OIRM held a wonderful 18th Anniversary Celebration on September 8th at the Barnett Building. It was a joyous occasion for all one hundred guests. While we did celebrate the Museum, the real party was for Mrs. Twyla Gill Wright. In what can only be described a miracle, the staff, volunteers, and members of OIRM were able to pull together and give Twyla a surprise 80th birthday party!

The evening began with Past President Mary Ann Marshall revealing the surprise. Twyla was truly shocked; it was only the beginning. After coming to the stage, Twyla learned that her children, Tanya and Darrick, had traveled from California and Boston for the occasion—a real treat. Then, she was presented with a Proclamation from County Judge Griffin declaring the day as the “Happy Birthday Twyla Wright Day in Independence County, Arkansas.” Next, Board President Sandy West revealed that Governor Asa Hutchinson had written Twyla a letter thanking her for her service to the community and wishing her a Happy Birthday!

Dinner was then served by Elizabeth’s. Some of Twyla’s favorite foods were served: rosemary apricot chicken, lemon cake, peach cobbler, apple cobbler, and cheesecake. Elizabeth’s provided a wonderful meal and service.

The keynote speaker of the evening was, Swanee Bennett, co-author of Arkansas Made, discussed the work associated with upcoming projects. He also highlighted pieces of local history included in the Arkansas Made series. The entertainment for the evening was provided by Twyla’s favorite band, Harmony. They sang a 20 minute set which included a song written just for Twyla.

To conclude the evening, Twyla was given a few more surprises. First, Mayor Rick Elumbaugh presented her with a Key to the City of Batesville, a true honor and one not given out freely. Next, she was given a plaque reading “Twyla Gill Wright Exhibit Preparatory Area.” The plaque is now on display on the door leading downstairs from the Main Gallery. Finally, Twyla received a photobook signed by guests of the party. The book chronicled her early years with her family through her work with Old Independence Regional Museum.

It was truly a wonderful evening full of grand surprises, wonderful entertainment and refreshments, and untold amounts of appreciation. Thank you to all who attended and helped make it possible! Special thanks to Elizabeth’s, Imagination Events, and our wonderful volunteers.
This is an exciting time to be on the Museum Board, and a busy time! In July, Amelia Bowman resigned from her position as Director/Humanities Educator to manage her family’s business. It is hard to see Amelia leave but we wish her well. She really won’t be going very far because she will become a Board member in January and will continue to volunteer and help Twyla with exhibits.

The Board considered many possible avenues of response and did some creative, thinking outside of the box. I am excited to report that Vickie Garland has joined the staff as Humanities Educator and that the museum is contracting with Family Business Enterprises to build a more secure financial future for the museum. Rich Florczak will develop and oversee a capital fundraising effort that will ensure the stability of the museum and allow us to grow. What a pleasure it has been to work with the Board and to engage the services of two outstanding individuals. Our future is bright!

Below: President, Sandy West presents Amelia Bowman with a resolution of appreciation from the Board of Trustees.

Baby Care Continues to Change

This is one of our most popular exhibits. Maybe it is because everyone of any age or gender can relate to it. In the middle of the Honkonen Center stands a table with cloth diapers and the challenge for visitors to try their hands at folding them. Oldsters are sure they remember how, young mothers are astonished. Kids follow printed instructions.

The whole room is sprinkled with baby mannequins in many situations. An 1840s “mammy bench” with baby and mama mannequins show how mothers could rock babies and do handwork at the same time. An 1860s field cradle with a sleeping baby inside is ready for a mother to pull it down rows of cotton at harvest time. Also on display is a baby bed that once stood under a tree as that baby’s mother left a dog to watch over the infant while she picked cotton. And over in the corner an infant lies on a changing/bath table.

A “baby” crawls in its 1960s playpen, while another baby’s dress tail is secured under a table leg to keep it from getting into danger while its mother is cleaning her house in the early 1900s. Several children have felt so sorry for it that they have tried to free it! An early high chair and homemade chair that springs like a rocker are on hand, loaned by the Barnett family. Two cases of baby care items show products from the past and present. This exhibit will end by the first of 2017, so we invite you to see it now.

