

Old Independence



Summer 2017 Newsletter



A State of War: Arkansas Remembers WWI



Throughout the month of May, Old Independence Regional Museum provided a free two hour tour focusing on WWI and its impact on the people of Arkansas and the Batesville region. This tour was made possible by a \$2,080 grant from the Department of Arkansas Heritage.

A total of 553 students visited the museum during the month, as well as teachers, bus drivers, chaperones, and parents. Nine schools, some from as far away as Weiner, Calico Rock, and Highland, visited the museum and engaged in the WWI sessions that revolved around various aspects of the war. Six of the visiting schools were awarded bus stipends through the grant.

The tour consisted of six sessions that included WWI inventions, mining, aviation, voluntary food rationing, the 1918-1919 flu pandemic, and the gift shop.

Students heard about how inventions and innovations such as the trench coat, wrist watch, tank and metal helmet impacted the war effort. In the mining section they learned how local manganese was vital to the war. They took home a wooden model bi-plane from the aviation session and sampled a cake made without sugar when they learned about voluntary rationing. In the flu portion of the tour the students conducted a simple science experiment to see how quickly the flu virus could spread through the population.

Without the help of the OIRM volunteers and docents, this venture would not have been possible. Many thanks to everyone who provided assistance.



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Special points of interest:

- Exciting new exhibit news
- Learn about our new collections
- Day Camp !
- Remembering Anna Parks

Smithsonian Sports Exhibit Is Coming!

By Twyla Wright

We have been selected to host the Smithsonian Institution's traveling exhibit "Hometown Teams: How Sports Shape America"! It will open on December 16 and last through January 27, 2018. There will be more about this in our next newsletter.

Between now and then we are celebrating our own regional sports through monthly programs and a companion exhibit titled "Our Team - Our Pride." Starting last January our exhibit curator Twyla Wright and Linda Wann have put in place objects and photos to focus on local sports through the decades.

Members of the Collections/Exhibits/Programs committee gathered items on loan. A large kiosk showcases 8 sports champions and visitors are challenged to guess who they are.



In one corner the rivalry between Batesville and Newport football teams is featured. You can also view a video when Rick Monday, who was born in Batesville, saved the American flag from being burned on the



field during a Los Angeles Dodgers game. We have a magnet game for you to match 15 local sports mascots and their towns.

Glass cases shelter early bats, gloves, balls, and trophies, including the famous 1927 basketball trophy won by Batesville High School when they placed second in the nation!



Perhaps the most astounding part of the exhibit is a diorama showing a small town's baseball field in the 1950s, complete with players and cars and score board etc. Mike West spent countless hours creating it for our museum. Come see!

We also have a "sports dress-up" area where kids of all ages can put on sports clothes and equipment.



Sports Programs

Bruce Johnston (chair), Kyle Christopher and Amelia Bowman have planned a full year of sports related programs.

A full crowd gathered at the museum in February to hear Dr. Brad Austin, Lyon College graduate and now professor of History at Salem State University in Massachusetts. He spoke about the origin and development of hometown teams as a cultural phenomenon in small towns.

In March Stuart Smith, Chair of Batesville Area Athletic Hall of Fame, gave a splendid program using his inclusive memory of many local athletes over the years. Fortu-

nately, his program was recorded for the museum's archives.

In April Dave King (BHS football coach) and Tracy Stewart-Lange (Lyon College women's basketball coach) shared their thoughts on what makes a good coach.

June's program featured sports media with Mark Lamberth and Paul Glover.

Upcoming programs:

July 9: Sports as Recreation will be the focus by Mayor Rick Elumbaugh, Dennis Wright, and Darrell Shaw (Lyon College LEAP Program)

August 6: Rodney Griffin and Laurie

Carter Laman will reminisce about memories in their lives as well-known sports players.

September 10: Dr. Dylan Carpenter will talk about Sports Injuries, and their prevention or treatment



Dr. Brad Austin's program

The Collections Corner



There are always interesting new artifacts to catalogue in our collections area. As a general rule we are unable to accept very large objects into our holdings due to extremely limited storage space. However, we occasionally must make an exception. A few months ago, precisely such an oversized item was offered to the Museum. Roy and Peggy Row had in their possession a wonderful piece of local history

– the telephone booth from the lobby of the Barnett Hotel. The phone booth was so meticulously restored and well preserved by the Rows that it remains fully operational to this day. All the coin operated telephone requires to place and accept calls is a connection



to an active telephone line. Just connect the booth to electricity and, voilà, the interior illuminates upon the closing of the door.

When the Barnett Hotel closed circa 1946 and was converted to the North Arkansas Clinic hospital, this wooden phone booth remained in the Clinic lobby. It served hospital visitors until about 50 years ago when Southwestern Bell Telephone replaced it with a “modern” metal phone booth. Upon learning the older booth was to be removed, the Rows purchased it for use as a unique phone for their home’s recreation room.

With a height of almost seven feet, we scurried around to find a spot for storing and preserving this artifact. Not only is the telephone booth a piece of local history, it is a part of the history of telecommunication technology -- technology completely foreign to today’s younger generation who know only the cell phone as a means of voice communication. “A phone with a handset attached to a cord? What is up with that?”

