This year marks an important milestone for the Southwest Arkansas Regional Archives, also known as SARA. SARA celebrates its 40th year of service as a research institution serving the Ark-La-Tex region. The seeds for what became SARA were planted in 1975 when the Washington Bicentennial Celebration Committee decided to commemorate the country's 200th birthday by purchasing books for the Washington town library. When they asked AHC director John Ferguson for advice, he advised them against merely stocking the library with new books. He suggested to them that they spend the money in building an historical archives to collect materials important to the history of southwest Arkansas. They took his suggestion to heart and began building an archives, which they housed in the 1874 Hempstead County Courthouse in Washington. Over the years, the archives collected numerous old documents that would have otherwise been lost to history. This archives opened to the public on March 17, 1978, during the popular Jonquil Festival.

The Southwest Regional Archives, then managed by the Hempstead County Historical Society, soon became a haven for those studying genealogy and the history of the region. Its collection featured such invaluable materials as early court records, materials relating to the economic development of southwest Arkansas, and numerous important collections related to the region’s political landscape. The collection outgrew the courthouse and in 1993, moved to its current location in the former Washington Elementary School building. It remained under the management of the Hempstead County Historical Society until 1979, when it became an independent research institution. In 2005, SARA became part of the Arkansas History Commission and State Archives as a branch archives.

SARA has continued to be an important stop for researchers for 40 years. To mark this important milestone, the State Archives and the SARA Foundation will hold a birthday party from 2—4 p.m. on Sat., Mar. 3 at SARA in Historic Washington State Park. Speakers will include Department of Arkansas Heritage Director Stacy Hurst, ASA Director Lisa Speer, SARA Foundation President Gary Walker, and Keenan Williams of the Hempstead County Historical Society. Please RSVP by Monday, February 26 by emailing events.archives@arkansas.gov or call 501-682-6900.

See our website for more events and exhibit locations!
One of the most popular collections at the ASA for those doing research into the genealogy of African American families has been the Dubisson Funeral Home records. Dubisson Funeral Home was established in 1915 in Little Rock, as Dubisson and Goodrich, an African American business. The company's founders were Daniel Joy Dubisson and Fred J. Goodrich. After a fire destroyed the original building on Louisiana Street (between Fourth and Fifth streets), the business relocated several times, including a move to West Ninth Street (once Little Rock's black business district). After Goodrich died in 1924, the business became Dubisson and Company.

The business incorporated in 1932 and expanded to include Dubisson Burial Association. Daniel Dubisson died on July 10, 1952, and his funeral was held at Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, in Little Rock. At that time, his daughter, Geraldine Dubisson Lee, became president. In the spring of 1986, Dubisson Funeral Home was acquired by the Miller Company of Monroe, Louisiana, with Joseph H. Miller as owner. In 1987, his son, Darryl Miller, became president of Dubisson. The funeral home is still in operation at 1851 Marshall Street.

In 2002, the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society published "Dubisson Funeral Home, Little Rock, Arkansas Death Record Index" in three volumes, as a part of its Final Emancipation Cemetery and Funeral Home Project, funded in part by the Arkansas Humanities Council. The collection can be found on microfilm in the ASA’s research room.
As a new year begins, we want to take a moment to reflect on the accomplishments the ASA achieved in 2017. Each year, we strive to reach a little higher in our work and to provide more for our patrons.

Last year, for example, we increased our efforts to preserve Arkansas government records. The ASA held eight state agency records workshops, presenting to 40 different state agencies. We also actively began local government records consultations, visiting eleven counties around the state. Our county consultations resulted in the ASA, with support from the Department of Arkansas Heritage, assisting Howard County with the salvaging of water-damaged county records after a water pump failure in the basement of the courthouse.

Digitization is another high priority for us and we made some great strides last year with digitization projects. We were awarded a grant from the Arkansas Natural and Cultural Resources Council for the purchase of an oversize, planetary scanner. The scanner allows us to digitize objects that were previously too difficult to digitize due to their size and condition.

We also received a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities for a newspaper digitization project. The digitized newspapers will be housed online through the Chronicling America website hosted by the Library of Congress (http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/) and will be accessible to the public for free. Additionally, we partnered with the Central Arkansas Library System (CALS) to digitize 17 of our newspapers for Newspapers.com, a project completed in June. Patrons can access those newspapers at CALS and all three ASA facilities.

Our microphotography department completed a two-year project to address a backlog of newspaper filming, which resulted in a total of 2,508 boxes of microfilm being sent to our branch archives as well as adding 16 previously unfilmed titles to our newspaper collection. Through grant funding, our branch archives also purchased digital microfilm readers for their research rooms.

We hosted/co-hosted 17 events and staff members gave 44 presentations around the state. We opened a new onsite exhibit highlighting Arkansas during World War I. “On the Fields and in the Trenches: Relics of World War I” can be viewed in front of our research room during regular business hours through 2018.

