

# Leslie Family Papers Processed

The Butler Center's largest manuscript collection to date has been processed and is available for research use. The Leslie Family Papers contain the personal and business records of six generations of a Southeast Arkansas family. While the earliest materials in the collection date from the 1850s, the bulk consists of the papers of James W. "Jim" Leslie. His papers include personal and professional correspondence, financial records, and historical writings and research.



James W. Leslie, ca. 1974

Jim Leslie, a Pine Bluff writer/historian and retired businessman, wrote extensively about the history of Southeast Arkansas. Born in Warren, Bradley County, Leslie attended Monticello A & M (now University of Arkansas at Monticello) and finished his formal schooling at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, with bachelors and masters degrees in business administration. After graduate school, he worked for Firestone and enlisted in the Army in July, 1941. After completing his military service, Leslie returned to Pine Bluff and opened a merchandise brokerage. In 1968, he sold his business and became a full-time historical re-

searcher and writer.

Leslie has authored three books on Pine Bluff and Southeast Arkansas history: *Saracen's Country* (1974), *Land of the Cypress and Pine* (1976), and *Pine Bluff and Jefferson County: A Pictorial History* (1981). In addition, his articles have appeared in numerous publications, including the *Pine Bluff Commercial*, *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, and *Jefferson County Historical Quarterly* and cover a wide spectrum of historical topics.

Aside from the James W. Leslie papers, a rich and wide variety of subjects are found in the Leslie Family documents, including a number of photographs and documentation on the lumber industry in Southeast Arkansas.

The Leslie Family Papers is a valuable resource for an understudied portion of the state. The collection is cataloged as MSS 98-58 and is available to the public.

Leslie and his wife Gerry now live in retirement in Little Rock.

## Butler Center Hires Special Collections Librarian

The Butler Center for Arkansas Studies is proud to welcome Rob Seibert to the staff. Rob has been hired as the Special Collections Librarian. In addition to being in charge of the library system's rare book collection, Rob's main job is processing the Jay Miller Aviation History Collection, which is housed at the Aerospace Library. The Miller Collection is one of the largest collections of aviation and aerospace materials in the United States and was purchased by the Aerospace Education Center when it opened in 1995.



Through a cooperative agreement, the library organizes, catalogs, and processes the collection. Currently, Rob is working on the photograph component which encompasses around 500,000 images. Many of the images in the Miller Collection have been used in books and documentaries.

Rob graduated from Catholic High School, in Little Rock, and received a B.A. in History from Hendrix College in Conway. He graduated from the University of Southern Mississippi (USM) in 2000 with a dual masters in History and Library Science. While at USM, Rob worked at the John C. Stennis Space Center, a testing station for the NASA Space Shuttle.

Currently, Rob's office is located at the Aerospace Library, but future plans call for him to be in the Butler Center full-time. Rob can be contacted through the Aerospace Library. To view a selection of the Miller Collection images go to [www.cals.lib.ar.us/miller](http://www.cals.lib.ar.us/miller).

Rob lives in Hillcrest with his wife Mary Anne. Please join us in welcoming Rob to the staff.

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## Curator's Column

Tom W. Dillard

As we begin another new year—not to mention a new millennium—the collective minds of the Butler Center are on programming. By *programming* I mean all of the varied activities and projects sponsored by the Butler Center.

Many people think of an archives as a place for merely warehousing information that documents the past. The Butler Center is not that kind of archives. From the very beginning, the Butler Center has viewed itself as an agency that will work hard to connect Arkansans with their heritage. In sum, we not only collect, we also translate.

Connecting the population of a state with their heritage is a rather daunting goal for a newly organized and underfunded agency. On top of that, the challenges are huge. I cannot think of another state which has so consistently neglected its heritage. We were one of the last states in the nation to create an official state history commission; state and local history was virtually left out of the state educational curriculum; until recently few books were produced on Arkansas, and even fewer videos are available. We did not even have an adult-level history of the state in print until a few years ago.

