



The JOURNAL



Double Play

Hank Feldman's Local Impact in Baseball and Business



Big K in Front

*Kerwins American Legion
Baseball*



From Rags to Roses

*A biographical sketch
of Espy L. O'Neel*

Vol. 36, No. 1, April 2012



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COVER: **Main photo:** Singer Eddy Arnold, second from left, makes a promotional appearance at Elmore's Records in Fort Smith in the 1950s. Hank Feldman, second from right, shakes Arnold's hand. Photo courtesy of Elizabeth Brodie.

Lower left photo: Kerwins coach Lawrence "Squeaky" Smith stands in the Kerwins store when it was located at 707 Garrison Avenue. Photo courtesy of Jerry Glidewell, Fort Smith Boys & Girls Club.

Lower right photo: Espy L. O'Neel in front of his flower shop. Photo courtesy of George O'Neel.

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News & Opportunities

PASSINGS

William Fadjo Cravens Jr.

Mr. William Fadjo Cravens Jr. died February 19, 2012. He was a great friend of the history community in this city and recognized throughout Arkansas for his contributions to the study and preservation of history. He is shown below with members of the Fort Smith Historical Society.



PHOTO FROM FORT SMITH HISTORICAL SOCIETY ARCHIVES

PRESENTATION OF THE FORT SMITH LAND RECORD BOOK to the Fort Smith Public Library by the Leigh Kelley family and the board of the Fort Smith Historical Society. From left, Missy Cole Carrol, Fadjo Cravens Jr., Mrs. Pat Kelley, Joe Barron, Phil Miller, Thelma Wray, Gordon Kelley, Amelia Martin, and Violet Burton.

Lillian Bell Kropp

Lillian Bell Kropp died January 31, 2012. Ms. Kropp was a nationally distinguished teacher at Fort Smith Southside High School who mentored and guided many students to success in their high academic and business careers.

31st Annual Frontier Achievement Awards Ceremony

and

Fort Smith Historical Society Annual Membership Meeting

Thursday, April 19, 2012, 6 p.m.

West Room at the Riverfront Park on Clayton Expressway

The Fort Smith Historical Society joins with the Fort Smith Chamber of Commerce in honoring citizens, businesses, and industries that have made an outstanding contribution in the historical development of our city and/or helped to preserve the heritage of Fort Smith at the 31st annual Frontier Achievement Awards ceremony. The Fort Smith Historical Society's annual general membership meeting will follow the Frontier Achievement Awards Ceremony. An election of officers and board members for 2012-2013 will be held during this meeting.

Please join us for these important events.

Bass Reeves Statue Dedication

Saturday, May 26, 2012

The Bass Reeves Legacy Initiative Inc. successfully raised the funds to commission and erect an equestrian statue of U.S. Deputy Marshal Bass Reeves. The statue is at the foundry at this time and is scheduled to arrive in Fort Smith on May 16 with a law enforcement escort and will be installed and covered on its plinth in Pendergraft Park. The unveiling dedication is scheduled for May 26. The week preceding will include receptions and dinners for the dignitaries and donors who have made this one-of-a-kind statue for Fort Smith a reality. The featured speaker at the dedication is James Pickens Jr., who plays the role of Dr. Richard Weber on the ABC's "Grey's Anatomy."

On the day of the dedication, there will be a party to celebrate not only Deputy Reeves but also the citizens of Fort Smith who have given themselves this wonderful monument. Along with music, the cannon at the National Historic Site will

be booming in this celebration of our history, the legacy of Deputy Reeves, and the other marshals who “Rode for Parker.”

Be sure to mark your calendar and plan to stay in town on this Memorial Day weekend. Don’t miss the party.

Fort Smith Museum of History Special Exhibits for Spring and Summer 2012

320 Rogers Avenue

❖ **Girl Scouts Celebrate 100 Years.** On March 12, 2012, the Girl Scouts of the USA celebrates its 100th anniversary. The Fort Smith Museum of History will host a new exhibit in Boyd Gallery designed by Girl Scouts—“Diamonds of Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Texas.”

