

The Newsletter of the Arkansas Historical Association

Vol. 40 No. 4 (March 2026)

Editor: Brian Irby

The Monticello Conference



The Arkansas Historical Association invites you to its 85th annual conference in Monticello, April 9–11, 2026. This year's presentations will explore Arkansas's rich history of work and industry, spanning all time periods—from the centuries of material goods production and trade by Indigenous peoples to the diverse modern economy

shaped by agriculture, mining, forestry, manufacturing, and tourism. Join us for an in-depth look at the forces that have built the state and will continue to shape its future.

In addition to the conference sessions, an opening reception will be held on Thursday evening at the Trotter House at 6:00. Friday will start with registration at 7:30 AM followed by a greeting session at 8:00. Friday's luncheon and business meeting will be held in the Green Room at the Gibson University Center on the campus of the University of Arkansas Monticello. We will have a field trip to the Taylor House (see the story on the Taylor House in this issue) on Friday afternoon after the luncheon. On Friday evening, the AHA banquet and awards ceremony will begin with a reception at 5:30 at the Monticello Country Club. Saturday's luncheon will be at the Green Room at the Gibson University Center.



Grace Mason, the tabulating machine operator, at the Lion Oil Company in El Dorado, 1947 (Photo courtesy of the Arkansas State Archives)

Registration is \$25 per person; meals are not included. Meals for the banquet and luncheon can be purchased at the time of registration. Tickets for the reception and banquet can also be purchased without registering for the rest of the conference. To do so, simply select the number of tickets you would like to purchase for the "Friday Banquet" and complete checkout. Members may complete the registration form received in the mail and send it with a check or money order to:

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 deadline for meals is March 31.

Arkansas Historical Association

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AHA Conference Luncheon Speakers

The AHA has always brought interesting speakers to the annual conference, and this year is no exception. On Friday, April 10, the AHA will hold its business luncheon. The speaker for the luncheon is University of Arkansas Professor Jeannie Whayne. Dr. Whayne, an expert in agricultural and southern history, is an accomplished author; her book *Delta Empire: Lee Wilson and the Transformation of Agriculture in the New South* won AHA's John G. Ragsdale Prize. She serves as a fellow of the Agricultural History Society and her most recent book is *The Oxford Handbook of Agricultural History*. Her luncheon address is titled, "The Unholy Alliance of Debt and Disease: Mary Grace Quackenbos on the Plight of Italian Immigrants at Sunnyside Plantation."



AHA conference luncheon speakers Jeannie Whayne and Michael C. Pierce

Saturday's luncheon will feature Michael C. Pierce, Associate Professor of History at the University of Arkansas. He studies the intersection of civil rights and labor groups in Arkansas. He authored the book, *Striking with the Ballot: Ohio Labor and the Populist Party*. He recently co-edited a collection, *Race, Labor, and Violence in the Delta* which won AHA's John William Graves Award in 2024. He is associate editor of the *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* and has published his work in numerous academic journals. He will be discussing his research in a talk titled, "The Rise and Fall of Labor Liberalism in Postwar Arkansas."

We thank our generous speakers and look forward to their talks!

Taylor House



On Friday, conference attendees can go on a guided tour of the Taylor Log House, a historic structure built by enslaved people in the 1840s as a headquarters for the plantation of Dr. John Martin Taylor. Taylor was born in Winchester, Kentucky. He became wealthy in his practice and purchased a large tract of land in Kentucky. He also bought land along Bayou Bartholomew from his father-in-law in Rives, Arkansas, which he renamed Winchester in honor of his birthplace. He established a plantation there that he named Hollywood Plantation after the holly trees common in the area. Before the Civil War, Taylor owned as many as 101 enslaved people who grew cotton on the plantation. He split his time between Arkansas and Kentucky until 1876 when the family settled permanently in Arkansas. Taylor died in 1884, but the property remained in the family until the 1940s.

