

# THE BUTLER BANNER

NEWSLETTER OF THE RICHARD C. BUTLER, SR. CENTER FOR ARKANSAS STUDIES

Volume 4, Number 2

Summer 2001

## LIBRARY FUNDING AXED BUTLER CENTER IMPERILED!

Despite the advent of the “Information Age,” the state of Arkansas has withdrawn almost all of its funding for public libraries. It is anticipated as many as 25 small libraries in the state will completely close; others will implement draconian cuts in staff, operating hours and public services. The Butler Center, which is a department of the Central Arkansas Library System, expects to implement several cuts, including a reduction of hours, elimination of all salary raises, and leaving vacant staff positions unfilled.

The state began funding “state aid” for Libraries in 1937, during the depths of the Great Depression. The total amount this year was about \$5 million, a tiny fraction of the state’s \$2 billion budget. As recommended by the Governor, the Revenue Stabilization Act, which establishes funding priorities for state agencies and programs, completely cut *all* library funding. The Governor was attempting to find dollars to fund his much-ballyhooed \$3000 raise for teachers.

The Governor’s decision came as a surprise to the library community, and the imminent legislative adjournment gave them little time to lobby on the issue. Still, the Joint Budget Committee saved the program by including a token amount of just over \$1 million for libraries. (This takes state funding back to the level of 1980!)

This year’s state funding accounted for 5% of the total budget for the Central Arkansas Library System,

or a total of about \$310,000. Dr. Bobby Roberts, Library System Director, warned that cutting a budget by 5% will mean “elimination of much more than ‘fat.’” No new computers are being ordered. Salaries have already been cut, and it is expected that programming will also suffer.

Even before this unilateral cutback, CALS was facing a severe financial challenge, and the entire System has been operating under a hiring freeze. The Butler Center, for example, currently has two vacancies which we cannot fill—even though we are experiencing dramatic increases in usage.

Tom W. Dillard, Butler Center curator, said “it is ironic that the most successful component of our educational system—our public libraries—was sacrificed to support another educational program.” Dillard asked: “We are less than six months into the new millennium—the ‘Information Age’ as many call it—so, why are we jettisoning our public library system?”

“It is particularly galling,” Dillard added “that the library appropriation was almost eliminated while at the same time a new appropriation of \$300,000 was made for the Arkansas Fishing Hall of Fame.”

As the *Banner* goes to press the Library System board is considering both short and long term solutions. Dillard said it is likely the System will have to seek an increase in its millage. The Butler Center will keep readers informed of developments in this crisis.

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## Curator's Column

Tom W. Dillard

Life can certainly be full of surprising twists! Until last week, the Butler Center seemed to be on track to meet our goal of becoming an outstanding Arkansas history facility. We knew things were not perfect, but indications were positive. We have found the public totally supportive, with many Arkansans generously giving us vast amounts of archival materials. Volunteers regularly come in to help with various projects. Our Arkansas History Education Fellowships have been eagerly sought by teachers around the state, and the Fellows have produced dozens of lesson plans to help improve the teaching of Arkansas history. Our "Legacies & Lunch" monthly program has been consistently popular.

With this background, you can see why many of us were amazed when the Governor recommended eliminating all state aid for libraries. The Governor had an admirable

goal: providing teachers with a raise of \$3000. We know teachers are underpaid, and the Governor should try to do something about this sad situation. However, the plain fact is that public libraries are part and parcel of our educational system—indeed, public libraries comprise probably the single most successful component of our educational effort.

In fairness to the Governor, we must admit that library funding was inadequate even before he killed the Library Aid Program. Library funding in Arkansas is abysmal, with CALS being far from the top. Library patrons are surprised to learn that many towns in Arkansas actually support their libraries better than CALS. For example, Fort Smith spends almost \$25 per person on its library system, while CALS spends \$19.90! Compare us with Birmingham, Ala. and you will discover we are out of the ball park altogether (\$50.30 vs. \$19.90).

What can be done to improve this startling situation? Though the CALS board has not yet decided upon a plan of action, a millage increase seems unavoidable. An increase of one mill would take us from our current 1.8 mills to 2.8—still less than the three mills paid in Searcy County. In our area a one mill increase would amount to about \$20 per year on a \$100,000 home—about the current price of one trade paperback book.