Facing this kind of challenge forces the Butler Center to plan carefully. We cannot rectify all these shortcomings at once. One of our top priorities has been to help teachers do a better job of teaching about the state. Our Butler Fellowship program has been a big success, and we have recently augmented that program by seeking out partners who can collaborate with us. We are aggressively seeking out materials to go on our website—for use by both students, teachers, and the general public. We are continuing to work with TASC (Teachers of Arkansas Studies Council) to co-sponsor the popular “Arkansas History Resource Fairs” that are designed to acquaint teachers with resources useful in teaching about the state. In sum, the educational front is keeping the Butler Center very busy. Whenever we doubt the wisdom of our educational program, we force ourselves to visualize the students of the future—young men and women who emerge from our school systems with an awareness of their heritage as Arkansans.

We do not overlook the out-of-school adult when it comes to programming. Our “Legacies & Lunch” series, which has been attracting large crowds, is a noon program on Arkansas history held the first Wednesday of each month. Each May we mount a variety of programs to commemorate Arkansas Heritage Month. With the adult audience in mind, we are underwriting a 30-minute program on Arkansas steamboat history—which will be broadcast later in the year.

While I do not have space to list all our programming plans and initiatives, I think you get the point. Arkansas history programming is our bread and butter.

If you have not participated in any of our Butler Center programs, please consider this an invitation to do so. All you have to do is drop us a note or give us a call—and ask to be placed on our mailing list. My phone number is 501-918-3054. Give me a call, and we will begin the process of connecting you with your heritage as an Arkansan.

## Wilson Company Photographs Available for Research Use

Access to the Butler Center's photograph collections continues to improve. Brian Robertson, Manuscripts Coordinator, has been hard at work creating finding aids for portions of our collection. The finding aids provide descriptions of the images held by the Butler Center. The latest photograph collection to be completed contain the images of the R.E.L. Wilson Company in Wilson, Arkansas.

The R.E.L. Wilson Company was founded by R.E.L. Wilson in 1886. From its humble beginnings the company grew into a massive enterprise of extraordinary diversification. Centered in Mississippi County, the company blended agricultural and industrial pursuits under one management. At one time, the company owned seventy-seven different industries and cultivated the world's largest cotton plantation with over 57,000 acres. A self-contained company town, Wilson, Arkansas once had 11,000 workers/citizens.

The R.E.L. Wilson Photograph Collection contains over 200 black and white images documenting the company and its workers. The photographs date from the late 1930s and show various aspects of life within the company. These images will prove to be an invaluable resource for those interested in the Arkansas Delta.

The Wilson Company photographs were donated by the late Mr. and Mrs. George Toney and are now available for use.

# A LEGACY OF ARKANSAS ARTISTS:

**Nicholas, Adrian and Edwin Brewer** by Reita Walker Miller, Arkansas Art Coordinator

Not long ago I had the opportunity to get reacquainted with Edwin Cook Brewer by way of email. Edwin and his painter wife, Maedge, have lived in Santa Barbara, California for the last 20 years. Before moving to California, Edwin lived in Little Rock, Arkansas, where he was born in 1927. In the late 1970s Edwin was teaching occasional classes and workshops in Arkansas and that's when I first met him.

Several other beginning Arkansas painters and I spent a week in the old Crescent Hotel in Eureka Springs, AR., learning to "look" at the many leveled city, interpret what we saw with graphite, paper, and watercolor paints, then present our work to Edwin daily for critique. Edwin was a good teacher who gently prodded us along the way with his own drawings and developing paintings so we could begin to see what an experienced artist's eye could do with all that visual information. The breakthrough I had that week was one painting that began to show me how to simplify complicated subject matter. I often looked at that painting--and it still reminds me how hard a lesson "simplification" is to learn.

Edwin recently gave the Butler Center Arkansas Art Collection one of his newest paintings (above), "A Remembered Place," (Eureka Springs) Oil, 28" x 38". If you could see the colors in this painting, you would see the brilliant, jewel-like blues, reds, oranges, and pinks as they appear throughout the painting on the houses, the

mountainside and even in the shadows. Although we have almost a dozen of Edwin's older works, this piece represents the only one we have of his newer work.

