

THE BUTLER BANNER

NEWSLETTER OF THE BUTLER CENTER FOR ARKANSAS STUDIES

Volume 9, Number 3

Summer 2007



Upcoming Events

Legacies & Lunch

(First Wed. of every month at noon in the Darragh Center, Main Library)

July 11 - Phyllis Brandon, *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette* High Profile Editor

August 1 - Milton Crenshaw, Tuskegee Airman and Congressional Gold Medal recipient

September 5 - John A. Kirk, University of London, "Beyond Little Rock: The Origins and Legacies of the 1957 School Crisis"

Native American Genealogy

Workshop - July 21

Led by Marjorie J. Lowe
Visit www.butlercenter.org to download a registration form or call 501-918-3056 to request a form.

J. N. Heiskell

Distinguished

Lecture - July 31

Jay Barth, Hendrix College, "The Geography of Race"

Fred Darragh

Distinguished

Lecture - August

16 "Who Will Build Arkansas? A Readers' Theater on Race Relations and Community"

Visit us online at www.butlercenter.org for more information.

Free Books for Arkansas Students



The Central Arkansas Library System (CALs) and the Butler Center for Arkansas Studies announce the creation of BASE (Books for Arkansas Students' Education). BASE is an innovative book-exchange program that will provide free books on Arkansas history and culture to public high schools across the state. BASE will be operational in time for the 2007–2008 school year.

CALS and the Butler Center will solicit gifts of spare books from individuals and organizations to be distributed through the program. A database will enable public school media specialists to "shop" for books. Public schools will order books free of charge according to a point system based on per capita income and other factors regarding availability of books.

To jump-start this program, CALs and the Butler Center need donations of Arkansas history and culture books. Bobby Roberts, Director of CALs, issues a challenge: "Take a look at your own personal collection of Arkansas books and imagine them in the hands of a student in the Arkansas Delta region. That is what BASE is all about."

cont. on page 2

Hot Off the "Printing" Press

The Butler Center's wide range of projects, programs, and events includes a book publishing program. Every year, one or more select books are printed, bound, and sold through the Butler Center. To date, seven books have been published under this program, with topics ranging from short stories on Arkansas history to the Civil War.

The program is funded privately, through a generous gift from John G. and Dora "DeDe" Ragsdale.

The Ragsdales' life-long love of books and education moved them to fund this vital project, which gives Arkansas authors the opportunity to get their work published and into the hands of the public.

Money from the sale of the books is directly returned to the original Ragsdale fund, allowing a continuous cycle of book publication that will extend well into the future.

Book publishing is not the only project the Ragsdales' gift has funded, "John and his wife DeDe have been

cont. on page 2



Dora and John G. Ragsdale at Legacies & Lunch

Cont. from *Free Books for Arkansas Students*

How to donate books to the BASE program:

Mark your Arkansas history and culture books “BASE donation” and drop them off at any CALS branch or at the Cox Creative Center in the River Market. Books may also be mailed to 100 Rock St., Little Rock, AR 72201. To order books or view the BASE book wish list, visit www.alibris.com/wish/list.cfm and type *Books for Arkansas Students' Education* in the “find a wishlist” search box. For more information, email base@cals.org or call 501-918-3093. ■



BASE



The **BUTLER BANNER** is the quarterly newsletter of the **Butler Center for Arkansas Studies**

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Printed and distributed with private funds.

Anna Morshedi: Editor and Designer



Volume 9, Number 3

Cont. from *Hot Off the “Printing” Press*

great supporters of the Butler Center. The creation of the Ragsdale Publishing Fund allows us to produce important books about Arkansas and we literally would not have a large meeting room in the future Arkansas Studies Institute without their help,” says Bobby Roberts, Director of CALS. Thus, one of the meeting rooms in the new ASI complex will be named after them. A dedication ceremony will be scheduled as construction progresses.

Mr. and Mrs. Ragsdale have left a legacy at the Butler Center through their generosity. You can learn more about the Butler Center’s most recently published book, *Crisis of Conscience*, on page 6 of this issue of the *Butler Banner*. All seven publications are available for sale at the Butler Center. For a list of available books and an online order form visit our website, www.butlercenter.org. ■



A rendering of the ASI complex that will house the Dora Johnson Ragsdale and John G. Ragsdale meeting room.

