Little Rock Fire Dept. Collection

The Little Rock Fire Department Collection is now available to the public for research. This unique six-box collection contains many fire department records dating back to 1868, showing the development of this very important institution in a growing city. Items of interest to researchers include early ledger books, member and purchase lists, correspondence, and numerous rarely seen photographs.

The early history of Little Rock's fire department...

Aviation Historical Society Collection

The Butler Center is pleased to announce the opening of the Arkansas Aviation Historical Society Collection. This comprehensive research collection, which highlights the history of Arkansas aviation and aviators, is the product of many years of work on the part of the society. It is a unique collection with subject files—such as the 154th Observation Squadron; May 1931.
Cont. from Aviation, p. 1

A large portion of the collection contains files on inductees to the Arkansas Aviation Hall of Fame from 1981 to 2010, as well as other submitted nominations. The contents of each file vary from person to person, but the information offers a glimpse into the careers of notable Arkansas aviators and others who influenced this state’s rich aviation history.

A particular item of note is an album with 420 photographs related to Eberts Field in Lonoke (Lonoke County), a leading World War I training center. Although the war ended before the first class graduated, Eberts Field had approximately 1,000 cadets enlisted in its training programs.

The Arkansas Aviation Historical Society Collection can be accessed in the Research Room at the Arkansas Studies Institute building. A full finding aid for the collection is available online at www.butlercenter.org.

Aerial view of Helena Aero Tech under construction, Helena; February 1942.
A Word from the Center
David Sticklin, Head of the Butler Center

Last time you had the Banner in your hands, we were coming up on the election to refine some construction bonds for our parent organization, the Central Arkansas Library System. The initiative would provide additional funding for books, computers, and other materials, and funding for the whole system, including the Butler Center. But it would also enable us to create additional space for our growing collections and services, build a 350+ seat mixed-use auditorium for our events, and add 250 parking spaces to the Main Library campus.

Well, I’m very pleased to say that the initiative passed with eighty-seven percent of the vote! So the meetings have begun for the planning of the new structures. I’ll keep you posted on the progress. It will be pretty exciting.

Also exciting is the work being done on our inaugural music festival, Arkansas Sounds, which you can read about on page 5. John Miller is doing a wonderful job getting ready for what promises to be a great event this fall, and we are talking about ways to spread the celebration of Arkansas’s contributions to the world of music with events throughout the year and throughout the state. More about that soon.

Along with countless people around the world, we were saddened by the recent death of famed musician and Arkansas native Levon Helm. He was exactly the kind of person we want to celebrate in the music festival, someone who gave voice to his Arkansas upbringing and point of view, creating in the process a vast reservoir of goodwill both for himself and for the state. More also about that soon.

We are busily at work on quite an array of projects, partnerships, and productions. As always, it is gratifying to see the response to our efforts, especially the kind words offered by people who appreciate the work of our great staff.

Come see us soon in the Butler Center!

Arkansas Civil War Exhibit

A Civil War exhibit built around the theme of “occupied Arkansas” will open in the Butler Center’s Concordia Hall on Friday, July 13, 2012, during 2nd Friday Art Night. Invasion or Liberation? The Civil War in Arkansas will provide a provocative look at the war in Arkansas. Through the use of letters, diaries, photographs, and artifacts, the exhibit will examine the multi-faceted history of Arkansans caught up in the conflict. For example, contrary to popular opinion, not all Arkansans supported the Confederacy. Considerable attention will also be devoted to the perceptions and experiences of outsiders who found themselves in Arkansas during the war.

The Butler Center maintains an extensive collection of Arkansas-related Civil War material, and many of these unique items will be part of the exhibit. Additional items, especially three-dimensional artifacts, will be borrowed from local museums to supplement the exhibit. Invasion or Liberation? will tell the full story of life in Arkansas during the war to provide visitors with a greater understanding of the American Civil War and its impact on our state. The exhibit will run through October 27, 2012.