In speaking with Butler Center

patrons, I am often surprised when they refuse to believe me when I tell them how pitiful are our salaries. Salary adjustments will be a major priority for the Butler Center once the funding situation improves.

Currently, we pay our beginning staff members a salary of about \$17,500. *No, that was not a typo*—we expect people with college degrees (often with graduate degrees too) to work for less than \$20,000 per year. Since he just discovered that his wife is pregnant, one of our young staff members will be resigning soon since it is impossible to feed one's self on \$17,500 per year, much less have a family. This situation will only get worse when the Presidential Library opens—since they will pay their staff approximately one-third more than what we pay! No one enters the library/archives field expecting to get rich, but it is not fair to expect an employee to exist on poverty wages!

I hope you will give some thought to this column. Arkansas and Little Rock are at a crucial point in our history. The state ranks 47th nationally in higher education funding; 48th in school funding; 47th in Internet connectivity; and 47th in public library funding. With these statistics, the new Information Economy is a mere pipedream for Arkansas.

The *Butler Banner* is the quarterly newsletter of the Richard C. Butler Center for Arkansas Studies. Central Arkansas Library System 100 Rock Street LittleRock, AR 72201 (501) 918-3056 (501) 375-7451-FAX arinfo@cals.lib.ar.us <http://www.cals.lib.ar.us> Timothy G. Nutt, Editor



## Arkansas Art Corner: New Louis Betts Items Acquired

Reita Walker Miller  
Arkansas Art Coordinator



The Butler Center recently acquired the

Louis Betts original oil painting, *Reverie*. The 25" x 30" painting hung at the National Academy of Design Exhibition in New York City in 1932.

Louis Betts was born in Little Rock, Arkansas, on October 5, 1873, to Edwin Daniel Betts and Anna Betts. His father, a landscape painter, provided his early training. His mother, also an artist, died when he was a child. His father remarried and Louis was raised with several step-brothers and sisters and there was usually a shortage of funds. Louis, the oldest of the nine siblings exhibited a natural aptitude for drawing. From the age of seven he sketched and painted still-lives and landscapes.

According to a newspaper article from 1930, the portrait *Professor Armellini* was made by Louis Betts when the artist was only 16 years old in 1889. It was given to the sitter in exchange for violin lessons that the young man had recently been given. This painting is now part of the Arkansas Arts Center Foundation Collection.

After the Betts family left Little Rock for Chicago sometime in the early 1890s, Louis studied at the Art Institute of Chicago under William Merritt Chase, a

successful and well-known teacher and painter. In July 1899, at the age of 26, Louis married Giovanna Kurzenknobe. For an income, Louis painted not only portraits, but he also worked as a commercial illustrator for books, prints, and advertising posters.

*A Child of the Sun*, written by Charles Eugene Banks and published in 1900, has 16 color illustrations by Louis Betts. The book is a meticulous recreation of Indian legends and lore and accurate descriptions of villages, celebrations, rituals, customs, and day-to-day activities. The Butler Center has recently acquired a first edition copy of *A Child of the Sun* that includes the 16 color illustrations by the young Louis Betts, Arkansas born artist.

In 1902 Louis enrolled at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and continued his study with Chase. He later received a travel scholarship that enabled him to tour Europe during the years 1903-05. He was greatly influenced by the 17<sup>th</sup> century painters Frans Hals and Diego Velasquez. These Baroque artists had reputations as portrait painters to the wealthy and powerful. Ultimately, Betts would follow their example and receive commissions from the likes of Matilda Dodge Wilson, widow of the automobile tycoon and her second husband. Other famous sitters painted by Betts include George Eastman, the



*Reverie*. This oil painting depicts a resting circus performer.

painter Gifford Beal, Dr. William J. Mayo and dozens of others.

Betts was an eclectic artist who selected and adapted the styles that worked best for him. The assimilation of influences encountered through years of study, travel, and experience were infused in his painting. His body of works may be divided into two groups: commissioned portraits and paintings of his choosing executed with impressionistic color and energetic brushwork.

Betts was praised for his lofty ideals, psychological insight and his contempt for unrealities and commercialism in his profession. He led a long, productive life working until he died in 1961 in New York at the age of 87. Louis Betts' work can be found in many prestigious museums in the United States including the Art Institute of Chicago, the Smithsonian Institution, the Corcoran Gallery of Art and the National Academy of Design.

The Butler Center is proud to add these two items of Arkansas art to our collections.