Podcast - The Wave of the Future



The Butler Center for Arkansas Studies has joined forces with the Arkansas Literary Festival and Aristotle Web Design to embark on a new podcast project. During the 2007 Arkansas Literary Festival last April, the Butler Center was busy filming the presentations that took place in the Daragh Center of the Main Library.

Each of the eight presentations will be released as podcasts throughout the year and then digitally archived at the Butler Center for future generations to enjoy. Stay tuned to www.arkansasliteraryfestival.org for podcast releases. The podcasts will allow people to relive the festival or listen to an author they might have missed. The Butler Center plans to produce podcasts of its own programs in the near future. ■



Christopher Hitchens at the Arkansas Literary Festival.

Ruled by Race?

The Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation has awarded the Butler Center \$330,000 for a two-year educational project to focus on the role of race relations in Arkansas history and the state's growing population diversity. The project is called "Ruled by Race? A Classroom Exploration of Arkansas's Past and Future."

This project will engage classroom teachers and their students by creating curricular materials, making documents available for classroom use, and conducting training events. The project is part of widespread efforts by many people and institutions in Arkansas to understand and interpret the events of 1957 and their aftermath.

The grant will provide for a project coordinator/educator, a content specialist, an oral historian, and a processor to help build a digital archive of recorded materials. The project will be based in part on the work of the Butler Center's Dee Brown Fellow Grif Stockley, whose fellowship has involved writing two books on race relations in Arkansas under sponsorship of the Darragh Foundation.

In 1974 the Trustees of Governor Winthrop Rockefeller's Estate endowed the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation to continue the work of The Rockwin Fund. Governor Rockefeller set up The Rockwin Fund in 1954 and until his death in 1973, funded projects and programs he believed were important to improving the quality of life in Arkansas.

The Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation is a private foundation whose mission is to improve the lives of Arkansans. Additional information about the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation can be found on its website, www.wrfoundation.org. ■

A Word from the Center

David Stricklin, Head of the Butler Center



It's been a season of firsts at the Butler Center.

With the help of the Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation, detailed in the article on this page of the *Butler Banner*, we

have begun to build what very well may be a first of its kind, an audio-visual database digitally searchable by key-word. Somehow, when you say it like that, it doesn't sound very exciting! But you've got to trust me on this: It's going to be one of the greatest things we've ever done. It will enable researchers to listen to and/or watch recorded materials such as oral history interviews, speeches, radio and television programs, and the like but also to search a printed index of the contents of these materials, making the sounds and sights of historical accounts more accessible and more immediate. This will be especially valuable for teachers and students, a prime concern of ours. We'll say more about this when the database is ready to launch and tell people how they can take it out for a spin. But in the meantime, let me say that we are very excited about getting this initiative started and extremely grateful to the good folks at WRF for helping us do that. Stay tuned!

Another first we enjoyed recently, mentioned ever so modestly on page 4 in Nathania Sawyer's column, was having more than 6,000 visitors to the *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture* in one day. Usage of the EOA continues to astound, as its value as an educational tool becomes

more and more widely appreciated. Teachers tell me they don't know how they ever got along without it. It's gone in one year from a fledgling website to an indispensable free resource used by researchers and all kinds of people around the world who are interested in Arkansas.

April marked another first, the first time more than 1,000 people attended Butler Center programs in one month. This is a very gratifying acknowledgement of the long-term quality of events the Center holds, the widespread appeal of those events, and the growing interest in the topics and experiences people can connect with when they attend Butler Center events.

Finally, we're proud to celebrate the kindness and generosity of John and DeDe Ragsdale, whose gift acknowledged on page 1 of the *Banner* enabled us to mark another first, the first room we're naming in the new Arkansas Studies Institute facility under construction across the street from us now. The Ragsdales have benefited a number of history organizations and other efforts around the state over a long period, and we are delighted to honor them by naming one of the meeting rooms on the ground floor of the ASI complex after them. This room will be used by all kinds of groups, including classes from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. Everybody who knows the Ragsdales knows that their generosity is matched only by their modesty. This is a lot more attention than they want, but we wanted to say publicly how much we appreciate these fine people. Thanks, John and DeDe!