Today, the house is owned by the University of Arkansas at Monticello, which operates it as an interpretive site. Over the last decade, UAM has been restoring the property based on archeology and historic photographs. AHA Board of Trustees member Matthew Rooney, who has spent four years researching the plantation, will lead the tour.

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Traveling in Arkansas



Train chugging along in a winter wonderland in the Ozarks
(Photo courtesy of the Arkansas State Archives)

Travel in nineteenth century Arkansas was always a difficult affair. Roads were often rudimentary, or non-existent, especially in rural areas. A traveler wrote to the *Arkansas Democrat* for its January 18, 1881, issue describing a rather dicey experience he had journeying to Washington State, a trip that took him through the Ozarks in winter.

The writer waited at the train station in Morrilton among a bustling crowd fighting for space on the platform. Among the crowd were several men making their way to Little Rock for the upcoming legislative session to show “how much the influence of manly strength and straightforwardness can avail in the legislative halls of Arkansas.” When he boarded the train, he found the crowded ride stifling and tried on numerous occasions to open the windows to let in fresh air. Each attempt was met with scowls from his fellow passengers who quickly

slammed the windows shut. As he was breathing the turgid air, the train suddenly came to a stop. A mule, it seems, had decided to walk in front of the train, lay down, and refused to budge. Several men, including the author, stepped out of the train and gathered around the mule who continued to stubbornly block the track. The author imagined, “I was sure I could see a twinkle of fun and satisfaction in his half closed eye.” After a half hour of the men trying to coax the mule from the track, the animal got up and trotted off.

He disembarked at Alma, switching to a rickety wagon to continue his journey. After crossing Frog Bayou in Crawford County, they made it to Woolum where the driver stopped, and a new driver took up the reins. After a short trip to the next station, the driver got out of the wagon and started to walk off into the night, leaving the author and his fellow travelers confused. He called out to the driver asking him where he was going, “Going to warm,” was his reply. “Can’t we go, too?” the traveler asked. “There ain’t any fire,” was his reply. “How will you warm then?” to which the driver answered, “I’ll go to bed for an hour or two.” “And leave us here to freeze?” the writer begged. The driver finally relented and allowed the passengers to follow him into a small house where they built a fire.

After warming themselves, the retinue continued on their way. The hack driver was also working as a mail man and had to make several stops on the route. The mail was not sorted by address, and at each stop, the driver would hand the mail sack to a resident who would then pick through it for any incoming items. The passengers would sit in the wagon and wait for each person to dig through the sack. One resident decided to read every postcard while the passengers sat in the freezing cold. The writer attempted to bribe the driver with ten dollars if he would go on and do his mail route after they had gotten to their next destination. The driver, though, had the ethical strength to resist. The writer commented, “Now that my anger at his stubbornness is cooled down, I recognize the worth of that man, and shall do all in my power to have him promoted, for such honest men are the kind Uncle Sam wants.”

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Upgrading Your Membership



The Arkansas Historical Association is committed to preserving and sharing the history of our state since 1941. We offer annual conferences, awards that recognize contributions to scholarship on Arkansas's history, and one of the finest state history journals in the country. We thank all our members for supporting us financially.

We encourage our Life Members to consider upgrading to Permanent Membership. Being a Permanent Member puts you amongst a distinct club of supporters who will be permanently recognized in the association's records and publications. To become a Permanent Member, Life Members can contribute \$500, payable over three years.

You can upgrade your membership easily through our website

(www.arkansashistoricalassociation.org) or by contacting AHA Business Manager Renwick Hudson at renwickh@uark.edu or 479-575-5884.

Look Here!



Young men training at Camp Joseph T. Robinson during World War II got a nice diversion from the rigors of training for war. Often they were allowed to visit Little Rock and attend the USO for live shows and dances. Here a couple of nervous GIs are outnumbered at a dance. (Photo courtesy of the Arkansas State Archives)

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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 \$25; Individual, two year for \$45;

Family, one year for \$35; Family, two year for \$55;

Foreign, one year for \$35; Student, one year for \$15;

Contributing, one year for \$55; 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;
visit the AHA website arkansashistoricalassociation.org.



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."