From: *A Child of the Sun*

# Butler Center to Host Conference on Arkansas' Contributions to World War II

Arkansas was profoundly and permanently changed by the impact of World War II. Young and old, rich and poor, urban and rural, black and white — all were affected by the economic upheavals, shifts in migration, changes in transportation and communication, and especially the transformations in social and cultural attitudes brought on by the greatest war the world has ever seen. The Butler Center for Arkansas Studies will examine the impact World War II had on Arkansas and its citizens in a conference, "Arkansas in World War II: Tragedy, Triumph, and Changing Times," to be held on July 20-22 in the Darragh Center, at the Main Library.

The conference will begin Friday evening, July 20, at 6:00 pm with a reception highlighted by exhibits of World War II memorabilia. The evening's main event, "The Experience and Tragedy of an Arkansas Airman in World War II," will focus on the military service of Floyd Hughes Davis, a young man from Fort Smith who was tragically killed in an airplane crash over Europe. This program will be given by Nan Snow, co-author of *Roberta: A Most Remarkable Fulbright*, and a resident of Little Rock.

The conference will continue Saturday, July 21, with a variety of presentations and activities. The focus of the morning sessions will be "On The Homefront: World War II's Impact on Arkansas." The first program, "Camp Robinson: From Sleepy Outpost to Arkansas'

Third Largest City," will be presented by Steve Rucker, Director of the Arkansas National Guard Museum at Camp Robinson. Rucker will describe how Camp Robinson was transformed from an insignificant national guard training post to a self-sufficient military city of 30,000 people. The next program will be presented by Dr. S. Charles Bolton, professor of history at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. Entitled "Arkansas' War Industries and the Economic Modernization of Arkansas," it will look at the military manufacturing operations established in Arkansas during World War II and how they laid the foundation for Arkansas' entry into the nation's post-war industrial economy. The morning session will conclude with "Society and Culture in World War II Arkansas: A Day In the Life," by Dr. C. Calvin Smith, professor of history at Arkansas State University in Jonesboro. Dr. Smith will examine the everyday lives of Arkansans, including blacks as well as whites, and how

the war affected their religion, education, social and racial attitudes, and economic status.

During breaks in the programs World War II-era newsreel footage, music, and speeches will be played, and the audience will be invited to participate by sharing their memories of famous incidents and everyday experiences during the war.

The afternoon sessions will feature "Strangers In a Strange Land: Prisoners of War, Political Prisoners, and War Brides." Leading off these programs will be "German and Italian POW Camps in Arkansas," presented by Dr. William Shea, professor of history at the University of Arkansas at Monticello. Shea will discuss the four major POW camps located in the state as well as the dozens of satellite camps where many prisoners were sent to help alleviate the farm labor shortage. A different type of prisoner, the political prisoner, will be the focus of the next program, "Arkansas' Japanese-American Internment Camps. Presented by Russell Bearden,

a history teacher at White Hall High School, this program will look at the politics and hysteria that forced the Japanese into these camps, camp life and living conditions, and how Arkansas reacted to them. The concluding program of the conference will be "Experiences of European War Brides in Post-World War II Arkansas," presented by Dr. James Miller, professor of history at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, and Dr. Karin M. Schmidlechner, a professor of contemporary history at the University of



First Cadet Class at Grider Field, Pine Bluff. Grider Field played an important role in Arkansas' contributions to the war effort. Photo from: Leslie Photograph Collection

See WWII on next page.

# COME PLAY "ARKANSAS JEOPARDY" AND HELP SAVE THE BUTLER CENTER

Threatened by dire economic shortfalls, the Butler Center is working with the Coalition for Neighborhood Libraries to raise the Library's millage rate. To help reach the goal of securing economic stability for the Library System, the Butler Center is organizing an "Arkansas Jeopardy" party on Saturday evening, June 23rd, at the Main Library's Darragh Center.