Edwin follows in a long line of renowned American artists. His grandfather, Nicholas Richard Brewer (1857-1949), was known in the art communities of New York, Minneapolis, Chicago, California, and the Southwest as a portrait painter. He was represented three different times in exhibitions of the National Academy of Design in New York beginning in 1885.

Nicholas was born in Minnesota, but split his time between St. Paul and New York City. His first important commission was from Henry Ward Beecher (American clergyman and abolitionist). Among his sitters were famous people of his time such as Joseph Jefferson (actor), Ignace Paderewski (violinist), Justices Butler, Van Devanter and Sutherland (Supreme Court justices from New York), Senator Joe T. Robinson, and President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

The Butler Center recently acquired the original painting of actor, "Joe Jefferson as Rip Van Winkle" (right). This painting appears in Nicholas Brewer's illustrated autobiography, *Trails of a Paintbrush*, published in 1938. The book chronicles his life and travels as an artist throughout the United States. His book is an important



"A Remembered Place" (Eureka Springs) by Edwin Brewer was recently donated to the Butler Center by the artist.

document covering more than half a century of artistic development in America. *Trails of a Paintbrush* is in the Arkansas Collection at the Butler Center and can be used in the reading room area.

Another recent acquisition is a Nicholas Brewer small landscape painting in oil. The painting was acquired through contacts in San Antonio, Texas, where Nicholas painted and exhibited in the 1920s.

Nicholas Brewer and his son Adrian (1891-1956) first traveled to Arkansas in 1912 where Nicholas See "Brewer" on Page 7



"Joe Jefferson as Rip Van Winkle," by Nicholas Brewer.

## Nominations Sought for Advisory Board

In order to gain valuable perspective and independent evaluation, the Butler Center depends upon an advisory board. The board, which meets yearly, consists of 15 people with backgrounds in Arkansas studies. Tom Dillard, Butler Center Curator, said he calls upon board members frequently to react to potential programs and needs.

At their regular meeting this past December, the board drew for terms—which will result in about one-third of the members being replaced each year. Board members, and their terms of service, are:

- Senator Jim Argue, Little Rock, 2 year term
  - Judge Morris S. "Buzz" Arnold, Little Rock, 3 years
  - Ann Cobb, Little Rock, 2 years
  - Nate Coulter, Little Rock, 2 years
  - Robin Giles, Little Rock, 1 year
  - Dr. John W. Graves, Little Rock, 2 years
  - Clifton "Gene" Hull, North Little Rock, 1 year
  - Barbara Patty, Little Rock, 2 years
  - Mike Polston, Cabot, 1 year
  - Kathryn Rice, Little Rock, 3 years
  - Martha Williamson Rimmer, Little Rock, 3 years
  - Constance Sarto, Little Rock, 1 year
  - Peg Smith, Little Rock, 3 years
  - Nan Snow, Little Rock 3 years
  - Bob Razer, Little Rock,
- as Library liaison Bob is not subject to a term limit

Deputy Curator Timothy G. Nutt, who coordinates the work of the Advisory Board, said he is seeking nominations for the board. "We are looking for a few good people," Nutt said. He also said nominees do not have to be historians, but should have a sincere interest in helping the Butler Center accomplish its mission. Anyone wishing to serve on the board, or nominate someone else, should contact Nutt at 501-918-3055.

## New Postcards Feature Arkansas Artwork

Two different sets of color postcards featuring pieces from the Central Arkansas Library System's art collection are available for purchase at the Butler Center. Each set contains ten different color postcards of either "Landmarks and Landscapes of Arkansas" or "Women Artists of Arkansas."

The sets make wonderful gifts for family, clients, or out-of-state visitors and are available for \$5.00 per set. All proceeds benefit the Butler Center. To purchase a set or for more information contact Reita Walker Miller, Arkansas Art Coordinator, at 918-3090. You may also write Reita at the Butler Center, Central Arkansas Library System, 100 Rock St., Little Rock, AR 72201.