Recently, the Gravelly Finley family from Oklahoma City walked into the Museum eager to find a picture of an ancestor that they heard was on display. They found him on a large poster - Samuel Tisby Finley. He taught workers how to shape the stone for the Museum building in 1935. We enjoyed showing them not only that photo, but a whole file about the Finley family and even more photographs in our collections.

In the photo: Gravelly Finley III, his wife Kristy and their son Gravelly Finley IV.



Docent Corner

Our Annual Docent Appreciation Luncheon was held in December. 55 volunteers attended the Mardi Gras themed event where they were served Cajun inspired foods.

Dennis Wright and Mike West were presented with fresh baked goods for their work on sealing the windows and exterior of the museum. Volunteers received certificates, presidential volunteer service award and pins.

A total of 6,219 hours were worked by volunteers in 2016. This is an increase of 230 hours from 2015.

The highlight of the day was when Sharan Pittser was awarded the Presidential Volunteer Lifetime Achievement Award. Sharan is the curator of collections. Since 2009, she has acquired a total of 4,324 hours which met the lifetime requirement of 4,000+ hours.

This past winter and spring, we had to say goodbye to several docents. They were: Jacquelyn Earls, Suzanne Evans, Ralph Grant, Clyde Spangler and Whitney Stone.

We have also welcomed some new docents. They are: Judy Allen, Joan Davidson, Keith Brown, Joel Cannady, Joseph James, Pam Glover, Karl Sager, Kim Crosby, Shaela Williams, Jeanette Youngblood and Savannah Youngblood.



History Detectives: A Day Camp Adventure



Old Independence Regional Museum invites campers on an adventure to explore some of our region's historical mysteries. Campers will become history detectives. Each day the campers will be asked to look at evidence from the past and examine clues left behind by those who lived before us. They will then use these clues to piece together a reasonable solution to the mystery.

During camp students will be visited by Emily Weaver. Weaver was a resident of Batesville during the Civil War. She was accused of and tried for spying for the Confederacy. Campers will hear her side of the story, question her actions and motives, and examine letters and testimony given about her during her trial. After all the evidence is collected, the campers will decide for themselves if Emily was a spy.

Abraham Ruddell came to Independence County around 1814. Shortly after his arrival he built Ruddell Mill. This was just the end of his story. What happened to Abraham Ruddell? Campers will hear from Mr. Ruddell and examine his early life to find the answer to this intriguing mystery.

As the United States commemorates the 100th anniversary of our involvement in World War I, the campers at OIRM will investigate the main causes of death for the World War I soldier. Was it really enemy fire?

On the last day of camp, campers will delve into several famous historical mysteries, not only in our area but also mysteries nationwide. We will look into the mysteries of Roanoke, VA, the Mary Celeste, and what the pilgrim's really ate at the first Thanksgiving. In addition, the campers and volunteers will prepare a sampling of the Pilgrim's foods together.

In addition to solving these mysteries, campers will participate in crafts and games from the time period of each mystery. This camp, designed for elementary age students, will be Tuesday, July 24 – Friday, July 28, 9 a.m. to noon each day. The cost is \$65 per camper, and the museum requires at least 10 children to sign up in order to hold the camp. Class size is limited to the first 25 registrants. The deadline to register is July 15, 2017.

In Memory...

Anna Parks, who was born in New York, died recently in Batesville at age 91. Intensely independent and quiet, she followed her interest in history with both feet on the ground. She spent much time driving her pickup truck through several counties, searching for early church and school buildings, and taking photographs of them. She donated those photos, plus historical documents and her subscriptions of historical journals over the years, totaling 177 items. It is a treasured collection!

As a member of the Arkansas Archeological Society she spent parts of many summers participating with them on professional archeological digs. She worked to find bits and remnants of long ago Native American sites.

Anna had also found many, many cemeteries and gravesites over the years. When Dennis Wright learned of this, he wanted to be sure that her knowledge would not be lost. So they partnered, and over the years, during winters when foliage and ticks were gone, they crawled over and under broken fences, finding simple gravesites in fields. With the help of a GPS they recorded locations of named cemeteries and many that had been lost. Their explorations included cemeteries in the 12 counties that our museum serves. Today, you can visit the museum's research library and find huge notebooks of directions to thousands of cemeteries.

Her dedication to learning about our area's history led her to membership in the Independence County Historical Society and the Batesville Genealogical Society. In 2006 she received from the Batesville Genealogical Society their award for Outstanding Accomplishment in Genealogy in North Arkansas. In 2003 she also received the museum's Dennis Wright Award for work behind the scenes. Anna Parks' dedication to unearthing and preserving local history was especially amazing because she was a woman "from away" who adopted and treasured our past.

Thank You!

Thank you to the following individuals who donated new light weight tables to the Museum.

Cliff Brown, Nona Floyd, Emilee Gerhardt, Kenny & Michele Gerhardt, Beverly Grigsby, James McLean, Mike & Sandy West



Anna Parks receiving the Dennis Wright Award, 2003