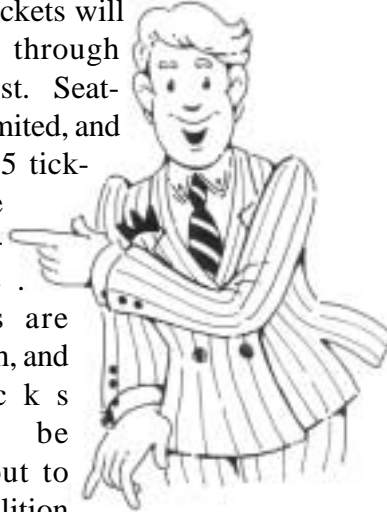
Everyone who wants to show their support for the Butler Center and Library System is invited to participate—and actually compete in the Arkansas trivia game. Topics will range from history to literature, from sports to politics, and from art to agriculture. We will begin with three preliminary rounds, and the winner of each match will move on to the final game. Each contestant will receive a prize, and the overall winner will receive—in addition to fame and recognition—a prize worthy of the title "Arkansas Trivia Top Hog."

Use the form below to register as a contestant or to buy tickets. A

drawing from these forms will select the participants. Deadline to be a contestant is June 10th, but general attendance tickets will be sold through June 21st. Seating is limited, and only 175 tickets are available.

Tickets are \$20 each, and checks should be made out to the Coalition for Neighborhood Libraries.

Tom Dillard, Butler Center Curator, said he believes "the Arkansas Jeopardy game will be crucial to raising funds to wage a spirited millage campaign later in the summer." Dillard concluded: "Even if we were not raising funds for an important cause, this would be a fun evening and it will give us an opportunity to highlight Arkansas history and culture."



"WWII," continued from page 4  
Graz in Austria. Miller and Schmidlechner will chronicle the experiences of several European women who married American servicemen and then settled in Arkansas, focusing on the unique circumstances they faced as they were forced to adjust to a radically different culture. At the conclusion of this presentation, Miller will lead a discussion featuring several Arkansas war brides.

The conference will conclude on Sunday, July 22, with a presentation of the life of a famed military physician from Little Rock. Rob Seibert, Special Collections Librarian at the Butler Center, will present "Dr. Corydon Wassell: The Story Beyond the Silver Screen," to be followed by a screening of the 1943 motion picture "The Story of Dr. Wassell," starring Gary Cooper. The movie will be shown complete with popcorn, candy, and soft drinks.

Admission to the conference is free and open to the public. For additional information contact the Butler Center at (501) 918-3049.

## ARKANSAS JEOPARDY REGISTRATION

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Number of tickets \_\_\_\_\_

- I am Arkansas-knowledgeable. I want to be a contestant and help my library. Enclosed is my donation of \$20.00.
- I want to be an audience member and help my library. Enclosed is my donation of \$20.00 per person.

Mail all inquiries and registration forms, along with a check to:  
Coalition for Neighborhood Libraries, PO Box 251178, Little Rock, AR 72225-0178.



## Genealogy Gab:

### Seeking the Answers---Some Tips

by Linda McDowell  
Genealogy Coordinator

This is the time of the year, late spring and throughout the summer months when family researchers hit the highway to distant destinations to scour all types of records for genealogical research. Research centers overflow to capacity with out-of-towners, who are anxious to find all they can and move on to the next location on their list.

If you are planning such a trip, it would be wise to have a genealogy plan of action...exactly what you hope to accomplish and the documents needed. You should not waste your time gathering information that is accessible from where you live; instead, think about what records you can *only* find in certain locations. Doing a little homework before your visit will save a lot of time and frustration. For instance, write or call ahead to research centers you plan to visit. Often, these centers will send you a brochure or a list of materials in their collections, hours of operation and directions. Becoming familiar with each center's holdings can help you strategize so that you can effectively use your time.

Ask yourself: "Where do I need to go to obtain x?" Many research centers have websites where you can easily obtain a list of resources before hand. Here are some good places to start: Butler Center for Arkansas Studies ([www.cals.lib.ar.us](http://www.cals.lib.ar.us)); Arkansas History Commission ([www.state.ar.us.ahc/](http://www.state.ar.us.ahc/)); and the Arkansas Department of Health (<http://health.state.ar.us/>)

However, many researchers do not have the time nor resources to do genealogical travel. The Butler Center receives many requests through mail and email. Many researchers tell us exactly what they need; others do not. Even if you are doing your research through the mail, it is important to organize your thoughts and formulate your questions carefully. It is also good to remember that facilities can not drop everything to attend to your question immediately. In some cases, it may take at least four-to-six weeks for a reply. The more solid information you supply in a succinct manner, the better your chances of receiving a prompt and positive reply. In other words, do not leave the researcher confused and perplexed--it could take an extra few days just trying to decode the letter and the gist of your question. Try to provide the following information as it relates to your inquiry: county and township, birth/death and locations, marriage dates, and parents.

