

THE BUTLER BANNER

NEWSLETTER OF THE BUTLER CENTER FOR ARKANSAS STUDIES

Volume 10, Number 1

Winter 2008

Upcoming Events

Visit www.butlercenter.org for more information

Legacies & Lunch

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

February 6 - Mary Swift, A Lifetime of Collecting: History and Significance of Black Dolls

March 5 - William H. Bowen, former dean of the UALR William H. Bowen School of Law

April 2 - Sneak Peek into the Arkansas Studies Institute with David Stricklin, head of the Butler Center

May 7 - The History of UALR with Dr. Fred Williams, professor of history at UALR

Showcase Arkansas Gallery presents, **The Subject is Books: Chapter III**, March 3 through April 26

Cox Creative Center Galleries - 2nd Friday Art Night. On the 2nd Friday of each month, the Cox Creative Gallery and Showcase Arkansas Gallery remain open until 8 p.m. Visit www.butlercenter.org/art or call 501-918-3090 for more information.

**February 8 • March 14
April 11 • May 9**



Life in a Relocation Camp

The Butler Center recently processed the Edna Augusta Miller Collection. Miller was senior clerk-stenographer for Ray D. Johnston, project director for the Rohwer Relocation Center for Japanese Americans during World War II.

The collection includes camp newspapers, yearbooks, photographs, and other miscellaneous materials. It also provides a fascinating window into life in a relocation camp.

On March 18, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9102, creating the War Relocation Authority, which was to supervise the relocation of all persons of Japanese descent on the West Coast. Within days, thousands of Japanese Americans had been removed from their homes to assembly centers in California.

From there they were shipped by train to relocation centers in other parts of the country. Southeast Arkansas had two such centers, one at Rohwer and one at Jerome.

Construction began on the Rohwer Relocation Center on *cont. on page 2*



Elementary School, Rohwer

1846 Mexican War Journal

On May 18, 1846, the United States declared war on Mexico. Tensions between the two countries had been mounting for years over the location of the boundary between Texas and Mexico. These disagreements finally erupted into open warfare between the two nations in April 1846. Calls for volunteers soon went out across the country. Support for the war was particularly strong in the southern states.

In Alabama, Alexander Corbin Pickett, a lawyer by trade, joined the 1st Regiment of Alabama Volunteers. Pickett was born around 1823 in Virginia. He was the son of Steptoe and Sarah O. Pickett, who were some of the earliest settlers of northern Alabama. The elder Pickett was a schoolmate of James Buchanan and cousin to Chief Justice John Marshall, "Light Horse" Harry Lee, and General George Pickett of "Pickett's Charge" fame.

The Butler Center recently secured the Mexican War journal of Alexander C. Pickett. The journal was discovered and graciously donated to the Center by Jo Blatti of Batesville. As an educated man, Pickett offers interesting commentary and insight into the often overlooked war. His entries begin on June 11, 1846, as recruits were rendezvousing in Mobile. On June 29, the regiment boarded a ship for Texas. Pickett writes, "The steamers start at 6 o'clock p.m., their departure cheered by the deafening applause of the citizens of Mobile."

After briefly serving on the U.S.-Mexican border, the regiment was ordered to Camargo, Mexico. They were later transferred to Tampico. Pickett offers nearly daily entries on the unit's activities. The journal concludes in January 1847 while Pickett is still in Mexico. The regiment returned to Alabama about six months later.

In the late 1850s, Pickett moved to Arkansas, settling in Jackson County. He continued to work as a *cont. on page 2*

Cont. from Life in a Relocation Camp

July 31, 1942. Evacuees began arriving on September 18, before the center was finished. The camp occupied 500 acres in Desha County, much of it swampland. The camp was divided into numbered blocks, with each residence block containing ten to fourteen tar-papered, A-frame barracks. Each building housed four to six families in "apartments." The barracks had electricity, but no running water. In addition to the barracks, each block contained a mess hall, a laundry, and a bath house. The center also had a school, a hospital, an auditorium, a fire station, recreation facilities, administration buildings, and employee barracks.

The camp had a newspaper, the *Rohwer Outpost*, which was printed twice weekly when paper was available. The newspaper, which was printed in both English and Japanese, reported on happenings in the camp, as well as news from the outside that affected the residents. It also reported on Rohwer residents inducted into the military and on those killed in action.

