The Newsletter of the Arkansas Historical Association

Vol. 41 No. 1 (October 2026)

Editor: Brian Irby

The Monticello Conference Recap



Conference attendees enjoy the AHA awards banquet

Welcome to another edition of the Arkansas Historical Association's quarterly newsletter!

Although it may seem like ages ago, the Arkansas Historical Association held its annual meeting April 9–11 on the campus of the University of Arkansas at Monticello. This year's conference focused on the history of labor in Arkansas, with attendees enjoying papers and presentations by researchers from across the state.

The festivities began Thursday afternoon with a panel featuring representatives from archival institutions around Arkansas, who highlighted collections in their holdings related to the history of labor. That evening, conference attendees gathered for a welcome reception at UAM's Trotter House, a stately historic home in the heart of Monticello.

Friday's luncheon featured an engaging presentation by Jeannie Whayne, who discussed her research on Italian immigrants at Sunnyside Plantation in the Arkansas Delta. On Saturday, Michael C. Pierce brought the conference to a lively conclusion with a spirited discussion of labor and Arkansas politics.

Conference attendees also traveled to Tillar for a tour of the historic Taylor House, offering an opportunity to experience another piece of southeast Arkansas history firsthand.

We thank conference committee members Tim Nutt, Ruth O'Loughlin, Matthew Rooney, and Lisa Speer for all their hard work in planning and organizing such a wonderful conference. We also thank everyone who presented papers, participated in panels, and joined us in Monticello.



Dr. Jeannie Whayne delivers the luncheon address

We look forward to seeing everyone next spring when the Arkansas Historical Association gathers once again for its annual meeting—this time in Russellville!

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Meet Blake Perkins



Dr. Perkins accepting the office of AHA President at the Monticello conference

At our last conference, we said goodbye to outgoing AHA President Rachel Patton, who led the association for the past four years. We thank Rachel for her dedicated service to the AHA and for her leadership during her term as president.

At the conference in Monticello, the AHA elected Dr. Blake Perkins as its new president. Dr. Perkins is Vice Chancellor for Academics at Arkansas State University–Beebe, where he also teaches Arkansas and United States history.

A lifelong Arkansan, Perkins grew up on a cattle farm along the Strawberry River in Sharp and Lawrence counties in the Ozark foothills. He earned his bachelor's degree from Lyon College, his master's degree from Missouri State University, and his PhD from West Virginia University.

Perkins is the author of *Hillbilly Hellraisers: Federal Power and Populist Defiance in the Ozarks*, published by the University of Illinois Press in 2017. In 2020, he edited and wrote a new introduction for the University of Arkansas Press reprinting of Catherine S. Barker's 1941 book, *Yesterday Today: Life in the Ozarks*. He has also published dozens of articles and reviews in scholarly journals, including *Agricultural History*, *History of Education Quarterly*, and—the best one of all!—the *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*.

Before joining ASU–Beebe in 2022, Perkins taught history for nine years at Williams Baptist University in Walnut Ridge, where he also served as chair of the Department of History and Political Science. In addition to his service to the Arkansas Historical Association, he serves on the governing boards of Lawrence Healthcare, the Hillcrest Public School District, and HumanitiesAR.

Perkins and his wife, Jodie, live in Lynn, Arkansas, with their sons, Maddox and Rylan, and their red heeler, Duke. There, they continue their family's agricultural tradition by raising cattle on the family farm.

We are pleased to welcome Dr. Blake Perkins as president of the Arkansas Historical Association and look forward to his leadership in the years ahead.

Education Corner

Congratulations to the 2026 winners of the AHA Chronicling America Awards.

Sydney Schmid of Haas Hall Academy in Springdale won the Senior Division for "A Stand Against Corruption in the Coalfields: How the Paint Creek Cabin Creek Strike Reshaped Labor Relations in West Virginia" (Teacher: Jami Forrester).

Judy Youssef of Pulaski Academy in Little Rock won the Junior Division for "From Neglect to Reaction: How The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire Sparked Reform in Factory Facilities, Revolutionizing Industrial Safety" (Teacher: Angela King).



Sydney Schmid and National History Day Director Dr. Cathy Gorn at the NHD state awards ceremony in Conway

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These student researchers were recognized at the Annual National History Day in Arkansas. National History Day is a highly regarded academic program for elementary and secondary school students, offering an enriching and transformative experience. Arkansas educators who have participated report that their students gain valuable research, critical thinking, and communication skills. Advance preparation is key to successful projects, and the benefits extend far beyond the classroom. As teachers prepare for next year, they can bring history to life for their students by integrating National History Day into their curriculum. Doing so not only makes learning more engaging but also provides students with an opportunity to connect with historical events in meaningful ways. Check out Teacher Resources at arkansashistoryday.org/for-teachers/resources to get started.

