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ASA newsletter 2013 June

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ARKANSAS HISTORY COMMISSION NEWS ARKANSAS'S STATE ARCHIVES

ISSUE 16

JUNE 2013

Dr. Speer Begins Work as AHC Director and State Historian

June 3, 2013 marked the beginning of a new era at the Arkansas History Commission when Dr. Lisa K. Speer began work as the AHC Director and State Historian. Only the fifth director in the Commission's 108 year history, Speer brings a fresh vision, experience, and commitment to the institution.

Born in Fayetteville, Dr. Speer grew up near Malvern, graduated from Glen Rose High School and then from Ouachita Baptist University in 1988 with a degree in History. She earned an MA and PhD in American History from the University of Mississippi, where she worked as Curator of the Mississippi Collection in the University's Archives and Special Collections. She then earned an MA in Library and Information Studies from the The University of Alabama, where she worked as an archival technician at the W. S. Hoole Library. For just over a dozen years, Dr. Speer directed the Special Collections and Archives at Southeast Missouri State University.



"The History Commission, NEARA, and SARA are run by a talented and dedicated group of staff and volunteers and I am proud to be a part of a team which enthusiastically embraces our mission to preserve our history and to promote that history to a diverse clientele throughout the state," Speer stated. "With the support of the Commissioners and staff, the future of the Arkansas History Commission lies in expanding our mission to include greater online access to collections and continuing to develop our collection by partnering with state agencies and individuals to preserve the official records of the state," she continued.

Additional future goals of the Commission, as outlined by Dr. Speer, include promoting Ark-Cat to reach its full potential as a clearinghouse for collections information, building an active Friends of the Arkansas History Commission group, and developing lesson plans and activities to facilitate and promote use of the AHC's rich collections by Arkansas teachers and their students.

"Speer has the education, experience, and personality to lead not only the archives, but will be a capable and effective advocate for Arkansas history," declared Richard Davies, Director of Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism. Dr. Ray Granade, chairman of the Arkansas History Commission, summed up the Commissioners excitement in Speer's hiring by stating: "She is someone who obviously wants to serve the people of Arkansas and whose priority is to serve the best interests of not only the institution, but of all Arkansans."

AHC Seminar—Healthcare in Arkansas History

Mark your calendars for Saturday, June 22 from 9 am – 2:30 pm and attend the *Healthcare in Arkansas History* seminar at the Arkansas State Capitol. Sponsored by the Arkansas History Commission, the free seminar will be held from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. in Room 171 of the Capitol.

Featured speakers include Bill Gurley, Professor of Pharmacy at UAMS, speaking on Civil War surgeon Henry Dye; Lauren Jarvis, AHC Archivist, exploring the fight against tuberculosis in our state; Elizabeth Freeman, Library Technician at the AHC, discussing midwifery and childbirth; Amanda Paige, AHC Library Technician, addressing the issue of health and illness during Indian Removal; and Jane Hooker, AHC Archival Manager, discussing the *In Remembrance* death records index.

Seminars presented by the State Archives are approved by the Arkansas Department of Education as Arkansas History professional development credit for teachers of all grades. Don't miss this interesting session!

From the Director

As I write this article, two weeks have passed since I walked through the Commission's doors on June 3. Those weeks have been a whirlwind and I have enjoyed every minute!

Thanks to so many of you that have called, emailed, or just dropped in to welcome me back home. I truly appreciate your warm hospitality!

I am very excited about the future of the Arkansas History Commission—how we can serve you better, increase our collections, promote our history to classrooms across Arkansas, and improve online access to thousands of historical records. The AHC has so many strengths to build upon including the most extensive research collection on Arkansas history, life, and culture in the state; a staff that travels the state to promote our history and heritage to you (53 presentations in 2012 alone!); and strong support from the commissioners and the Black History commissioners. All 14 commissioners work hard on behalf of the AHC, seeking new materials, making time to attend meetings, and promoting our mission in all four corners of the state. I would be remiss if I did not recognize the direction, leadership, and dedication of the previous AHC Directors, most recently Dr. Wendy Richter, in their efforts to build the AHC into the largest depository of Arkansas materials in the state.

One of the things I look forward to is meeting you, our patrons, and hearing your thoughts on how the Commission can improve our services. Please feel free to contact me at the Commission or better still attend one (or several!) of our many summer events. I hope to see you there!

BRINGING THE AHC TO YOU

- Through June 26* "Fought in earnest" Exhibit
Headquarters House
Fayetteville
- Through June 29* African American Legislators
Exhibit
Lakeport Plantation
Lake Village
- June 22* Seminar
"Healthcare in Arkansas History"
Arkansas State Capitol
Little Rock
- July 2-28* Exhibit
Garland County Library
Hot Springs
- July 20* Booth and Presentation
Genealogy Lock In
Jonesboro Public Library
Jonesboro

News from SARA

The Southwest Arkansas Regional Archives has selected its 2013 Summer Intern. Roy P. "Trae" Wisecarver III of Crossett will work at SARA from June 4 to August 10 transcribing 19th century southwest Arkansas Freedmen's Bureau handwritten documents from microfilm and work on other records related to the Bureau as time permits.

