Governor Proclaims October 21-27 as Archives Week

Governor Mike Beebe has officially proclaimed October 21-27 as Archives Week in Arkansas. In conjunction with National Archives Month, Arkansas will celebrate Archives Week with activities that promote the theme “Documenting Arkansas.” The events celebrate the significance of Arkansas’s historical records, illuminates the many ways these records enrich our lives and recognizes archives around the state for their work in preserving these treasures.

During Archives Week, the History Commission will host a workshop at Historic Washington State Park, participate in the Arkansas Genealogical Society’s fall seminar, present the monthly Bits and Bites lunch program and display the “Fought in earnest” exhibit at Historic Washington State Park.

Other activities are planned throughout the month of October to promote the History Commission and its collections. For more information about Archives Week or the activities scheduled, contact Jane Hooker at state.archives@arkansas.gov.

From the Director

National Archives Week, October 21-27, is a time to publicize and celebrate the work of NEARA, SARA and the AHC. I hope you will join us during the month of October for several of the activities we have planned. Two in particular, Bits and Bites on October 26 and a seminar on October 27, help you learn more about our collections and how to preserve your family heirlooms. Please register and join us for these Archives Week events!

Our collections spotlight this month features preserved family documents graciously loaned to the AHC for copying to microfilm. This collection tells the story of the Hendrix Mercantile in Antoine, Arkansas. Family treasures like these, are invaluable primary sources of life in rural Arkansas. By loaning your papers to us, a source that would have been unavailable to researchers across the country, becomes accessible. Saving these treasures doesn’t always mean transferring ownership to the AHC. I’d love to talk with you about records you might have to loan to us.

The Fought in earnest exhibit continues its travels across Arkansas this month to Little Rock Central High School and Historic Washington State Park. Please take some time to view this glimpse into Civil War Arkansas.

Two new commissioners have been appointed by Governor Beebe to lead our team at the AHC - Michael Lindsey of Fayetteville and Joyce Gibson of Prescott. Lindsey’s term as a Commissioner continues until 2017 and Gibson’s service to the Black History Commission of Arkansas extends until 2013. Welcome!

Fall means festivals in Arkansas and the AHC will be at several this month. Mark the dates on your calendar to visit us in Stuttgart and Hot Springs. We’ll see you there!
Mary Medearis, SARA Founder and First Director

The History Commission and our staff mourn the passing of Mary Medearis on September 16, 2012.

Mary was the founding director of the Southwest Arkansas Regional Archives and a charter member of the Hempstead County Historical Society. While Medearis called herself a musician, she is best known for authoring Big Doc’s Girl (1942), a best-selling novel about her early Arkansas days and her parents and family.

Mary was born in North Little Rock in 1915. Her mother taught piano and her father was a doctor. She attended the Juilliard School of Music, graduating in 1940. She married Richard Reeves and raised four children, living in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. She spent her life teaching music. On a visit home in 1962, Mary discovered historic Washington and returned each summer for thirteen years, finally moving to Washington in 1975 to write a book about the town and its people. Mary also served as the writer-in-residence at Ouachita Baptist University before retiring in 1996 and moving to Saratoga Springs, New York, to be near family.

“Mary was a dear friend and a vital force behind saving and preserving the stories of historic Washington. Her work at SARA and to preserve the records and documents from southwest Arkansas left an impressive legacy,” said Dr. Richter. “All of us at the Commission are grateful for her vision and her friendship,” she concluded.

News from NEARA

NEARA’s outreach programs often take the form of an information booth to help publicize the regional archives, offer free services and supply research information. A recent opportunity, the Milligan Family Reunion/Civil War Memorial, provided an interesting twist to the usual family reunion schedule. Staff from NEARA were on hand to provide genealogical references and information.

About 75 people attended the Civil War Memorial Ceremony held at the Milligan Campground, located about 28 miles from Powhatan near Strawberry, Arkansas. Eight Milligan descendants were honored posthumously with the Southern Cross of Honor placed at the gravesites of the veterans. The Sons of the Confederate Soldiers from Jonesboro conducted the ceremony assisted by the local chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy.

Confederate flags blew and the sun shined brightly as the crowd stood around the cemetery singing Amazing Grace. As the ceremony progressed, the “widow” walked to the gravesite with the escort and flowers in hand to mourn her “beloved husband.” W. Danny Hondoll stood with his sword drawn and pointed to the Confederate footstone to acknowledge this soldier who had died in the throes of battle. The widow moved to the side of her “husband’s” grave to lay the bouquet of flowers she brought. It was as though time had reverted to the 1860s, 150 years ago, to finally bring honor for this man’s extreme sacrifice.

The cannon sounded off with six rounds, echoing through the hills to remind those looking on that all of these men had paid the extreme price to serve their Confederate lands. What a privilege for the Milligan clan to attend a family reunion and have their fallen loved ones honored on this date. One of the descendants remarked that “We’ve managed somehow to touch our past.”

