T. Foster, University of Central Arkansas

“Kids at Work: Examining Child Labor in Early 20th Century Arkansas”

Lisa Lacefield, Pinkston Middle School, Mountain Home

“‘We Were on Our Own’: Working in the Arkansas Mercury Mines”

Terry Reynolds, *professor emeritus*, Michigan Tech University

**Luncheon: 12:30 p.m., Green Room, University Center,
UAM**

Business Meeting

Presiding: Rachel Patton, President

President's Report

Secretary-Treasurer's Report

Election of Officers and Trustees

**Keynote Address: "The Unholy Alliance of Debt and
Disease: Mary Grace Quackenbos on the Plight of Italian
Immigrants at Sunnyside Plantation"**

Jeannie Whayne, University Professor, University of Arkansas,
Fayetteville

Tours: Depart from Hampton Inn at 2:30 p.m.

Taylor House on Hollywood/Valley Plantation

184 Plantation Lane, Tillar, AR 71670

There will be two 11-passenger vans available for the tour. Others are welcome to carpool to the site. Note: Although the address is Tillar, the Taylor House is near Winchester, AR.

Attendees may also choose to walk historic downtown Monticello or to visit other historic properties of interest in the area on their own.

Reception and Annual Awards Banquet

Monticello Country Club, 134 Golf Course Drive, Monticello

Reception: 5:30-6:30 p.m.

Sponsored by Special Collections, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, UAMS Historical Research Center, Butler Center for Arkansas Studies, Central Arkansas Library System, and Stone's Throw Brewery

Banquet: 6:30 p.m.

Awards Presentation

- ❖ Lifetime Achievement Award
- ❖ Award of Merit
- ❖ Arkansas Diamond Award
- ❖ J.G. Ragsdale Book Award
- ❖ John Williams Graves Book Award
- ❖ Tom Dillard Advocacy Award
- ❖ J.H. Atkinson Award for Excellence in the Teaching of Arkansas History
- ❖ NEARA Award for Exemplary Archival Research
- ❖ James L. Foster and Billy W. Beason Award
- ❖ Lucille Westbrook Award
- ❖ Violet B. Gingles Award
- ❖ Susannah DeBlack Award
- ❖ Walter L. Brown County and Local Journal Awards
- ❖ Arkansas Women's History Institute Susie Pryor Award

Saturday, April 11

All activities held on the University of Arkansas at Monticello campus

Session 4A: 8:20-9:30 a.m., Capitol Room, Gibson University Center, UAM

Designs, Lives, and Legacies

Moderator: Brian Irby, Arkansas State Archives

“Elizabeth Nash Upham: A Widow Makes Her Way, 1882-1904”
Jo Blatti, independent scholar

“A Tale of Two Domes: Arkansas and Mississippi”
Blake Wintory, independent scholar

“‘It is Mortifying That a Stinking Buzzard and a Stupid Goose Should Fly’: The Life of Charles McDermott”
Timothy G. Nutt, Historical Research Center, UAMS

Session 4B: 8:20-9:30 a.m., Conference Room A, Taylor Library and Technology Center, UAM

Rural Development and Agricultural Transformation

Moderator: Lisa Speer, Ouachita Baptist University

“Growing, Developing, and Modernizing the Hills: The Establishment and Early Years of the Ozarks Regional Commission”
Joe Hutchinson, Mississippi State University

“Mulberry Farm, Inc.: Reimagining Rural Community in 1970s Johnson County”
Marie Totten, University of Central Arkansas

“White County, Arkansas: The Strawberry Capital of the World”
Shelly Churchwell, White County Historical Association

Break: 9:30-9:50 a.m.

Hosted by the Arkansas State Archives, Black History Commission of Arkansas, and Arkansas Archeological Society

Session 5A: 9:50-11:00 a.m., Capitol Room, Gibson University Center, UAM

Flour, Fields, and Farmhouses

Moderator: W. Scott Tomlin, Arkansas Tech University

“Improving Rural Housing from a Wealth of Native Resources: The Homemade Homes Campaign, 1937-1941”
Darren Bell, Arkansas State Archives

“Flour Power in French Colonial Arkansas”
Linda C. Jones, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

“Inequitable Labor: Black Arkansans and Home Farms During the Civil War”
Kimberly Green, independent scholar

Session 5B: 9:50-11:00 a.m., Conference Room A, Taylor and Technology Center, UAM

Stewardship, Stories, and Economies Across Time

Moderator: Tom Wing, University of Arkansas at Fort Smith

“A History of Beards, or a Lack Thereof, at the UAM Archeology Station”
Brittney N. Bostian, L. Sunni Deb Brooks-Weaver, Lilly C. McKee, Rylee A. Meeks, Erin K. Rooney, and Matthew P. Rooney, Arkansas Archeological Survey

“Arkansas Archeology Site Stewards at Work in Arkansas”
Ruth O’Loughlin, Lakeport Plantation, and Mel Zabecki, Arkansas Archeological Survey

“Salt, Stone, and Trade: Indigenous Economic Systems in Pre-Contact Arkansas”
Wesley P. Jackson, Arkansas State University

Session 6A: 11:10 a.m.-12:20 p.m., Capitol Room, Gibson University Center, UAM

The Politics of Race and Labor

Moderator: Tim Nutt, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences

“Labor, Land, and Learning in Fort Smith: The Struggle to Save a Black Working-Class Neighborhood”

John Kirk, University of Arkansas at Little Rock

“The Racist and Anti-Semitic Origins of ‘Right-to-Work’”

Michael C. Pierce, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

“The Rights of Labor versus the Right to Work: The 1976 Campaign to Repeal Arkansas’s Right-to-Work Law”

Michael K. Rosenow, University of Central Arkansas

Session 6B: 11:10 a.m.-12:20 p.m., Conference Room A, Taylor Library and Technology Center, UAM

Labor, Incarceration, and Exploitation

Moderator: Blake Wintory, independent scholar

“Punishment for Profit: Labor, Reform, and the Battle to End Convict Leasing in Arkansas”

Ryan Anthony Smith, Missouri State University

“Work and Incarceration: Japanese American Labor in Arkansas, 1942-1945”

Kimball Erdman, Angie Payne, Joshua C. Youngblood, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

“‘Unequaled Brutality’ and ‘Modern Horrors’: Remembering Coal Hill”

David Ware, Arkansas State Archives

Luncheon: 12:30 p.m., Green Room, University Center, University of Arkansas at Monticello

Keynote Address: “The Rise and Fall of Labor Liberalism in Postwar Arkansas”

Michael C. Pierce, Associate Professor of History,
University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

Adjourn

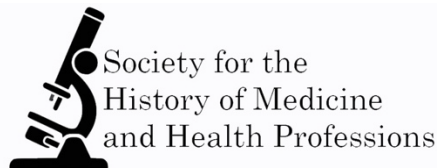
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The Arkansas Historical Association is grateful to our conference supporters!

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