❖ **Civil War in Arkansas, 1861-1865.** July 19-29, 2012. Traveling exhibit from the Arkansas Humanities Council, the exhibit includes a timeline and dozens of images of people, places, and battles in Arkansas.

❖ **Children’s Story Hour.** June to mid-August, Tuesdays and Saturdays, 2:00-3:00 p.m. The hour will include a story on Arkansas history and a viewing of an exhibit related to the day’s story.

For more information, call 479-783-7841 or visit the museum website, <http://www.fortsmithmuseum.com/attractions>

Clayton House Museum Announces Spring and Summer Programs

514 North Sixth Street

The Clayton House is preparing for a busy spring and summer with its participation in special community activities as well as with its own new educational programs. The historic house museum is expanding its offerings to the public with its free monthly “Clayton Conversations,” its quarterly volunteer activity/tour for junior high and high school students, and its school field trips.

“Clayton Conversations” features a presentation by a local citizen sharing the history of a specific aspect of Fort Smith or the region. It is offered the fourth Sunday of the month in the museum’s Community Room (former servants quarters).

The “Fort Smith Frontier History/Victorian

Youth Lifestyle” tour enables student members to enjoy a “close-up” history lesson and to fortify their resumes with volunteer historic preservation activities. April and May will be filled with special visits by school classes from across the region participating in the “Life and Law in 19th Century Arkansas” field trip. The activity includes a visit during one day with four historic museums: the Clayton House, the Fort Smith National Historic Site, the Fort Smith Museum of History, and the U.S. Marshals Museum.

The following are some specific activity dates:

❖ April 14: Fort Smith Heritage Festival activities at the Clayton House.

❖ April 15: Edwardian Hat Workshop (accompanied by a discussion of “Titanic: The Musical” by Fort Smith Little Theatre director).

❖ April 22: Clayton Conversations: “History of Furniture Industry in Fort Smith” by Gene Rapley

❖ May 16: 2012 Arkansas Preservation Conference Opening Reception at Clayton House (5-7 p.m.)

❖ May 26: Clayton House activities celebrating Bass Reeves Legacy Initiative and unveiling of Bass Reeves Monument (1-4 p.m.)

❖ May 27: Clayton Conversations: “About Bass Reeves”

❖ June 16: “Fort Smith Frontier History/Victorian Youth Lifestyle” tour and volunteer day for Student Members (10 a.m. to noon; also offered September 15 and December 15)

❖ June 24: Clayton Conversations: “Architecture of the Belle Grove Historic District” by Graham Sharum (2 and 3 p.m.)

❖ June 24: Introduction of Clayton House Walking Tour (Belle Grove Historic District) (2 and 3 p.m.)

❖ July 22: Clayton Conversations: “The 1887 Sebastian County Courthouse” by Judge Jim Spears

For information, call 479-783-3000 or visit the Clayton House website at <http://claytonhouse.org/>

‘A Divided Arkansas’ 71st Annual Conference of the Arkansas Historical Association

Fayetteville, Arkansas

April 12-14, 2012

The University of Arkansas hosts the 71st annual meeting of the Arkansas Historical Association on April 12-14, 2012, in Fayetteville. This conference

continues the AHA's look at the Civil War in Arkansas. Events include scholarly presentations, receptions, and special tours. Make plans to attend to learn more about the state's rich heritage and new scholarship and be entertained by gifted speakers.