"Counterpane"  
by Sherna Cockrill

## Legacies & Lunch Schedule, February-June 2001

Held Every First Wednesday. First Three Wednesdays in May

### February 7

"Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Reverend Al Green, and Everyone In Between: Famous Black Entertainers with Arkansas Roots"  
Dr. Gwendolyn Twillie

### March 7

Early Women of Arkansas  
Frances Mitchell Ross, UALR

### April 4

"Bing, Bobo, and the Boom-Boom Travs: Little Rock Baseball for Fifty Years B. C. (Before the Cardinals)"  
Jim Bailey, *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*

### May 2

Stories and Storytelling in Arkansas Music  
Dr. Robert Cochran, University of Arkansas

### May 9

Arkansas Ghost Stories  
Dr. William K. McNeil, Ozark Folk Center

### May 16

Arkansas' WPA Murals: True Stories or Fanciful Tales?  
Dr. Gayle Seymour,  
University of Central Arkansas

### June 6

"What If Arkansas Had Taken the 'Road Less Traveled'?: Defining Moments in Arkansas History and What Might Have Been: A Panel Discussion"  
Dr. S. Charles Bolton, UALR  
Dr. Thomas DeBlack,  
Arkansas Tech University  
Dr. Ben F. Johnson,  
South Arkansas Community College

All Legacies & Lunch are in the Darragh Center  
12 Noon - 12:45 p.m.  
Bring a Sack Lunch/ Soft Drinks & Water Provided  
Call 918-3049 for information.

## Butler Center Works to Improve Arkansas Economic History Education

One of the primary goals of the Butler Center is to help teachers improve their instruction about the state of Arkansas. Recently the Butler Center teamed up with two other agencies to specifically address the issue of teaching economic concepts through state and local Arkansas history.

Collaborating with the Butler Center on this venture are the Arkansas Council for Economic Education, a private non-profit organization, and the Bessie B. Moore Center for Economic Education at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville.

These three groups devised a joint program that involves selecting ten outstanding economic education teachers who will devise lesson plans to help teachers use Arkansas history to teach economic concepts. Each teacher was

awarded a Butler Center Economic Education Fellowship, which includes a stipend of \$250. Each teacher will then develop a lesson plan using Arkansas history as a framework for teaching economic concepts—such as scarcity of natural resources, how market prices are set, etc.

Tom Dillard, Butler Center Curator, said the ten lesson plans developed by the Fellows will be disseminated both on the Internet and in print. Dillard also noted that the Butler Center's website already contains about 40 Arkansas history lesson plans, and his ultimate goal is to have a minimum of 300 plans available for teachers.

The ten Economic Education Fellows are Bruce Vick, Kimmons Junior High School, Fort Smith School District; Debbie Shearer and Peggy Dodge, both Baker Elementary, Pulaski County Special School District (PCSSD); Pat Person, an elementary teacher in the PCSSD; Vickie Jackson, College Station Elementary, PCSSD; Jeanette Bennett, a school principal with the Osceola School District; Kim Kendrick, elementary teacher, Bentonville School District; Melody Key, George Elementary School, Springdale Schools; Debbie Hatch, secondary teacher, St. Paul School District; and Linda Haley, Rogers School District.

It is expected all lesson plans will be finished and made available to other teachers by the end of the current academic year.



## Butler Center Staff News

◆Curator Tom Dillard recently completed a term on the Arkansas Genealogical Society Board, but he continues to serve on many other historical and genealogical boards.

◆Deputy Curator Tim Nutt has assumed co-editor duties of the *Pulaski County Historical Review*, the journal of the local historical society.

◆Cary Cox, Programs Coordinator, will present a history of Arkansas Power & Light (AP&L) and its founder Harvey Couch at the annual conference of the Arkansas Historical Association in April. The theme for the AHA's annual conference is natural resources.

◆Brian Robertson, Manuscripts Coordinator, recently returned from research trips to Murfreesboro, Tennessee, and the National Archives in Washington, D.C. Brian is currently editing a Civil War diary for the Butler Center's publications program. The information gathered during his trips will be used to annotate the diary.

◆Reita Walker Miller, Arkansas Art Coordinator, will participate in an art symposium in late January. The symposium, sponsored by the Arkansas Arts Center, will focus on universal themes in the culture of the South. Reita will describe how those themes are prevalent in Arkansas art.