Next time, more firsts, along with some seconds and thirds! ■

Never Too Young

The fourth-graders at Carver Magnet Elementary School in Little Rock learned that they too can be a part of Arkansas history. The Butler Center and the UAMS's Donald Reynolds Institute on Aging combined to teach elementary students the value of oral history and inter-generational communication. The students were asked to interview a parent or grandparent and then write a short narrative. All of the essays will be archived at the Butler Center, and the students at Carver Magnet School will be able to view them for years to come. Jajuan Johnson, oral history coordinator at the Butler Center, said, "Knowing that the stories of their families are archived as historical documents makes history feel real to these students, and that is priceless." ■



Jajuan Johnson and Ms. Mary Acott's fourth-grade class at Carver Magnet Elementary School.



THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF ARKANSAS HISTORY & CULTURE

Senior Editor's Column

Nathania Sawyer



By the time you receive this newsletter, we will have started adding some new features to the Encyclopedia of Arkansas website. The first one is a "What's New" tab that is next to the "Browse En-

tries" and "Browse Media" options on the homepage. Clicking on "What's New" will give you a list of entries that have been added in the past thirty days. Now that the website has more than 1,200 entries, we wanted people to have an easy way to see the most recent additions without having to browse the entire website. We are adding new entries every week and are well on the way to meeting our goal of having 3,000 entries by the end of 2010.

I will talk more about the other new features in the next newsletter, but here's a sneak preview:

- We are adding a new section that will contain narratives related to the various entries. For example, if you are looking at an entry and see "Selected Narratives" at the top of the page, following that link will take

you to a section that may contain excerpts from diaries, personal memoirs, and/or audio clips from oral histories.

- The other new section is "Selected Comments." Clicking on this link will take you to part of the website that contains alternate interpretations of the historical record, dissenting views, and/or other comments we believe add to the discussion of a topic.

The narratives and comments sections won't be available on the website until sometime in late June or early July. We are working out the logistics for these sections with the folks at Aristotle and will be beta-testing during the next few weeks. Be sure to check the website for additional information and instructions on how to contribute to these sections.

The Encyclopedia was one year old on May 2, 2007. When we launched to the public last year, we knew there would be interest in the history community, but we weren't sure if the Encyclopedia would "grow legs" and be used by the general public. The response to the Encyclopedia during its first year has been fantastic. The number of visitors per day has grown steadily, and on May 16, we had more

than 6,000 visits to the site—a new record. What a wonderful validation of the need for and interest in an online encyclopedia for Arkansas! ■

Recent EOA Donors

Baseline Meridian Chapter of the
NSUSD 1812, Hot Springs Village

Benton County Historical Society,
Bentonville

John Logan Davis, Katy, TX

Catherine Hamilton Hepinstall,
Little Rock

Histecon Associates, Inc., Little Rock

David Stricklin and Sally Browder,
Little Rock

In honor of Pat Lile and the Arkansas
Community Foundation

The Encyclopedia Turns One Year Old



Mike Polston and Nathania Sawyer blow out birthday candles at Legacies & Lunch.

Only a year after the launch of *The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, the site is averaging more than 1.2 million hits per month. Since the moment the site went live, there has been no looking back. "The growth is mind-boggling," says Nathania Sawyer, senior editor of the Encyclopedia. "A year ago, we had around 700 entries and 1,000 pieces of media; currently, we have more than 1,200 entries and 1,700 pieces of media. And we're adding more every day."

The Encyclopedia of Arkansas has not only captured the attention of Arkansas, it has sparked the interest of visitors from every continent—including Antarctica. Web users from 155 countries, which is about three quarters of the world, have logged on to learn about the history of our state.

The Encyclopedia is becoming a staple for students and teachers. Log on now to www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net to discover what everyone is talking about. ■



I had never heard of the Black Hawk War until the entry on Mississippi County landed on my desk, with mention of an 1872 race riot of that name in Osceola.