Finding Family Facts

Monday, May 14 • 3:30 - 5:00 p.m.
401 President Clinton Ave. • Room 204

The Butler Center offers a free beginners’ genealogy class on the second Monday of every month. Rhonda Stewart, local history and genealogy expert, will teach participants how to use online databases and city directories, as well as how to archive family documents. This class is free and open to the public.
New Donation for CALS Art Collection

Artist Ruth Anne Yax recently donated a quilt to the CALS permanent art collection. The quilt, made from mixed-media fabrics and titled Winter in Little Rock, depicts the winter sun shining brilliantly over downtown Little Rock. It was inspired by a photograph Yax had seen in the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette.

Annual Genealogy Workshop

This year’s genealogy workshop will take place on Saturday, July 21, in the Darragh Center of the Main Library. The annual Butler Center event will feature Jim Edgar with Little Rock’s Latter-day Saints Center and Lisa McKinney, an award-winning writer and genealogist. Edgar will discuss what is available through FamilySearch.org (a new Butler Center resource) while McKinney’s workshop sessions will include “Coming to Understand Sources: A Case Study in Proper Genealogy,” “The 1940 Census,” and “Your Cemetery Visit.”

This workshop is free and open to the public; registration is required. For more information, visit www.butlercenter.org/conference.

Flash... Butler Center Events in the Spotlight

Guest exhibition curator Amanda Ferguson takes a group on a private tour of Making a Place: The Jewish Experience in Arkansas.
Arkansas Sounds is the name of our new music festival, which will take place on September 28 and 29 at the Riverfest Amphitheatre and the River Market Pavilions.

Two notable musical acts, Sleepy LaBeef and Sonny Burgess (appearing with his band the Legendary Pacers), have been confirmed as headliners for the fall festival. LaBeef is from Smack-over, and Sonny Burgess is from Jackson County. Both are legendary rockabilly musicians and early rock and roll pioneers. Sonny Burgess was one of the original artists with record label Sun Records, while Sleepy LaBeef has shared the stage with musicians such as Elvis Presley, Roy Orbison, and Wanda Jackson. Both have been instrumental in shaping the world’s perception of Arkansas music.

For more information on Arkansas Sounds, contact John Miller, music festival coordinator, at jmiller@cals.org or (501) 320-5728.

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Roberts Receives Lifetime Achievement Award from History Community

Bobby Roberts, director of the Central Arkansas Library System, was a recipient of this year’s Arkansas Historical Association (AHA) Lifetime Achievement Award. Roberts, one of five recipients this year, received the award for his career of service to the general public and scholars in promoting the study and preservation of Arkansas history. The AHA recognizes individuals each year for their achievement and contributions. Past lifetime achievement recipients include John and Dora “DeDe” Ragsdale, Tom Dillard, Curtis Sykes (posthumous), Michael B. Dougan, C. Fred Williams, Margaret Ross, and Cy Sutherland.

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Arkansans at Work in May at CALS

In May, each branch of the Central Arkansas Library System (CALS) will feature unique Arkansas events and programs as part of Arkansas Heritage Month. This year’s theme is Dreams & Determination: Arkansans at Work.

Arkansans work in many different ways, from shaping our political landscape to providing food and goods for the state and nation. The CALS branches will feature programs that highlight the different occupations of Arkansans, as well as interactive programs that invite patrons to bring in their photographs—historical and modern—of the businesses and people of Arkansas. Additionally, the Butler Center for Arkansas Studies will produce a special image panel guide that reflects the theme of Arkansans at Work throughout the decades. Images include nurses at Arkansas Children’s Hospital, workers at the Portia Lumber Company in 1894, and coal miners in 1939. These images are part of a collection of more than 100 image panels displayed throughout the interior and exterior of the Arkansas Studies Institute building on the Main Library campus.