Two Civil War-related tours will be available on Friday afternoon: Pea Ridge National Battlefield Park and Prairie Grove Battlefield State Park. Look for registration information at <http://www.arkansashistoricalassociation.org/>

2012 Arkansas Preservation Conference

**May 16-18
Fort Smith, Arkansas**

The Historic Preservation Alliance and the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program will co-host the annual preservation conference in Fort Smith on May 16-18. This year's conference focuses on historic preservation as a tool for economic revitalization, and includes several informative sessions, tours, and opportunities to explore Historic Fort Smith as well as neighboring Van Buren and Fort Chaffee. On Wednesday, May 16, 2012, a lunch kicks off with an update for Arkansas's Historic Preservation Plan followed by a visit to Fort Chaffee. The tour continues through Fort Smith's National Register residential historic districts: Belle Grove; May-Lecta-Sweet; and Fishback. The Clayton House is the site of the welcome reception for attendees, a night capped off with a Preservation Pub Crawl for those interested in exploring Fort Smith's nightlife.

Thursday starts with a walk through the Bell Grove Historic District, followed with the opening session in the historic Sebastian County Courthouse and a welcome from Fort Smith architect John K. Mott. The day continues at the Holiday Inn with educational sessions on historic preservation tax credits, fire safety for historic properties, and economic "gardening." Lunch will take place on the grounds of the Fort Smith National Historic Site (weather permitting) with a re-enactment in Judge Parker's Courtroom.

The evening will close with dinner at Adelaide Hall, a presentation by Tom Wing, director of the Drennen-Scott House. On Friday, participants will disembark Fort Smith at the Trolley Museum on board a train to Van Buren to explore the Drennen-Scott House. Project architect John K. Mott will outline the restoration of the property.

For schedule and registration information, visit <http://www.preservearkansas.org/>

Memorial in May Cemetery Preservation Conference

The sixth annual Memorial in May Cemetery Preservation Conference of the Preservation of African American Cemeteries (PAAC Inc.) will be held Friday and Saturday, May 18-19, 2012, at the Creekmore Community Center, located in Creekmore Park, Rogers Avenue at South Thirty-first and South M streets, Fort Smith, Arkansas.

For a complete schedule or registration information, check our website:
www.paacarcemeteries.com

Juneteenth Celebration 2012 Fort Smith Summer Jam

June 9, 2012

**Harry E. Kelley Park
Fort Smith, Arkansas**

Our annual "Freedom and Unity" Celebration is an opportunity to showcase our multicultural history with re-enactments, music, dance, food, and fellowship. It's all about education and entertainment. This is how we learn to live, work and play together. "Together, we make our community better!"

The Juneteenth celebration will consist of four weekends of events put on by a partnership of the Juneteenth Planning Commission Inc. (JPCI), A-State of Mind Foundation, and the National Juneteenth Observance Foundation (NJO). To see the event schedule, visit www.juneteenthfortsmith.com.

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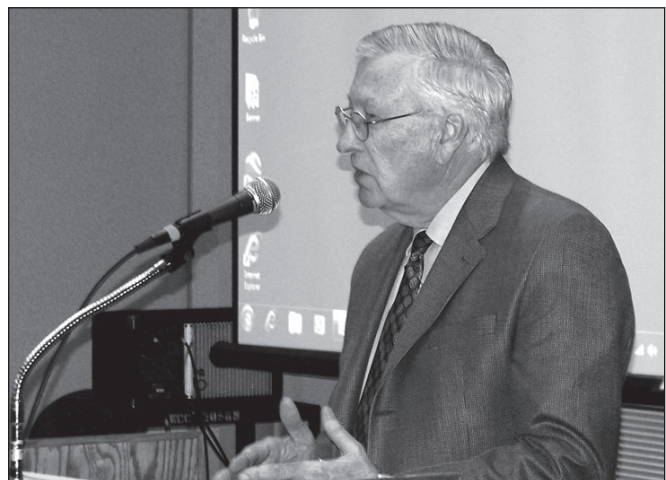
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MEMORIALS

William Fadjo Cravens
By Jerry and Wincie Hendricks



PHOTOS COURTESY OF MARTHA SILER

SPEAKERS AT THE FOURTH ANNUAL HISTORY CONFERENCE in January 2012 included (clockwise from left) Taylor Keen, director of Creighton University's Native American Center, archaeologist Ann Early, and keynote speaker Dr. Daniel Littlefield with the University of Arkansas-Little Rock Sequoia National Research Center.