Goodspeed’s *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Northeast Arkansas* published in 1889 dubs it an “insurrection of the blacks,” adding, “The colored people formed into secret societies throughout the county and often marched in armed bands to Osceola and other points, making speeches and causing a great deal of excitement, but there was no collision between them and the whites until fall, when, during a term of court in the county, the negroes, forming quite a formidable band, were attacked by the whites, under Capt. Charles Bowen, and immediately dispersed....There were a good many negroes killed, how many was never known, and a number escaped to adjoining counties.”

Such a vague account raises more questions than it answers. What “secret societies” are these? Why are these black citizens walking around in armed groups? What kind

of speeches were they making? Answers to these questions are needed to understand the situation fully.

But there are a few clues. We’re told that it occurred during a term of the county court. The year 1872 is significant—around that time, Reconstruction efforts were slowly being pushed aside for renewed Democratic rule and white supremacy. Two years later, a new state constitution officially ended Reconstruction in an election rife with voter fraud. Were these “armed bands” in Osceola just advocating for their right to vote?

If you have any information on this event, we would love to hear it. And think about this—here’s a race riot almost lost to history. We are committed to keeping stories from being lost and telling them when we find them. We hope you will help us do this important work. ■



WANTED

AUTHORS AND MEDIA

We need authors, photographs, documents, video, maps, and audio clips to help make The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture the most complete resource on Arkansas history available.

Entries Needing Media:

Arkansas Real Estate Bank
Camp Aldersgate
Wesley Kanne Clark
William Allen Clark
Coy (Lonoke County)
Benjamin Crowley
Daisy State Park
Samuel George Hamblen
James Kelly Hampson
M. R. Harrington
John Harold Johnson
Douglas Clyde Jones
King of Clubs
Robert Lockwood Jr.
Alexander Copeland Millar
Murphy Oil Corporation
Norman (Montgomery County)
Opie Pope Read
Panel of American Women
Plantation Agriculture Museum
Hester Buck Robinson

Gustave Joseph Shrader
George Francis Trapp
Grannis Vigil
Inez Harrington Whitfield
John Quincy Wolf Jr.

*If you have pictures or other media, please contact
Mike Keckhaver at mkeckhaver@encyclopediaofarkansas.net*

Entries Needing Authors:

Emancipation
Pentecostals
Polk County
St. Francis County
Night Riders

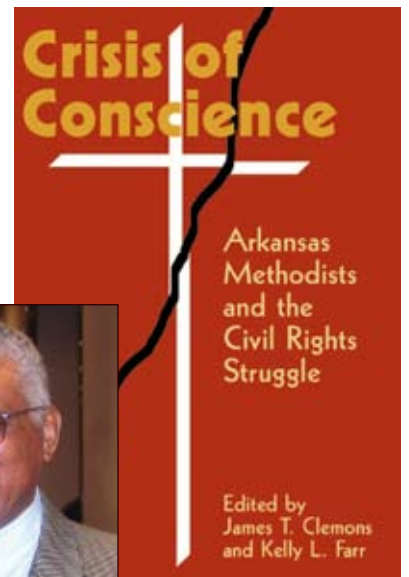
*If you would like to write one of these entries, please
contact Anna Lancaster at alancaster@encyclopediaofarkansas.net*

Crisis of Conscience

Carlotta LaNier, a member of the Little Rock Nine, was the keynote speaker at the book launch luncheon for the recent release of, *Crisis of Conscience: Arkansas Methodists and the civil Rights Struggle*. LaNier spoke of the progress that has been made since the 1957 Central High crisis, "There is much that has been done to make education a civil right for all." Both the progress and the hardship of Arkansas's integration are laid out in the thirty-three personal stories that make up *Crisis of Conscience*, a collection of accounts of the role of Arkansas Methodist in the civil rights struggle.

These range from integrating Hendrix College to the reconciliation of Elizabeth Eckford and Hazel Bryan. *Crisis of Conscience* was co-edited by James Clemons and Kelly L. Farr and published by the Butler Center for Arkansas Studies.