Trae is a May 2013 graduate of the University of Arkansas at Monticello. He graduated *Summa Cum Laude* with a B.A., majoring in history with a minor in political science. He has been accepted into the Master's Degree Program in History at the University of Mississippi and will begin his graduate career there in mid-August. Trae also has a strong background in computers with concentrations in General Technology, Computer Maintenance, and Networking.

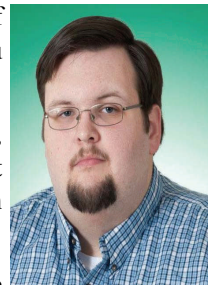
Trae had an outstanding academic career at Monticello and was the recipient of many awards and scholarships. In 2011, he received the G. William and Verna Hobson Cahoon Scholarship from UAM. In 2012, he received the Dr. Claude H. Babin Scholarship, also from UAM. In 2013, he won the Thomas S. Morgan Memorial Scholarship given by Phi Alpha Theta--the history honor society, and the H. Y. Benedict Fellowship given by Alpha Chi--the academic honor society. He also received the History Outstanding Graduate Award and the Field Study Scholarship--both from UAM--as well as the Academic Dean's Award from the Arkansas Zeta Chapter of Alpha Chi.

During his time at UAM, Trae participated in the UAM School of Social & Behavioral Sciences British Isles Study Program. In May 2012, he studied in the program in London, England. In May 2013 after graduation, he participated in the program in Dublin, Ireland.

Trae is very interested in the American Civil War, and has already presented at national and regional conferences. In 2012, he presented on Civil War in Ashley County, Arkansas, at the Phi Alpha Theta Arkansas Regional Conference at UCA in Conway and at the National Convention in Orlando, Florida. This year to date he has spoken on the Battle of Arkansas Post at the Phi Alpha Theta Arkansas Regional Conference at Harding University in Searcy, at the National Conference on Undergraduate Research at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse and at the Alpha Chi National Convention in Nashville, TN.

Trae has also published in his area of interest. In 2012, Trae completed an article on "Skirmish at Longview" for *The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture*. Currently, his article "A Perfect Hurricane of Shot and Shell: The Battle of Arkansas Post" is in the April 2013 issue of the *Grand Prairie Historical Bulletin*. This essay received the award as the Best Undergraduate Paper at the Phi Alpha Theta Arkansas Regional Conference in March 2012.

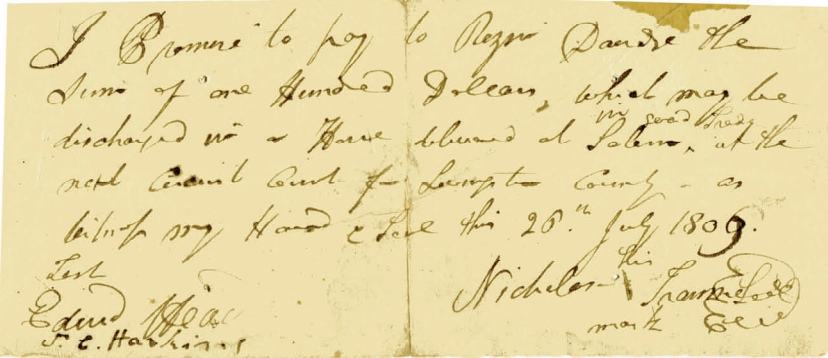
Please help us welcome Trae to SARA this summer—we are very happy to have him as part of our team!



News from NEARA

A review of early documents of territorial Lawrence County (Missouri and Arkansas) reveals that fully half of the complaints filed in the Justice of the Peace and Circuit courts were debt-related. A close examination of the people involved, the nature of the debt, the entangled business and personal lives of the litigants, and the high incidence of people admitting to owing the debt rather than challenging the suit, demonstrate a closed economic system. In this system, residents borrowed and loaned money, goods, and services freely among themselves, then used the courts to recover that debt when the need arose.

Often promissory notes, or IOUs, served as the means to substantiate the claims of individuals. When a debt was paid, the debtor reclaimed possession of the note to remove it from circulation. In an 1816 court case, Rezin Davage sued Nicholas Trammel in Lawrence County over a debt of \$100. One of the exhibits in the case is an 1809 promissory note, signed with an X in front of witnesses. Apparently, like so many of those early frontiersmen, Trammel was illiterate.



Sometimes these notes were used as currency, traded by the holder to another individual or business for goods, services, or in repayment of other debts. Much like banks and finance companies today sell loans they hold for real estate or automobiles, lenders in the early territorial period did the same. Among the collections at NEARA is an 1806 promissory note wherein Henry Cassidy owes money to Henry Renick. Apparently Cassidy did not repay the loan in a timely manner, because in 1816 Renick reassigns the note to Ely Hillhouse. The following year, Hillhouse sues Cassidy in an attempt to collect the debt.