War Relocation Authority records show a peak population of 8,475 at the Rohwer center. A total of 11,962 passed through the center at some point. There were 417 births and 168 deaths. The Rohwer Relocation Center closed on November 30, 1945. ■

Contributed by Carolyn Cash, Manuscripts Department

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

Central Arkansas Library System
100 S. Rock St., Little Rock, AR 72201
501.918.3056 - arkinfo@cals.org
www.butlercenter.org



Printed and distributed with private funds.
Anna Morshedi: Editor and Designer
Volume 10, Number 1

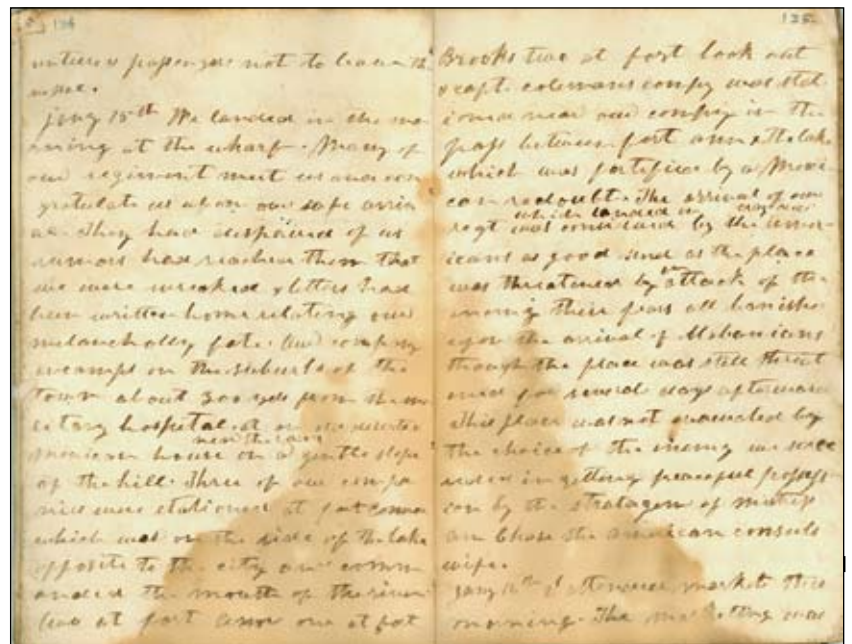
Cont. from 1846 Mexican War Journal

lawyer until war rumbled across the land once more. Following the firing on Fort Sumter, Pickett offered his services to the Confederate States of America. He organized and was elected captain of the "Jackson Guards."

The company was soon mustered in as the 1st Arkansas Infantry, CSA. Pickett was not with the unit long. In December 1862, he was transferred and promoted to colonel of the 10th Missouri Infantry, CSA. After the war, Pickett returned to Arkansas and resumed his law practice. He died in Augusta in 1883.

The Butler Center is thrilled to have Pickett's journal as part of its collection. Documents from the Mexican War are scarce, and pieces with an Arkansas connection are even scarcer. Plans are under way to transcribe, edit, and publish the journal as part of the Butler Center's book publishing program. Stay tuned for future updates. ■

Contributed by Brian K. Robertson, Manuscripts Coordinator



University of Arkansas Press Agreement

The success of the Butler Center's publishing program has brought a new partner to the table, the University of Arkansas Press. An agreement reached this past summer will allow the UA Press to market and distribute Butler Center-published books. The partnership will increase our publishing presence and enhance our overall outreach efforts. Butler Center books will be featured in the UA Press's publication catalog and on its website.

The UA Press was founded in 1980 as the book-publishing division of the University of Arkansas. A member of the

Association of American University Presses, it publishes approximately twenty titles a year, about a third of which fall under the general heading of Arkansas and Regional Studies.

The UA Press is charged by the trustees of the university with the publication of books in service to the academic community and for the enrichment of the broader culture by sharing the fruits of research and creative activity. To order books from UA Press, call toll-free 1-800-626-0090 or visit online at www.uapress.com. ■

A Word from the Center

David Stricklin, Head of the Butler Center



People in the history business get plenty of opportunities to address historically minded groups. I had a particularly delightful experience giving a talk a few weeks ago to a meeting of the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the State of Arkansas. Before I gave my talk, I heard several members of this distinguished group, who trace their ancestry to the period

of English colonization of North America preceding the American Revolution, discussing the plans for an upcoming ceremony. Enthusiastic comments were made concerning refreshments and photographs, and I assumed they were planning an event for their own members. I was wrong. It turns out that the plans revolved around a tradition of the Dames, one going back to the 1950s.