David Stricklin, head of the Butler Center, says, "This great collection of stories is part of our difficult history with integration and needs to be recorded as a marker of where we have been and where else we need to go." The book is available from the Butler Center for \$15 plus tax and shipping. To order, email hmathisen@cals.org. ■



James Clemons, co-editor of Crisis of Conscience, and Chester Jones at the book launch.



James Cone, Rabbi Ira Sanders Distinguished Lecturer

flash
...Butler Center Events
in the Spotlight



John Gibson and Olly Neal at the screening of the documentary Why Only Killen?



Bill Shea, Bobby Roberts, Ben Johnson, David Stricklin, and Tom DeBlack at the Butler Center reception of the annual Arkansas Historical Association conference



Jill Fine Mainelli and Carla Fine, daughters of former New York Times reporter Ben Fine, with Kelly L. Farr, co-editor of Crisis of Conscience, at the book launch

New Butler Center Staff

The Butler Center is pleased to welcome three new staff members, Kay Bland, Sara Thompson, and Stephanie Bayless. Bland has been the part-time lesson plan coordinator and teacher trainer for the Encyclopedia of Arkansas. On July 1, Bland will become the educator/coordinator of the “Ruled by Race” project. She will focus on creating curricular material and doing training in schools.

Sara Thompson received her undergraduate degree from Centenary College in Louisiana and her M.A. in public history at UALR. She will help the Butler Center build a pathbreaking research tool, the audio-visual archive. Thompson remarks, “I’m excited about the opportunity to start on the ground floor of the digital archive index as the Butler Center creates



Kay Bland, Stephanie Bayless, and Sara Thompson

the new online research tool.” Thompson has worked for several local historical agencies and has a breadth of experience that will serve the Butler Center well.

Stephanie Bayless is a graduate of UALR and an advanced student in the public history M.A. program. She joins the manuscript department of the Butler Center, “I look forward to processing wonderful collections and making them available for the public” says Bayless. ■

Get Involved

The Butler Center offers volunteers opportunities to share their gifts with the community. Our current volunteer needs are:

- Event greeters
- Event tear-down crew

If you are interested, please contact Anna Morshedi at 501-918-3049 or amorshedi@cals.org

Volunteer

BUTLER CENTER DONORS

DONATIONS TO THE BUTLER CENTER

Sue Clark, Little Rock
In memory of Helen Terry Marshall

Carol and Grimsley Graham, Rogers
In honor of Peyton and Betty Brewer Rice

Betty Brewer Rice, Little Rock

David Stricklin and Sally Browder,
Little Rock

Carroll E. and Colleen Walls, Little Rock

Lucette White, Gloucester, MA
In memory of Helen Terry Marshall

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Robert L. Short, Little Rock

Dr. T. T. Tyler Thompson, Little Rock

Mr. and Mrs. William L. Terry,
Little Rock
In memory of Josephine Thompson Brown



THANK YOU!

Artwork on Loan at Governor's Mansion

With artwork ranging from a mixed media painting by George Hunt to a drawing by Carroll Cloar, the Central Arkansas Library System (CALS) continues to build a strong permanent collection of original artwork through donations and acquisitions maintained by the Butler Center.



Lucette Darby White
"Rose's Garden"

CALS is proud to loan its art to worthy Arkansas institutions, such as the Arkansas Governor's Mansion. Reita Miller, Art Administrator at CALS, delivered fifteen pieces of art to the Governor's Mansion including pieces by Arkansas artists J. O. Buckley and Lucette Darby White.

The works will be displayed in the atrium of the Governor's Mansion and in Governor Beebe's office for at least a year. "This is the largest art loan in the history of CALS," says Miller. Ron Maxwell, Governor's Mansion Administrator, said, "We love the art! The pieces make a huge difference in the appearance of the atrium space. I am sure all our guests will be just as appreciative as we are." The art will be viewed by thousands of guests attending functions at the mansion over the course of the next year. For further information about CALS's permanent collection of art or art galleries, contact Reita Miller at reitam@cals.org or 501.918.3090. ■



Reita Miller (CALS Art Administrator) and First Lady
Ginger Beebe displaying Sherna Cockrill's "Counterpane"

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