You may also want to look at a "how-to-get started" book or website to become familiar with the types of records available and what they contain. Having some idea of what to ask for could help avoid such vague inquiries as "Please send me any information on the Bailey Family." or "Please send me all the information on the surnames listed below." Such broad queries are likely to go unanswered!

Also, you can save time by asking up front about fees and charges. Many mail patrons are shocked to receive a bill. Once again, research centers have a limited amount of time to spend on look-ups and usually cannot conduct full-fledged research, but they are willing to provide a list of professional researchers in the area.

I am planning to hit the highway sometime this summer myself. I have already started a "What's Needed" list and it is filed in front of my research binders for each county and state I hope to visit. Often with only one day to spend at each location, I really cannot afford to forget anything!

Happy genealogical trails.

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***"The more solid information you supply in a succinct manner, the better your chances of receiving a prompt and positive reply."***

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## You're Invited to a Garden Party

Mary and Tom Dillard's Garden  
12 Normandy Road  
Little Rock, AR 72207

Dinner

Garden Art Silent Auction

Saturday, May 19, 2001

6:00 ~ 8:30 p.m.

\$50.00 per person

Make checks payable to:

Coalition for Neighborhood Libraries, PO Box 251178, Little Rock, AR 72225

For information call 918-3090

# New Donations and Acquisitions Featured

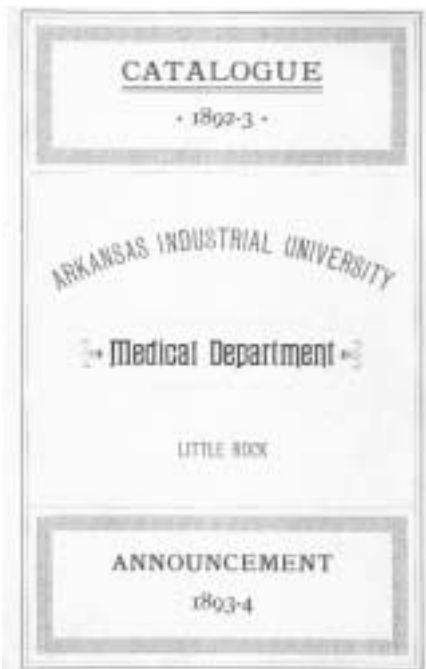
One of the missions of the Butler Center is to collect all types of materials dealing with the history of Arkansas, and we are always actively seeking new additions to our collections. New materials generally come to us in two ways: purchase or donation. While we can often find nice items for purchase this of course requires scarce resources. Unfortunately, we are sometimes unable to come up with the necessary funds and treasures of Arkansas' past disappear into obscurity.

Not surprisingly, donation is our preferred method of acquisition. We are very fortunate in having a strong support network. In recent weeks several of our patrons have kindly donated a number of impressive items to the Center. Our aggressive pursuit of materials has often resulted in new (old) historical gems

being added to our collections. In every issue of the *Banner*, donors are listed. Included on this page are some of our more recent and noteworthy acquisitions. If you would like to donate a photograph, map, pamphlet or anything else Arkansas-related contact Tom Dillard or Tim Nutt at the Butler Center. With your help, we can save Arkansas' past and build the Butler Center into one of the premier history centers in the nation.



**Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks (B.P.O.E), Argenta (North Little Rock), 1910. Purchased.**



**Arkansas Industrial University Catalogue, 1892-93 and Announcement for 1893-94. Purchased.**



**Second Baptist Church Picnic, West End Park, Little Rock, 1899. West End Park was established in 1885 by the Little Rock Street Railway Company. Located between Fourteenth, Sixteenth, Park and Jones Streets, Central High now occupies the site. Donated.**

## In Memory Of

**Nettie Gibson**  
Little Rock, Arkansas

Stuart & James Cobb

**Chet Blackwood**  
Little Rock, Arkansas

Betty & Peyton Rice

**Raida C. Pfeiffer**  
Little Rock, Arkansas

Tom W. Dillard

## General Support

**Gertrude R. Butler**  
Little Rock, Arkansas

**Rev. Donald K. Campbell**  
Little Rock, Arkansas

**Richard C. Butler, Jr.**  
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**Mildred A. Dunn**  
Conway, Arkansas

## Books and Materials

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