2018 is shaping up to be just as busy with a lot of exciting possibilities on the horizon! We’ll continue to keep you updated on what’s going on with the archives through our newsletter and social media throughout the year. — Dr. Lisa K. Speer, Director

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**News from NEARA**

Archives are meant to be a bridge to the past and a compass for the future. As archivists, we must constantly balance two of the foundational archival pillars: processing and access. Without the processing of material, we can’t provide any access, but without promoting access, there’s no point in processing. Some collections are particularly challenging in maintaining this balance due to their disorganized state.

Recently, we had a happy moment of serendipity at NEARA, which helped identify and reunit parts of a court case that had been processed already. In 1808, William Searcy charged Moses Graham with collecting debts on Searcy’s behalf. Searcy, being a landowner and prominent community member in Tennessee, had given loans to a long list of individuals. Unfortunately, Graham took his payment and never collected the debts, according to Searcy. This spurred a debt case in newly created Lawrence County, where Graham had resettled.

Previously, two lists of individuals with monetary amounts were identified as tax lists for early Lawrence County. These lists were digitized and made available through our Territorial Arkansas digital collection: http://ahc.digital-ar.org/cdm/landingpage/collection/p16790coll6. Then last month, the court case of *Searcy v. Graham* was digitized as well. In reviewing these separated documents, it became clear that the tax list was in actuality, the list of debts owed to William Searcy! With this revelation, we’re fortunate to be able to restore the meaning of these documents by putting them back together with the original court case papers.

**News from SARA**

When Hempstead County was created December 15, 1818, Arkansas was still part of Missouri Territory. Three more months would pass before it would be known as the Arkansas Territory. Hempstead County was named for Edward Hempstead, who was the first delegate to Congress from Missouri Territory. On June 28, 1819, the Hempstead County Court of Common Pleas was organized at the home of John English, an early settler of the area that came to be known as Marlbrook. The original county court records in the collections at SARA reference cases to be heard at English’s house, which stood along the route of what is now known as the “Southwest Trail.” This road bisected Arkansas, running from northeast to southwest. Known in earlier days as the Military Road, among other names, it would later bring many people, such as Jim Bowie, Davy Crockett, Sam Houston, and Stephen F. Austin, through Hempstead County on their way to Texas. Present day Hempstead County Road 16, between Washington and Marlboro, is part of the original route of the Southwest Trail, though it’s much improved from its 19th century condition.

During Arkansas’s Sesquicentennial in 1986, a marker denoting the site of Hempstead County’s first courthouse was placed near the site of English’s former home. Hempstead County is observing its bicentennial in 2018, with many events planned throughout the year culminating in a special celebration on December 15, 2018. For postings of events and “this day in history” in Hempstead County, visit the Facebook page https://www.facebook.com/Hempstead200/

Do you have archival materials pertaining to Hempstead County that you would like preserved for future generations? If yes, please consider donating these materials to SARA. Contact Melissa Nesbitt, Archival Manager, at 870.983.2633, email southwest.archives@arkansas.gov, or stop by SARA at 201 Hwy 195, Washington, Arkansas, Tuesday – Saturday, 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
The Friends of the Arkansas State Archives are busy planning for the coming year. In the next couple of months, the FASA will be debuting its newsletter, which will be full of information about upcoming events and ways that you can support the ASA. In addition to the newsletter and our Facebook page, we are now also on Twitter.

In a couple of weeks, we will launch our website which will detail ways in which you may join the organization and will include a schedule of upcoming events, as well as news and photos from past events.

If you are interested in joining, contact us via Facebook or by mail at Arkansas State Archives, PO Box 250916, Little Rock, AR 72225. Follow us on Facebook and Twitter for more information!

New at the ASA

January 2018
Donations and Accessions

ASA

Bates Family History Vol. 1 and 2, .25 cu.ft.
Major Joe V. Conklin photograph
James C. Frazier Abstract of Title
Joe David Rice papers, 4 cu.ft.
Roy Johnson Family collection artifacts
Glenwood City Treasury Warrant and Bank Note
from the Bank of Amity
Othella Faison collection, .5 cu.ft.
Governor Winthrop Rockefeller Proclamation
Proclaiming Engineer's Week

We always receive more material than we are able to list in our newsletter. For a full listing, see our blog.

We appreciate the generous support of our donors!

The State Archives is fortunate to hold a large collection of historic maps. This month, we highlight a few of the rarest and earliest maps in our collection. All of our maps are available in our research room and some are online at http://ahc.digital-ar.org/ with more to come. Here’s a glimpse of some of these important resources!

French map from the early 18th century depicting the Mississippi Valley, designating the tribal lands of the “Chactas” (Choctaws) and “Chicachas” (Chicasaws)

Map depicting the Mississippi River Valley from the second half of the 18th century. Note that this was before the Louisiana Purchase and that “Carolina” extended as far west as the Mississippi River.

Map of the Louisiana Territory shortly after the Louisiana Purchase, showing “Akansas”

Map of Arkansas Territory from 1823 before the western border of the territory was fixed