For a half century, members of the Colonial Dames have attended naturalization ceremonies at the federal courthouse in Little Rock and given receptions for their newest fellow citizens. They provide food and take souvenir photographs to give the happy families. Some members of the group told me how proud it made them to hear the new citizens discuss the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution. Now, I don't know. Maybe groups all over the country do the same thing. Maybe Colonial Dames in other places do this. But it made me feel really good to know that somebody is extending such a gracious expression of welcome to folks who are just getting started in their journey as citizens of the United States, especially a group of people whose genealogy goes back so far into the nation's past. Well done, Colonial Dames!

Well done, also, Rhonda Stewart. Our esteemed colleague and genealogy and local history specialist in the Butler Center was named Employee of the Year by the Central Arkansas Library System. This award is testimony to the great regard in which Rhonda is held both by Butler Center and CALS staffers, regard she has earned through her friendly service, skills as a researcher, and determination to help any- and everybody find out about their cherished history. We have such excellent genealogy staff members—see the note about Alex Baird on page 6—that I often say to people: If we can't find somebody, they're probably in witness protection! Rhonda and our other colleagues in the genealogy service do a great job. We're very glad to have them, and we're glad to have one of their number honored by our colleagues in the CALS community.

Thanks to everybody for your kind thoughts and many acts of assistance during 2007. We look forward to an exciting new year, especially as we begin the countdown to the move into the new Arkansas Studies Institute facility. More about that soon.

Come see us in the Butler Center! ■

SARA Correction

In our last newsletter, we described Lucille Westbrook as the founder of the Southwest Arkansas Regional Archives. Several people sent documents to assist us in correcting our error. Ms. Westbrook was a longtime volunteer with SARA and the interim director for 10 years—quite a long interim! But the credit for founding the archives should go to many people with strong interests in the history of Southwest Arkansas, including Mary Medearis, James H. Pilkington, Sr., and John Ferguson, the former director of the Arkansas History Commission, which assumed control of SARA in 2005. We regret the error and congratulate SARA, its many volunteers and supporters, and the History Commission on long years of service to Arkansas researchers. ■

Professor of the Year Announced as Fellow

The Butler Center is pleased to announce Dr. Jay Barth, associate professor of politics at Hendrix College, as the 2008 Butler Center fellow. A native of central Arkansas, Barth received his undergraduate degree from Hendrix College and his master's and doctoral degrees in political science from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Since 1994, Barth has been a faculty member in the Department of Politics at Hendrix College.

In November, Barth was selected as Arkansas' Professor of the Year by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, an award honoring the most outstanding undergraduate instructors in the country.

Barth has published works on American governors, the politics of the South, and race and gender politics in such journals as *Political Psychology*, *Polity*, *Women and Politics*, *State Politics and Policy Quarterly*, and *Politics and Policy*. Barth's most recent publication was the second edition of *Arkansas Politics and Government: Do the People Rule?* which he coauthored with the late Diane D. Blair. The book, published by the University of Nebraska Press, was released in April 2005.

Barth is a noted expert in Southern politics and has an educational career beyond the classroom that combines a wide-ranging research agenda, an ongoing role as a public analyst on the politics of Arkansas and the South, and an active involvement in several advocacy groups.

As the Butler Center research fellow, Barth will conduct extensive research on Arkansas politics and public policy and assist the Butler Center in building its research collections. ■



Dr. Jay Barth



THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF ARKANSAS HISTORY & CULTURE

Senior Editor's Column

Nathania Sawyer



Hope (Watermelon) Springs Eternal

Back in the spring of 2006, I wrote in a newsletter column that our staff historian, Mike Polston, and assistant editor, Guy Lancaster, were trying to grow a watermelon in the windowsill of the EOA offices. After they edited the entry on the Hope Watermelon Festival, they became fascinated with the idea of growing a giant melon in our office. Many seedlings began the journey, but only “Scratchy” flourished that year. Scratchy



became the unofficial EOA mascot, and much discussion ensued about grow lights, importing bees into the office for pollination, and best practices in watermelon rearing.