◆Linda McDowell, Genealogy Coordinator, published a new book on slave research in Hempstead County, Arkansas. Entitled *Black Slaves & Early Freedmen of Hempstead County, Arkansas, 1819-1850*, the book is a compilation of slave transactions abstracted and transcribed from county deed records. Linda also succeeded Tom on the Arkansas Genealogical Society Board.



## Genealogy Gab:

by Linda McDowell  
Genealogy Coordinator

### Ryals Collection Donated to Butler Center

The Butler Center recently acquired a genealogical collection that will be of immense value to our patrons. Barbara Brittain Ryals was an avid genealogist and local historian for the Stone County area and she amassed a large personal collection before her death in April, 2000. The staff at the Butler Center often hears horror stories of research being thrown out after a death. Thankfully, Ms. Ryals' children knew of the time and love that went into their mother's genealogical research and wanted to find a repository where others could benefit from her years of research. The family immediately thought of the Butler Center and called when they began to settle Ms. Ryals' estate to inquire about donating all the books, microfilm, and maps. We excitedly expressed our interest and set a time to visit Mountain View.

After two trips to Ms. Ryal's home in Mountain View and months of sorting and cataloging, all of the materials are now available for use. The materials from the collection have been a wonderful addition to the Butler Center, filling in many gaps in our out-of-state holdings. The books and materials are being used frequently.

The family of Barbara Brittain Ryals is very pleased to know that their mothers' legacy lives on each and every day as researchers pull books from the shelves bearing a name plate in her memory--"The Barbara Brittain Ryals Genealogical Collection."



Barbara Brittain Ryals, ca 1955

## Butler Center to Co-Sponsor Genealogical Conference

The Butler Center and the Arkansas Chapter of the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society will co-sponsor a one-day genealogy conference on Saturday, February 24, 2001.

Two of the most challenging areas of genealogical research encountered by African-American genealogical researchers are their Native American and slave ancestry. The conference theme, "Scaling the Brick Wall," alludes to the challenges and difficulties encountered in researching antebellum African-American genealogy by focusing on these specific topics. Speakers will offer informative suggestions and strategies to help genealogists overcome research hurdles.

The conference will feature nationally-recognized Angela Walton-Raji, who will discuss African-Native American Genealogy and History. Ms. Walton-Raji is a native of Fort Smith, Arkansas. She attended St. Louis University and received a masters in education from Antioch University. Her research on the records of former "Black Indian" slaves, who were eventually given citizenship in the Five Civilized Tribes (Cherokee, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, and Seminole Nations), resulted in her book *Black Indian Genealogy: African-American Ancestors Among the Five Civilized Tribes*. Ms. Walton-Raji is also the publisher of *Frontier Freedman's Journal*. She has been featured in *Parade Magazine*.

Other topics that will be addressed during the conference include: family reunion planning; Arkansas Vital Records; Arkansas Slave Narratives, the Freedmen's Bureau in Arkansas; and Slave Freedom Papers.

Pre-registration is required for the conference and the cost is \$15.00 for AAHGS members; \$20.00 for non-members; \$10.00 for students. Registration fees include a syllabus and a sack lunch. The deadline for pre-registration is February 12, 2001.

To request additional information about the conference contact the Butler Center at 918-3056. This is the third year the Butler Center has co-sponsored the conference.



“Brewer,” continued from Page 3  
las had an exhibition of his paintings in hotels in Hot Springs and Little Rock. In Hot Springs Adrian met Edwina Cook, who later became his wife. Before they were married he had a period of commuting back and forth between Minnesota and Arkansas.

During this period Adrian focused on landscapes, doing plein air painting, and he traveled extensively in the South and Southwest including Texas, Arkansas, and New Mexico. It is thought that his genius lay in pastoral landscape paintings of the Southwest and rural scenes of his adopted state, Arkansas. In addition to Texas and Arkansas landscapes, he painted 126 New Mexico landscapes, often incorporating native-American figures into them. The Butler Center Arkansas Art Collection has several of the Southwest paintings, two of which are



“Landscape,” by Nicholas Brewer, ca. 1920.