This commonplace gathering brought the past alive for the Milligan family. NEARA was honored to play a small part in this local history event. After all, isn’t that what we are about?
BRINGING THE AHC TO YOU

Mark the 150th Anniversary of the Civil War by reserving “Fought in earnest” for your site today!

Know your Commissioners

Arkansas History Commission
Ms. Dorothy Boulden, El Dorado
Dr. Ray Granade, Arkadelphia
Dr. Ruth Hawkins, Jonesboro

Mr. Michael Lindsey, Fayetteville
Mr. Robert McCarley, Little Rock
Ms. Elizabeth Robbins, Hot Springs
Dr. Robert Sherer, Little Rock

Black History Commission of Arkansas
Mr. Marion Butler, Sherwood
Ms. Carla Coleman, Little Rock
Rev. Barry Dobson, El Dorado

Ms. Joyce Gibson, Prescott
Dr. John W. Graves, Arkadelphia
Mr. Myron Jackson, Little Rock
Mr. James Lawson, Jacksonville
**Remembering Dell Leveritt**
Long-time AHC volunteer, Mrs. Dell Leveritt, 92, of North Little Rock, passed away September 26. Dell volunteered at the Commission from 1989-2009 and performed a wide variety of tasks, including organizing and cleaning files and assisting archivists. Dell and her friend, fellow volunteer Juanita Rowlett, spent the majority of their time on organizing the Pulaski County probate records.

“As a retired teacher, Dell knew the importance of research and primary sources. Her preliminary work to prepare files for microfilming was of great help to our archivists. Dell’s attention to detail is something we all admired and will miss,” said Dr. Richter. Jane Hooker, AHC Archival Manager recalls Dell fondly stating, “Dell was a wonderful worker. We will always remember her as a friend and for her contributions to the archives.”

**News from SARA**
These images from the Rosemary Arnold collection at SARA capture W.H. Carruth and his wife Mary. Their story is one of a successful merchant with a large family in Washington, Arkansas.

W. H. Carruth was born in Batesville, Arkansas, in 1835 to Elias and Martha Blake Carruth. He was their third child in a family of nine—two sons and seven daughters. His father Elias and his mother Martha Blake married in Tennessee in 1829 and moved to Batesville in 1833 where they lived for four years. Elias worked rafting logs and lumber down the White and Mississippi Rivers to New Orleans.

In 1837 the Carruth family moved to Washington where Mr. Carruth contracted to carry the mail and became a major mail contractor in southwest Arkansas and northeast Texas. He was also involved in Indian Removal and provided the Indians moving through Arkansas at the time with supplies as they traveled from Mississippi to Indian Territory.

W. H. Carruth aided his father in his work but also managed to get a good education in Washington. He chose to become a merchant, and by 1860 when he was 25, he was living in Washington, and working as a clerk. That same year he married Mary A. Cermenati, age 17 and also of Washington, on December 13, 1860.

Mary Cermenati was the daughter of Bernard and Alice Cermenati, both natives of Maine, who had come to Washington, Arkansas, via Boston in 1842. Bernard Cermenati had been a stone mason. He and his wife had their daughter Mary in 1842 and a son William in 1846. In 1850, however, both parents died, leaving their children orphans with no relatives. Thomas Hubbard, a well-known Washington attorney who hailed from Connecticut, and his wife Barbara took the children to raise.

After the outbreak of the Civil War, W. H. Carruth served in the quartermaster’s department and carried supplies from Texas to Little Rock. After the war he became registrar of the United States land office in Washington for about a year. In 1868 he re-entered the mercantile trade. By 1870 he was the head of a large household in Washington with his wife, three children, his brother-in-law, his widowed mother and three servants.

Carruth was successful in business and by 1880 his household continued to grow. He and Mary would have nine children, six of whom survived infancy. These pictures of the couple were taken in St. Louis by the well-known St. Louis photographer Julius C. Strauss. Mrs. Carruth died in 1889, the pictures most probably date to the 1880s. St. Louis at the time was a supply center for merchants who visited the city for business and pleasure in order to stock up their stores. With the coming of the railroad across Arkansas in 1873 and 1874, the trip of many days at the time of the Civil War had become an overnight train ride on the St. Louis, Iron Mountain and Southern Railway.

W. H. Carruth remained in Washington after his wife’s death until his death in 1916. The Carruth family graves are in the Presbyterian Cemetery at Washington.
Commissioner Spotlight

Please join Dr. Richter and the AHC staff in welcoming Michael Lindsey as our newest Commissioner! He replaces James Huffman of Fayetteville. His term will expire in 2017.