Into the Nations

Fourth annual History Conference explores regional Indian issues

By Martha and Dennis Siler

The annual January History Conference convened in Fort Smith and Van Buren on January 27-28, 2012. The conference, which is funded in part by a grant from the Arkansas Humanities Council and is open to the public, continued its tradition of quality historical presentations, academic inquiry into local and regional issues, and an enthusiastic audience.

Into the Nations kicked off on Friday afternoon at the King Opera House in Van Buren, Arkansas, where presenter Josh Jenkins, creator of the Arkansas History Hub, discussed this great new resource for and by Arkansas teachers. Leita Spears, conference co-chair and historian at Historic Washington State Park, outlined the

programs and themes that the Old Washington offers for field trips. Tom Wing, associate professor of history and director of the University of Arkansas-Fort Smith Drennen-Scott House and historic site in Van Buren, spoke on "John Drennen and the Drennen Roll."

First National Bank of Fort Smith provided an evening meal, and the first day events concluded with Shawna Cain, Cherokee National "Living Treasure" artist, educator, and president of Cherokee Native Art and Plant Society, Lisa Rutherford, Cherokee artist and archival curator for Cherokee Nation Businesses, and Catherine Foreman Gray, Cherokee Nation historian, who together presented a style show with Native American clothing and fashion through

time, from 900 A.D. to the present.

On Saturday morning, the conference switched venues to the Smith-Pendergraft Campus Center on the University of Arkansas-Fort Smith campus. After a breakfast sponsored by the Fort Smith Historical Society, keynote speaker Dr. Daniel Littlefield of the University of Arkansas-Little Rock Sequoia National Research Center examined the role of Arkansas politicians in creating the Dawes Commission with a paper titled, Into the Nations—Literally. Archaeologist Dr. Ann Early then presented new findings on Arkansas Indians and the Trail of Tears. Amanda L. Paige of the Sequoia National Research Center gave a paper on Arkansas Indian Removal.

After a luncheon provided by the UA Fort Smith College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Mr. Taylor Keen, director of the Native American Center at Creighton University, led a discussion on the Native Identity Wars, giving particular emphasis to the Cherokee freedmen from the perspective of a former tribal council member of the Cherokee Nation. Keen received his bachelor’s degree from Dartmouth College, and MBA/MPA from Harvard University as a fellow with the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development. He publishes on topics of tribal sovereignty and economic development.

Following Keen was Dr. Russell M. Lawson, associate professor of history at Bacone College, who presented, Superstition and Science: Indian Naturalists and Healers in 19th Century Arkansas and Oklahoma, an excerpt of which appears in this issue of *The Journal*.

Daniel Maher, assistant professor of anthropology at UAFS brought a new perspective to the problem of historical interpretations and legend building with a paper titled Contested Lands and Contested Narratives in the Struggle for Modernity. The conference concluded with a presentation by Catherine Foreman Gray, Cherokee Nation historian, on Outlaws and Lawmen of Indian Territory.

The conference attracted distinguished speakers who kept an appreciative audience up to date and fascinated with their recent research and scholarship on Arkansas and Oklahoma Native American history.

One evaluator commented, “The conference was successful in all ways, especially from the academic perspective. Papers read by scholars from UAFS, UALR, UAF, Bacone College, and Creighton University added important findings on the making of Indian Territory and the ramifications of that process. ‘Nice Going’ and ‘Hats’ Off” to Martha Siler and Leita Spears, UAFS history graduates who have organized and nurtured this annual January History Conference series that just completed its fourth year.”

Next January’s (2013) conference topic will be Women on the Frontier from Settlement to Suffrage.