After the Encyclopedia website went live in May 2006, we held one of our launch parties in Hope. The organizers were amused by the staff’s attempt to grow a melon and gave us an autographed poster from the Hope Watermelon Festival. The guys placed the poster near Scratchy for inspiration.

Although the vine grew, we had no luck growing a melon.

This year, they tried again, and Scratchy II became a member of our office. Armed with knowledge from last year, Mike and Guy contended with bugs, pollination by tweezers, and absence of full sunlight. And, as an extra precaution, they parked our miniature Christ of the Ozarks statue in Scratchy II’s pot in hopes of divine intervention.

The photo in this column is of the surviving watermelon that was grown in our windowsill. Sure, it’s not a contender for a prize at the state fair (unless they open up a new category for office-grown melons), but we think of it as a testament to curiosity, determination, and Miracle-Gro plant spikes.

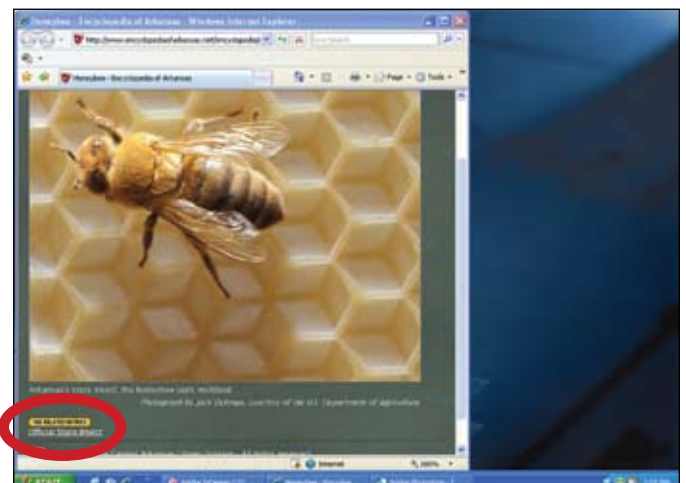
I see Scratchy as a symbol of the Encyclopedia Project. We started from scratch, weren’t completely sure of how we were going to pull off this undertaking, and learned a lot from our early mistakes. We’re also growing bigger and better each year. The Encyclopedia now has more than 1,400 entries and almost 3,000 pieces of media. Every week we learn something new about our state, add entry ideas to our database, and come up with ideas for new features and functions to make the website better. I just can’t think of a better way to spend my year.

I hope 2008 will be a year of growth and wonder for each of you, too. ■

Media Links

One of the newest features on the *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture*’s website is the ability to access entries from the Encyclopedia’s Media Gallery. The full-size versions of the media now include links to related entries. This new feature allows users browsing the media categories to see which entries contain the media they are viewing. Just click on the link to go to the entry. ■

Check it out at www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net



Nearly everyone knows that Arkansas was home to two internment camps for Japanese Americans (see page 1), as well as various POW camps housing German and Italian soldiers, but the state was also home to one camp for conscientious objectors (COs)—Camp Magnolia in Columbia County. Established in 1941, it was part of the Civilian Public Service (CPS) program for COs, established after heavy lobbying from the nation's historic peace churches, and involved the young men performing much the same duties as did the Civilian Conservation Corps in earlier years. Aside from constructing dams and reservoirs and planting trees, the men at Camp Magnolia also participated in warfare-related medical experiments.

Of course, many people in that part of the state were none too pleased at the presence of the “conchies,” as they were called. Taking some leisure time in the town of McNeil, three COs found themselves almost lynched by irate locals, especially after hysteria spread that one of the men, who was writing poetry about trains, was recording secret information for the enemy. Black COs found a welcoming environment inside the camp but only hostility and racism outside. When the camp was destroyed by a tornado in 1945, the local newspaper reported the event under the headline “God Strikes the Conchies.” The men were transferred to other camps across the nation, probably to the delight of many Arkansans. ■

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:

J. L. Brown
Sarah Caldwell
William Allen Clark
Common Cause/Arkansas
Convict Lease System
Glenn Ward Dresbach
Eaker Air Force Base
Far West Seminary
Edward W. Gantt
Verna Cook Garvan
Samuel George Hamblen
Harrison Railroad Riot
Information Galore
Kelleyite Churches of Christ
Jay Noal Lawhon
Margaret Heller Himstedt Letzig
Henry Jackson Lewis
Lovely County
Henry Morehart
National Society of the Colonial Dames of
America
M. E. Oliver
Panic of 1893
Irene Robertson

Harold Morrow Sherman

Sunny Side Plantation

Frank Glasgow Tinker

Grannis Vigil

Patrick Samuel Gideon Watson

Sue Cowan Williams

Richard Nathaniel Wright

If you have pictures or other media, please contact

Mike Keckhaver at

mkeckhaver@encyclopediaofarkansas.net

Entries Needing Authors:

Thomas Dale Alford

Black River

DeQueen (Sevier County)

Lincoln County

Soybeans

If you would like to write one of these entries, please

contact Anna Lancaster at

alancaster@encyclopediaofarkansas.net

New Arrivals

The Butler Center and the Encyclopedia of Arkansas (EOA) welcome new staff members, Alex Baird, Ali Welky, and Steve Teske. Alex Baird joins the Butler Center staff as the genealogy assistant. Baird brings with her an extensive knowledge of genealogy research tools. "I find genealogical research to be fun and mind-stimulating. I hope to continue opening new research avenues for our patrons," says Baird.

As copyeditor for the EOA, Ali Welky edits the final versions of all EOA entries before they are approved by authors and posted on the EOA website. Welky also edits all content for the EOA website, the *Butler Banner*, the annual EOA calendar (now on sale!), and other special publications. Welky notes that, "I get to read every word of every entry in the Encyclopedia, and I learn something fascinating about Arkansas every day."

Also joining the EOA team is Steve Teske. Teske is the new fact checker for the EOA, which means that after an entry is submitted, and the editors identify which items they would like verified, Teske goes to work verifying facts such as dates, locations, events, and comparisons. As Teske points out, "Fact-checking for the Encyclopedia is fascinating, not only because of the opportunity to learn new facts about Arkansas every day, but also because of the joy of working with a talented crew of editors."



Steve Teske, Alex Baird, and Ali Welky

flash ...Butler Center Events in the Spotlight



First Lady Ginger Beebe signs Arkansas Artists calendars at the Cox Creative Gallery during 2nd Friday Art Night



Dr. John A. Kirk, University of London, signs the first copy of his book, *Beyond Little Rock: The Origins and Legacies of the Central High Crisis* at Legacies & Lunch



David Stricklin, Richard Butler, and Charles Rodgers cut birthday cake at the Butler Center's 10th anniversary celebration



David Stricklin, Ellis Melton, and Legacies & Lunch panelists Bobby Roberts, Presley Melton, Jo Melton, and Tim Heiple

BUTLER CENTER DONORS

DONATIONS

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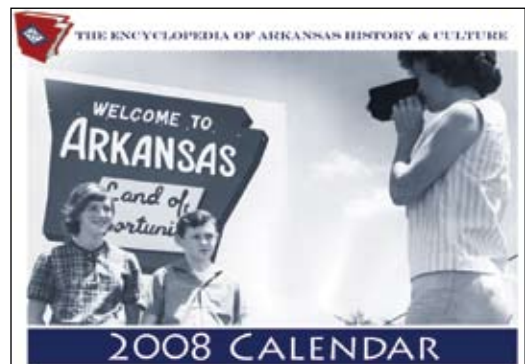
GIFTS OF MATERIALS

AETN, Conway
Arkansas Railroad Club, North Little Rock
Melrita Bonner, Little Rock
Ralph Brodie, Little Rock
Richard Butler, Little Rock
Martha M. Cease, Mountainside, NJ
Robert B. Clark, Little Rock
Jill Curran, Little Rock
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Rhonda Stewart, Little Rock
R. Allison Streepey, Little Rock
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Little Rock
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THE NEW 2008 ENCYCLOPEDIA OF ARKANSAS HISTORY & CULTURE CALENDARS ARE HERE!

Calendars are only \$10 each plus an additional \$2 for shipping and handling.
Please clip the order form below and send payment to:
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100 Rock St., Little Rock, AR 72201



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Recent Addition to Photograph Collection



Black Diamond, the celebrated trotting ostrich, Hot Springs

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