Additionally, Chronicling America is a valuable source of digital archives that students can utilize, thanks to the efforts of the Arkansas Digital Newspaper Project. More information on Arkansas History is being added every day. Learn more at arkansasheritage.com/chronicling-america-digitized-newspapers.

For Awards and Scholarship opportunities, don't forget to visit the Arkansas Historical Association Awards Program page.

AHA Awards Winners



(Left to Right) Rachel Patton and Ralph Wilcox present the Lifetime Achievement Award to Carl Miller

The AHA proudly honored Carl Miller with the Lifetime Achievement Award at our Annual Conference in April, recognizing a legacy that has helped shape Arkansas history. For 39 remarkable years, Mr. Miller dedicated himself to the National Register of Historic Places board, where his keen eye and unwavering commitment guided the review of more than 2,000 nominations. His stewardship has safeguarded Arkansas's historic landmarks, ensuring their stories endure for generations to come.

The Lifetime Achievement Award is just one of twenty-one honors the AHA bestows each year, celebrating the passion and dedication of historians, researchers, and scholars. Our winners range from promising student scholars to seasoned professionals and influential organizations. Explore the award categories—one may inspire your next project or ignite curiosity in your students.

The topics of at least two of this year's winners embodied the conference theme: "Arkansas at Work: Histories of Labor, Land, and Learning." The J.G. Ragsdale Book Award went to historian Buckley T. Foster for his book, *So Great Was the Slaughter: Market Hunters, Sportsmen, and Wildlife Conservation in Arkansas*. University of Arkansas student Ani-ya Beasley won the Violet B. Gingles Award for her essay, "Thomas Bass: Arkansas Reconstruction Politician." Projects like these help the association "publish scarce and important source material."

Congratulations to this year's outstanding award winners. Explore the full list of 2026 Award winners and help us celebrate the individuals and organizations making an impact.

To learn more about Award and Scholarship opportunities, don't forget to visit the Arkansas Historical Association Awards Program page.

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George Donaghey's Rough Campaign



Portrait of Governor George Washington Donaghey in happier times (Photo Courtesy of the Arkansas State Archives)

George Washington Donaghey was running for a third term as governor of Arkansas in 1912. A third term was not unprecedented. His predecessor, Jeff Davis, had successfully won three consecutive terms, becoming the first Arkansas governor to do so. Still, seeking another term carried risks.

Donaghey had first run for governor on a promise to complete the long-troubled construction of a new state capitol, and by 1912 he could point to real progress. But he also faced a formidable opponent in the Democratic primary: Joseph T. Robinson, one of the most skilled political figures of his generation. Donaghey entered the race knowing he was in for a difficult campaign.

On January 21, Donaghey traveled to Lawrence County to campaign. After spending the afternoon in Powhatan, he set out for Portia accompanied by M. J. Schuyler, editor of the *Black Rock Chronicle*. When they reached the Black River, swollen by recent rain and snow, they boarded the Powhatan ferry and crossed safely. In Portia, Donaghey delivered a short speech before setting out again for Black Rock, where he was expected to make another campaign appearance.

Around six o'clock that evening, Donaghey and Schuyler once again reached the Black River. Donaghey was in a hurry and needed to cross as quickly as possible. When they could not locate the ferry, they began looking for another way across. They soon found a man with a skiff who agreed to take them.

It was winter in northern Arkansas, and the swollen river was filled with floating ice. About halfway across, the skiff suddenly sprang a leak. The boat began sinking rapidly in the icy water, forcing Donaghey and Schuyler into the river. Fighting the strong current, they tried to swim back toward the bank from which they had come.

Donaghey's heavy winter coat quickly filled with water, becoming more anchor than apparel. Despite the weight of the coat and the freezing water, he continued struggling toward shore. Both men finally managed to reach the riverbank safely.

With another boat crossing now out of the question, they walked along the river until they reached the railroad bridge and crossed there. Shaken, soaked, and undoubtedly exhausted, Donaghey nevertheless made it to Black Rock that night and delivered his scheduled speech at the Henry Opera House.

The near-drowning was not the only misfortune to strike Donaghey during the campaign. In his autobiography, he recalled receiving a note from a well-wisher that warned, "Bad luck's after you, George Donaghey." Two weeks later, Donaghey's home in Conway burned to the ground.

When the Democratic primary finally arrived, Arkansas voters seemed to confirm the warning. Robinson defeated Donaghey decisively, receiving roughly 66 percent of the vote.

Perhaps George Donaghey should have taken the hint.

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

Look Here!



In the months before young men shipped off to serve their country during World War II, some of them married their sweethearts. Here, a couple say their vows on the steps of Arkansas's State Capitol building. (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."*