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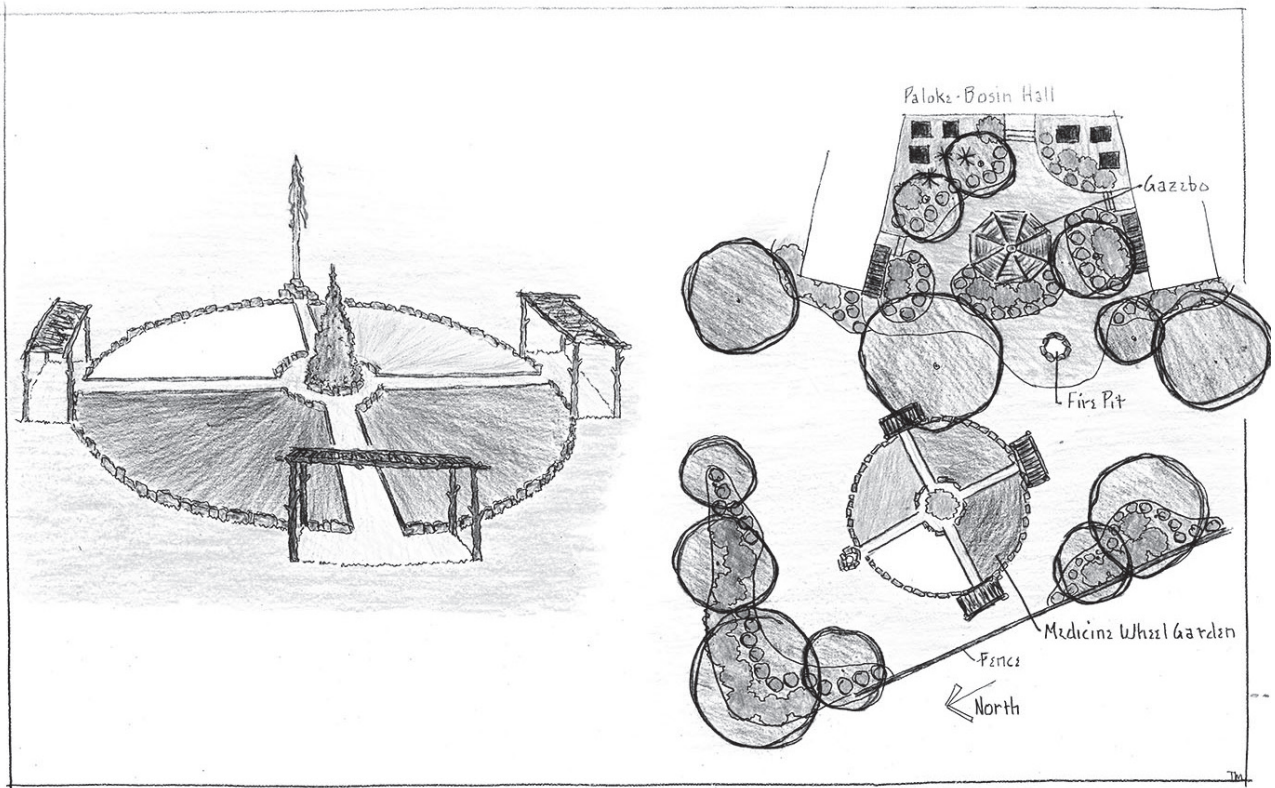
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MEDICINE WHEEL ORGANIC GARDEN

Indian Science

By Russell M. Lawson, Ph.D.