Even after statehood and the introduction of banks in the state, this system of internal finance continued. In a recent examination of court cases involving businessmen in Powhatan during the mid-nineteenth century, many of the complaints were between these businessmen and the cases almost exclusively involved credit between them. A reading of the cases shows a healthy trade relationship with no evidence of malice or ill will between those involved. While they might be on opposing sides on one case, the next case may show them as partners collecting debts owed by others.

The financial entanglements among the earliest settlers in this territory provide a revealing glimpse into how the relationships developed, who had power and money, and who was willing to help others succeed in such a trying environment. Understanding the social and economic structures underlying the lives of those who lived here requires analyzing the methods used to finance early settlement, expansion, and economic development. With hundreds of court cases from this era, NEARA provides an excellent resource to those interested in gaining a better understanding of early life in the territory.

KNOW YOUR COMMISSIONERS

Arkansas History Commission

Ms. Dorothy Boulden, El Dorado

Dr. Ruth Hawkins, Jonesboro

Mr. Robert McCarley, Little Rock

Dr. Robert Sherer, Little Rock

Dr. Ray Granade, Arkadelphia

Mr. Michael Lindsey, Fayetteville

Ms. Elizabeth Robbins, Hot Springs

Black History Commission of Arkansas

Mr. Marion Butler, Sherwood

Rev. Barry Dobson, El Dorado

Dr. John W. Graves, Arkadelphia

Mr. James Lawson, Jacksonville

Ms. Carla Coleman, Little Rock

Ms. Joyce Gibson, Prescott

Mr. Myron Jackson, Little Rock

Summer Exhibit Locations



Our AHC exhibits keep up their hectic traveling pace this summer. You can see the *African American Legislators* exhibit at Lakeport Plantation through June 29, *Fought in earnest* at Headquarters House in Fayetteville through June 26 and in Hot Springs at the Garland County Library from July 2 - 28. The *In Remembrance* exhibit continues through the end of the year in the exhibit area outside the Research Room at the Commission offices in Little Rock.

During your travels this summer, stop in to see one or all of these exhibits—it will be worth your while!

The AHC Team

Many of you are familiar with Brian Irby from his various presentations at many of our seminars and at other historical agencies throughout the state. Irby is a native of Conway, grew up in northern Pulaski County, and attended the University of Central Arkansas where he received his B.A. and M.A. in History.



Since 2008, Brian has worked at the Commission, first as an Administrative Specialist II and currently as an Archival Assistant. Prior to his tenure at the AHC, Brian worked for several law firms in the Little Rock area. His area of interest is turn-of-the-century South, especially the politics and the advent of progressivism in the south.

Currently, Brian is working on the huge collection of federal land grants, the bulk of which date from the mid 1800s through the 1920s. He has processed over 28,000 records, with many more thousands waiting. The grants consist of swamp land grants, 16th section grants, and donation land grants. Irby has learned a great deal about the settlement and development of our state from working with these grants. “The early swamp grants are especially interesting—you keep seeing the same land agents names over and over, along with lands being declared as swamp lands that really were not. I have to think this was the 19th century version of insider trading,” he said laughingly.

Helping new patrons learn how to research is one of the things Brian enjoys most about working at the Commission. “Most people starting out really don’t know the process of research and how to methodically look at sources. I really like helping them learn the steps to produce accurate research and finding that one source that pulls all their work together,” he stated.

Irby looks forward to the Commission becoming active in providing materials to teachers to help students use primary materials from the AHC collections to learn about Arkansas History. In his spare time, Brian enjoys playing the guitar, reading mystery novels, and traveling “where the road takes him.”

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

Collections Spotlight

With the receipt of the ANCRC grant to protect, conserve, and update finding aids to the Governors manuscripts in the collection, the Collections Spotlights through the summer will focus on some of the larger collections to be conserved with the grant.

This month, our featured collection is the John Ellis Martineau papers, covering the time period from 1926-1928. While Governor, Martineau changed the funding source for Arkansas highways, which launched the “modern era” of highway construction; led the relief effort following the 1927 Mississippi River flood, and demonstrated a more conciliatory position on race relations with his role as Chancery Judge in the Elaine Massacre and his stance as Governor on the 1927 lynching of John Carter in Little Rock. He also was the first candidate to defeat an incumbent governor (Tom Terral) since Reconstruction and the first to broadcast his inaugural address on the radio.

The Martineau papers consist of approximately 10 cubic feet of materials, including correspondence, warrants, telegrams, and his working papers while governor. Printed finding aids are available in the Research Room; once the grant work begins, finding aids for this collection will be online.

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ONE CAPITOL MALL, ROOM 2B-215 LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS 72201 501.682.6900
STATE.ARCHIVES@ARKANSAS.GOV WWW.ARK-IVES.COM