A native of Harrison, Arkansas, Lindsey now lives in Fayetteville and serves as vice president of Government Affairs at the Rogers-Lowell Area Chamber of Commerce. He joined the Chamber in 2010 and represents its members at the local, state, and federal government level. He holds a Bachelor of Science in chemical engineering and a Masters of Arts in History, both from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville. Prior to joining the Chamber, Lindsey worked in investment banking where he specialized in public finance for municipal, school, county, and state government. In addition to his experience in banking, he has experience as a consultant for non-profit and public entities where he provided grant, project management, financial and budget services.


State Capitol Exhibit Tells of Civil War Archives Relocation

In the spring of 1862, Arkansas’s Confederate government was threatened by the advance of Union forces. Lacking defensive resources, Governor Henry Rector contemplated relocating the state’s archives from vulnerable Little Rock to a more secure location. On May 8 the state archives were shipped seventy miles up the Arkansas river, then hauled overland to Hot Springs, where they stayed until the end of July.

Archives in Motion, the Arkansas State Capitol’s Fall 2012 display presented in partnership with the Arkansas History Commission, looks back at this episode and some of the individuals involved. These include a deaf government clerk known both for his distinctive penmanship style and a sense of humor, and Governor Henry Rector, a political outsider who found himself at odds with the Confederate national government and with local military commanders. Woven into the exhibit cases are excerpts from the diaries of Ralph Leland Goodrich, a New York-born Little Rock schoolmaster who passed some agreeable days in July 1862 at Hot Springs, doing clerical work for the Treasurer’s office by day, while his nights were filled with reading, writing, drinking, playing cards and occasionally dealing with a rough colleague.

Archives in Motion features replicas and originals of period documents drawn from the collections of the Arkansas History Commission and the Secretary of State’s office, which might have been part of the complement shipped out of Little Rock in May 1862. The exhibit’s central artifact, perhaps the only surviving object with an explicit link to the events of 1862, is a large wooden box, long preserved by the descendants of Governor Henry Rector, in which Treasury records were packed for their trip out of town.

On display through November 15 in the Capitol’s first floor display cases, Archives in Motion highlights an episode in which saving the state’s documentary heritage became a matter of the highest priority.
October Locations for “Fought in earnest”

Little Rock Central High School, along with Historic Washington State Park, host the AHC’s traveling exhibit, *Fought in earnest*, during October.

At Central, the exhibit will be on display in the Library from October 1-12. Richard Ledbetter, author of historical fiction books, will speak October 9 from 4-5 p.m. on using primary source documents in his writing. The event is free and open to the public and will take place in LRCHS’s library.

Historic Washington State Park in Washington, Arkansas will host the exhibit from October 17-November 5 as the park celebrates Archives Week. In conjunction with Archives Week and the display, the AHC is hosting a seminar on Saturday, October 27 featuring presenters from SARA, AHC and Historic Washington State Park. The seminar is free, lunch is provided, but registration is required.

Presentations will give both beginning and experienced researchers the chance to get acquainted with the resources of the State Archives. Topics will include an overview of the AHC’s digital photographic collections, how to care for family photographs, weaponry along the Southwest Trail, life and times of 1862 Washington, the stories behind the images from the Walz Collection at SARA and an in-depth look at the primary documents used in the “Fought in earnest” exhibit and the book, “Documenting Arkansas.”

History Bits and Bites - October 26

Register for “History Bits and Bites” here.

Registration deadline: October 24

Are you properly preserving and protecting your family treasures? Family photographs, documents, diaries, even grandma’s quilts and china need proper care, cleaning and storage to protect them for future generations. Join Jane Thompson, AHC’s conservator and Juilienne Crawford, AHC’s curator at the October 26 Bits and Bites program to learn how to be a good curator of your family’s treasures.

Crawford will demonstrate how to care and store textiles, ceramics, metals and artwork. Thompson will propose solutions for the “photo shoebox of shame” and recommend materials and tools to use for preserving and storing photographs.

Bring your lunch and a drink and join us in the AHC’s Conference room at 12 noon on October 26 for this informative program. Bits and Bites is free, but registration is required.
Collections Spotlight

Mercantiles and general stores were often the heart of rural communities around Arkansas. One such collection at the AHC, the Hendrix store records, records the purchases and activities of the citizens of Antoine, Arkansas. Covering a period from 1888-1974, the collection contains accounts payable and cash ledgers, a checkbook, news clippings, and gin tickets from the store.

Hendrix Mercantile, originally known as Meeks Mercantile, was established in 1889 in Antoine, Pike County, Arkansas, by O.O. Meeks. He owned the business until his death in 1935. His son, Harvey Meeks, operated the store until 1946, when he sold it to Buford Hendrix. Hendrix died in 2006 and his descendants continue to operate the business.

Many thanks to the Hendrix family for loaning the records to the History Commission for copying and providing this rare glimpse into the centerpiece of a rural community in southwest Arkansas. The finding aid for the collection is available on-line for researchers at www.ark-ives.com.

One Capitol Mall
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