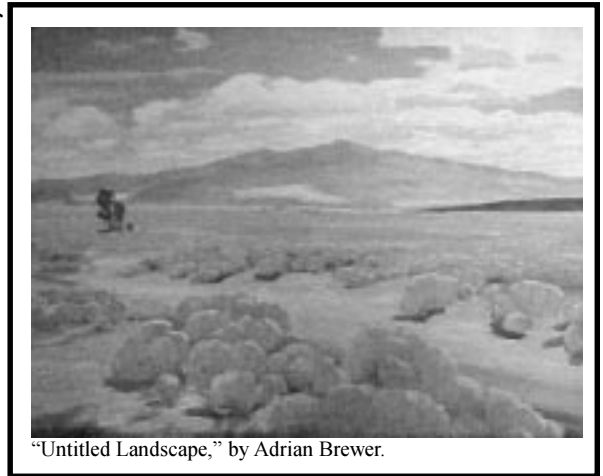
thirty-three years. He became known for his portraits of prominent citizens. He turned to this subject in 1929 for economic reasons, painting over 300 Arkansas subjects, and through Arkansas Senator Joseph T. Robinson, he painted Vice President John Nance Garner as well as many local politicians.

In 1932, with the help of Powell Scott, he established the Adrian Brewer School of Art in Little Rock, but in spite of being academically successful, it had to close during the Depression. During World War II, he ran the art classes at the Little Rock U.S.O. and after the war established a studio in Little Rock at 510 North Cedar Street, which became a gathering

League in 1953 and also the Arkansas Arts Center.

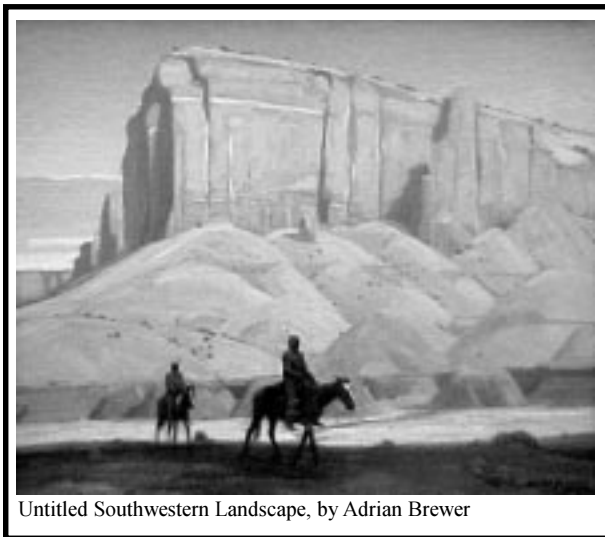
Each generation of Brewer artists has not only been interested in producing their own art, but also in the education of the next generation’s artists. In 1963 Edwin was one of the five founding members of the regional Mid-Southern Watercolorists based in Little Rock. The membership is currently approximately 200 and their annual juried exhibition is held at the Arkansas Arts Center.

Thanks to the talent and fore-



“Untitled Landscape,” by Adrian Brewer.

sight of the many artistic members of the Brewer family of artists, Arkansans now benefit through the rich and colorful “trails they have all left with their brushes.” We look forward to being able to exhibit all of our current collection of Brewer paintings in the new Cox Building across the parking lot from the Main Library. The building is under renovation at this time and hopefully will be open by the Fall of 2001.



Untitled Southwestern Landscape, by Adrian Brewer

featured on this page.

Adrian and Edwina Brewer lived in Little Rock, Arkansas for

ing place for artists, writers, and musicians. Adrian was instrumental in organizing the Arkansas Art

## In Memory Of

**R.N. Dillingham**  
by Mr. & Mrs. W.L. Terry  
Little Rock

**Jack East, Jr.**  
by Mr. & Mrs. W.L. Terry  
Little Rock

**Dr. E.L. Hutchinson**  
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Little Rock Company

**Janet Pfeifer**  
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by Little Rock Garden Club  
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by Raida C. Pfeifer  
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