Surviving Disasters

This exhibit has been up only a couple of months. Although small, it shows how people have suffered when fires and tornadoes have devastated Batesville, Cave City, Calico Rock, Guion, Judsonia, Bald Knob, and Vilonia.

Photographs and information fill colorful exhibit panels, while an old fire extinguisher stands ready for use. A flip-page stand allows visitors to leaf through a number of photographs taken when a terrible 1952 tornado devastated and killed so many in Judsonia. A rack of “Tornado Facts” allows visitors to take home a brochure of information. And to try your hand at creating a tornado, a two bottle hands-on apparatus invites children and adults to swirl it and see the tornado form.

Another State Award!

Our current “Living With the White River” exhibit, housed in the Barnes-Simmons Main Gallery, was awarded first place in its category at the Arkansas Museum Association’s spring 2016 Conference! This makes the third time one of our exhibits has won this top award.
The Collections Corner
Sharan Pittser, Curator of Collections

Historically aware families are keeping the curators busy with offers of family donations. Our mini vault shelves are nearly full of donations & we are most grateful they thought of Old Independence Regional Museum. Spring through summer are usually busy times for us as that is when most donations are offered. Our registrars as well as the curators are keeping busy working some unusually large collections.

One of the largest collections we are working at the present time is the Wilson Powell collection coming from two donors: Laura Hudson and the Batesville Daily Guard. Hudson has been going through family papers, books, & photographs for many years. She has given many valuable items that will help researchers & genealogists. Her gifts certainly verify that Wilson Powell was the leading area historian as well as genealogist. Other papers she has donated indicate the importance of Powell’s service in World War II. The same can be said for all the boxes and boxes of documents & photographs that the Batesville Daily Guard has given the museum.

Ruth Kent Cook, one of our registrars, has been working the donation of Extension Homemaker Club’s photos, program booklets, and scrapbooks. Ruth has been invaluable as she knew many of the women in the unidentified photographs. She has been told that there are many more EHC collections, but we will decide about that offer later.

Jeannie Wagoner continues to work through the letters from the Fitzhugh Spragins collection. There are hundreds of letters to work through. Jeannie’s love and knowledge of history is a real asset as she works to determine each letter’s importance. There are many other artifacts to work through as well in this collection.

Relatives of the Spragins, Joel and Jeannie Spragins, were in the museum recently and perused some of the letters and other items from the collection. Jeannie Wagoner made a quick trip to town to visit with them and answer any of their questions.

One of our long time registrars, Mary Ann Marshall, has been working part of the Powell collection and the huge collection of negatives from the Estes collection. The Estes collection has kept her busy for years; she backs away from it periodically to work other donations before returning to the negatives. As she currently works through the negatives, don’t be surprised if some of you reading this column get a telephone call from MaryAnn or Twyla Wright asking for your help in identifying people in the negatives. Of course, volunteers to help with the identification of the negatives are always welcome. One of our new docents on Saturday is Clyde Spangler. He, too, is helping with the Estes negatives.

One of the recent donations to the museum, is the magazine Eye On Independence, published and edited by Kimberlee and Joseph Thomas. All of the articles focus on events and people in Independence County and certainly add greatly to the modern history of the county. Other donations have been brought in by Nona Floyd and Sharon & Richard Black to name just a few.

Twyla Wright and Linda Wann continue to work and reorganize the collections of textiles in the Shell Room, making it easier to find what is needed for an exhibit. The reorganization is also revealing just how much of certain items we have. For all practical purposes the Shell Room is full.

Nona Floyd approached Sharan Pittser, curator, with the offer of a huge painting by Charles Handford that the Church of the Nazarene had in its possession. Both Sharan and Twyla went to the Church with Nona to see the painting. That helped us determine whether we could accept the painting and just where to place the painting. The painting is now on display next to the carriage in the loft area.