Indian science? Was there such a thing? Several years ago I edited a three-volume encyclopedia on the history of science in America. In selecting the scores of topics that comprised the book, I focused naturally on mathematics, chemistry, physics, geology, medicine, biology, Nobel Laureates, devotees to the systems of Linnaeus and Newton, and some of the greatest thinkers of all time such as Franklin and Einstein. At one point in the editing process, it dawned on me that there might be room for an entry on the science of the American Indian, even though I was not entirely sure how users of the book and reviewers would greet such an entry. I acquired the services of a specialist, Clara Sue Kidwell, then at the University of Oklahoma, since at the University of North Carolina, now at Bacone College, to write the essay. She wrote quite a convincing piece claiming that, yes, the Indians did practice science. Her argument fit in quite well with my previous studies on a variety of naturalists of the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries—besides Thomas Nuttall, the New Hampshire natural historian Jeremy Belknap, the traveler-physician John Josselyn, the geographer Jedidiah Morse, the English botanist John Bradbury, and the French-Mexican scientist Jean-Louis Berlandier. Belknap, for example, a

historian, scientist, and clergyman who studied the indigenous people of New Hampshire, remarked in his *History of New-Hampshire* on the inherent, natural intelligence of the native peoples, whose “invention was chiefly employed either in providing for their subsistence, by hunting, fishing and planting, or in guarding against and surprising their enemies.” “Some of their modes and customs have been learned by our own people, and are still retained.” “We have...learned from the natives,” he wrote, “to dress leather with the brains and fat of the animal, which render it extremely soft and pliable.” Their knowledge of herbs has been passed on, and “some of their medicinal operations are still practiced.” They knew how to prevent bites of venomous snakes and knew antidotes to snakebites. The Indians also devised intricate traps to take game. An example was the culheag, which, according to Belknap, who had examined one, “is a forceps, composed of two long sticks, one lying on the other, connected at one end, and open at the other....In this enclosure is placed the bait, fastened to a round stick, which lies across the lower log, the upper log resting on the end of a perpendicular pointed stick....The animal having scented the bait, finds no way to come at it, but by putting his head between the logs. As

soon as he touches the bait, the round stick, on which it is fastened, rolls; the perpendicular gives way; the upper log falls, and crushes him to death in an instant, without injuring his skin.” The culheag allowed the Indian hunter to clothe himself and his family in the warm, durable furs of the ermine, raccoon, beaver, wolverine, rabbit, lynx, mink, and martin. Indian hunters traveled to hunting grounds using two of their inventions, snowshoes in winter and the birch-bark canoe at other times; the canoe, white settlers realized, was clearly the best conveyance over rivers and streams. John Bradbury, sometime traveling companion of Thomas Nuttall, noted in his *Travels in the Interior of America* that the Sauk and Fox Indians of the upper Mississippi had mastered the art of smelting lead ore.¹

Jean Louis Berlandier, who is little known today, but whose life and reputation I hope to resurrect in words in a biography I have recently completed that will be published by the University of New Mexico Press this year, was born in France and educated in Geneva, and traveled to Mexico in 1826, where he joined a military commission that journeyed to the Rio Grande and the Texas Gulf Coast in 1827. Berlandier spent the remainder of his life in Matamoros, Mexico, just across from Brownsville, Texas. He was like Nuttall, an explorer and jack-of-all-trades scientist, though by training a botanist. Berlandier actually came to know the American Indians much better than Nuttall. He befriended Kickapoo hunters and went hunting with Comanche warriors. Their practical, scientific knowledge astonished him. Their ability to reason, to conceptualize, to deduce seemed as advanced as any white scientist who lived in a similar wilderness environment. Berlandier would not disagree with an argument today that the Indians of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries did indeed practice science.²

In short, scientific thought is dependent upon the experience of the natural environment. That is to say, Indian science was limited, but sufficient for their needs; for their time and place, nothing more was needed to live well. Thomas Nuttall discovered this in Oklahoma in August 1819, when he journeyed west across the prairies from Three Forks heading west toward the source of the Cimarron River. Accompanied by a hunter named Lee, Nuttall journeyed into lands hunted and protected by Cherokee and Osage hunters. If Nuttall had any doubts about the harshness of the environment, the difficulty of surviving in such an unforgiving land, they were quickly dispelled almost immediately, when he became terribly ill after drinking from a tepid pool of stagnant water. He spent several weeks following the hunter Lee trapping for beaver, following a tributary of the Canadian River, moving toward what is today Oklahoma City then north to the Cimarron River, all the while burning with fever, growing delirious, and coming very close to death. The hunter cared in a rough way for the ill scientist, feeding him honey and finding cool places next to beaver ponds to camp and rest. Lee built a dugout canoe, Indian style, to descend the Cimarron and the Arkansas to the