The Department of Arkansas Heritage (DAH) sets aside the month of May each year as a time for Arkansans to recognize and appreciate their cultural and natural heritage. DAH started this tradition in 1982, and Arkansas Heritage Month has grown and become more meaningful each year, serving as an opportunity to highlight a particular aspect of our state’s history and defining features.

For more information on CALS’s Arkansans at Work programs, visit www.cals.org.
WANTED: Authors and Media

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

Entries Needing Media (photographs, etc.):
- Marion Matthew Blackwell
- Malcolm Cleburne Bowman
- Sidney Burns
- Marie Katherine Phipps Clark
- William Allen Clark
- Dr. Smith's Champion Hoss-Hair Pullers
- Sonora Louise Smith Dodd
- Glenn Ward Dresbach
- Jim Ferguson Sr.
- Edward W. Gant
- Elizabeth Ward Gracen
- Ozro Amador Hadley
- Donald Harrington
- Joan Edmiston Hess
- Keith Jerome Jackson
- James Buel Lile
- Eugene Alyxius (Gene) Lyons
- Lillian Estes Eichenger Nickell
- Speer Morgan
- Rebecca Newirth
- Irene Robertson
- Hester Buck Robinson
- Hardy Alton "Spider" Rowland
- Ronald Gene Simmons

Entries Needing Authors:
- Brown, Fountain
- Searcy Male and Female College
- Little Portion Hermitage
- Ouachita-Black Rivers Navigation Project
- Pig Trail Scenic Byway
- M. M. Cohn (Business)

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

If you would like to write one of these entries, please contact Guy Lancaster at glancaster@encyclopediaofarkansas.net

FamilySearch at the Butler Center

The Butler Center is now a designated FamilySearch affiliate library. Through our Research Room (located on the second floor of the Arkansas Studies Institute building), patrons can order microfilm from the world's largest repository of genealogical records. The records are sent to the Butler Center and viewed in the Research Room. FamilySearch is a service provided by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

FamilySearch home page.
New from Butler Center Books

50-Year Career in Media and Politics Explored in New Memoir

Charlotte Tillar Schexnayder began her lifelong enchantment with journalism in the seventh grade when she tackled a class assignment to design and write a newspaper. She would pursue the career for more than a half-century as she and her husband, Melvin Schexnayder, worked side by side in southeast Arkansas to build the Dumas Clarion newspaper into an influential voice in the life and politics of the Arkansas Delta.

Now, Schexnayder’s story is told in her own words in a new book—Salty Old Editor: An Adventure in Ink, published this spring by Butler Center Books.

Schexnayder’s work on the award-winning Dumas newspaper also helped prepare her for a life of public service. Always fascinated by politics, she sat on numerous state boards and served for 14 years in the Arkansas House of Representatives. “Look in the dictionary under ‘multi-tasking’ and you will find Charlotte’s picture,” said Jimmie Lou Fisher, former Arkansas state treasurer.

“One day, she is helping a bereaved man get a suit to bury his brother in and the next, she and her husband are guests of the Clintons, sleeping in the Lincoln Bedroom in the White House. Salty Old Editor is a ‘must read’ for anyone who loves Arkansas and the real history of the state.”

A devoted wife and mother, Schexnayder was also a pioneer in helping to open the professions of politics and journalism to women. Salty Old Editor is the compelling story of how Schexnayder overcame the many challenges she faced with abundant humor and grace—and with ink stains on her fingers.

“Charlotte Schexnayder is one of those too rare people who not only cares about what’s right and wrong in the world, but spends a lifetime trying to do something about it,” said former Arkansas governor and U.S. senator Dale Bumpers. “Together, she and late husband Melvin were the bedrock of their community, the Delta, and the entire state. Charlotte has a lot of experience and wisdom, and I’m glad she’s sharing it with us in this book.”

Salty Old Editor is available from local and national book sellers or through the distributor, the University of Arkansas Press in Fayetteville, at (800) 626-0090 or online at www.uapress.com.

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Arkansas paroling the White River

Images from Our Collection