Other helpers are Kay Longenbach and Kenny Gerhardt. Their sharp eyes and historic awareness often find documents and objects that need to be saved. In addition, Kay works as one of our registrars when she can. Sharan and Alan Bufford, assistant curator, are grateful to all who help us. We couldn’t keep up the work load if it wasn’t for all who work in the back. They have our undying gratitude.
Vicki Garland, Humanities Educator

Vicki Garland has joined the staff of OIRM as museum educator. Vicki grew up on the White River in Oil Trough. She graduated from Oil Trough High School and attended Arkansas State University in Jonesboro. Vicki received a Bachelor of Science in Education degree from A.S.U. and worked as a teacher in various schools across the state, as well as working as an instructional specialist with an educational service cooperative.

Vicki has 2 grown children, Sara, who is an assistant band director at Jonesboro Westside High School and Grant, who is a musician/songwriter living in Nashville, Tennessee.

Vicki moved to Batesville in 2013 and has enjoyed every minute of living in this beautiful, historic city. She is looking forward to being a part of the OIRM.

Richard Florczak, Director of Development

The Museum would like to introduce Richard Florczak to the Membership. Rich comes to us through Arkansas Quality Management and Consulting Services. We are enlisting his help and experience to analyze, enhance and add to our Capital Fundraising Campaigns to ensure the strength and growth of our Museum for decades to come. Rich, his wife; Patty, their three teenage sons, and their 9 year old daughter, have called Batesville their home for over 11 years.

Rich wanted to add, “My family and I have enjoyed and appreciated what the Old Independence Regional Museum provides to our community. Soon after my family first moved to Batesville, we discovered the Museum, its wonderful staff, and the many opportunities that are available through the Museum. I am honored to work with the members and staff, offer my assistance, and, as a team, help ensure that the Museum can touch the hearts of many more families for many years to come.”

Shirley Stuckey, Docent Coordinator

My name is Shirley Stuckey, and I have the privilege of being OIRM’s Docent Coordinator since March. I have moved here from California where I worked with the disabled. We worked to help them become as independent as possible and stimulate learning. I also worked at the Albinger Archaeological Museum as a curator, tour guide and leading outreach programs for schools and the public. I worked on special programs and curating for the Olivas and Ortega Adobes that are in the Historical Register. I became involved in Living History and in Civil War Reenacting. My hobbies are sewing, quilting, knitting and crocheting.

I recently moved to Cave City to be near my daughter and my son and their families. I was born in St. Louis and my father was born near Dugginsville, Mo., but the farm was in the Ozarks on the Arkansas side. We still own the property, but lost half of the acreage when Bull Shoals Lake was formed. I am so excited to learn more about my family’s roots and feel so at home. You have all helped me feel so welcome. I look forward to working with all of the staff and volunteer docents at OIRM.
### 2015 Revenues

- **28%** Grant Revenue (Local, State, Federal & Private)
- **25%** Membership and Day Sponsors
- **18%** Bequests
- **10%** Memorials, Honors, & Donations
- **8%** Admissions, Archives, & Gift Shop Revenue
- **7%** Workshop Fees, Special Projects, Rental Fees and Other
- **4%** Interest Income

### 2015 Expenses

- **52%** Salaries, Payroll Taxes, Benefits & Professional Fees
- **16%** Utilities and Security Fees
- **12%** Exhibit, Collections, Grant and Special Event Expenses
- **11%** Maintenance & Repair Costs
- **5%** Insurance
- **3%** Postage, Office Supplies, Travel & Other Miscellaneous Expenses
- **1%** Advertising
Museum Membership

Day Sponsor Members are individuals and businesses that support a day of operating costs at the Museum. For each day sponsored, the member can “name the day”. Many choose to honor a birthday, anniversary, friendship or express support of a local business.

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Old Independence Regional Museum
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Mary Lee Thessen  
Betty Weaver  
Alice Witterman
George Pouliot (above) and Nona Floyd (below) were awarded the Twyla Gill Wright Award. This award recognizes a volunteer who shows an outstanding dedication of time and service to Old Independence Regional Museum. This award was created in 2009 and named in honor of its first recipient, Twyla Gill Wright.

Bekah Paxson (right) was awarded the Dennis Wright Award. The Dennis Wright Award, established in 1999, recognizes a volunteer, or group of volunteers, whose work behind the scenes has been exceptional. The award was created and named in honor of its first recipient, Dennis Wright.

OIRM 2016 Volunteers

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Sylvia Crosby
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