Three Forks. Along the way the Osage pestered the hunter and his ill companion, but the wily Lee, thankfully for Nuttall, outwitted the similarly wily Osage warriors, and Nuttall returned. He made his way, eventually, to Fort Smith in September 1819, where he stayed for several weeks while fever raged all about him, taking the lives of the garrison’s physician, Dr. Russell, and many other inhabitants. Nuttall learned firsthand the practical skills and applied science required to survive in the early nineteenth-century Arkansas Valley.

On a personal note, let me conclude my talk with a brief description of my own attempt to acquire knowledge about Indian science. I was recently able to spend a semester in Ontario on a Fulbright scholarship, where I studied the relations between Protestant missionaries and indigenous tribes, on which I was lucky enough to follow up recently with a grant from Fulbright Canada to construct a traditional organic medicinal garden on the Bacone College campus in Muskogee, Oklahoma. I am just now trying to figure out how best to spend the money and what plants to grow. The garden will be designed as a medicine wheel, the traditional symbol of healing and thought of the American Indian. The medicine wheel symbolizes the recurrent cycles of life: north representing infancy, east representing adolescence, south representing adulthood, and west representing aging and death. The garden will have healing plants used by tribes, such as Canadian First Nations, in the northern quadrant of the medicine wheel; the eastern quadrant with plants used by tribes east of the Appalachian Mountains; the southern quadrant with plants used by tribes in the south to the Mexican border; and the western quadrant with plants used by western tribes. In this endeavor, students and faculty will tend to the plants, offering them to American Indian herbalists to use in their healing arts. The garden will combine a scientific approach, botany, with a spiritual approach, the medicine wheel, thereby combining the two ways that American Indians have long understood the environment, the intuitive and subjective as well as the observational and scientific.



Russell Lawson teaches history at Bacone College in Muskogee, Oklahoma, where he is creating a Medicine Wheel garden.

Endnotes

- ¹ Russell M. Lawson, *Research and Discovery: Landmarks and Pioneers in American Science*, 3 vols. (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2007); quotes are from Belknap, *History of New-Hampshire*, vol 3; John Bradbury, *Travels in the Interior of America*. In *Early Western Travels*, ed. Reuben Thwaites (Cleveland: Clark, 1905), 252-253;
- ² Russell M. Lawson, *Frontier Naturalist: Jean Louis Berlandier and the Exploration of Northern Mexico and Texas* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2012).

Double Play

Hank Feldman's local impact in baseball and business

By Steve Peterson

Harry “Hank” Feldman was not a Fort Smith, Arkansas, native, but he did hone his craft near here. Hank Feldman met his wife here and even before his major league baseball career wound down, Fort Smith was the place his young family chose to make its home, leaving a definite impact on the people, and especially the youth, of this area.

In fact, the Fort Smith Church Baseball League to this day presents an annual Hank Feldman award to a Babe Ruth player based on his or her Christian attitude, sportsmanship, ability and contribution to the program.¹ Ironically, the recipient of that award in 2008 was Blake Brodie, Hank’s grandson and now a sophomore at the University of Arkansas-Fort Smith and a pitcher for the Lions baseball team. Blake “earned it on his own ability. The committee that selected him for the award had no idea of his relationship to Dad,” said Elizabeth “Libby” Brodie about her son, Blake. Libby Brodie of Fort Smith is one of Hank’s daughters.²

Diamond Dreams

Hank Feldman was born and raised halfway across the country from Fort Smith in the Bronx, New York, New York. He was born on November 10, 1919, and was the last of sixteen children born to his parents, although only eleven lived, according to J. Harry Feldman, Hank’s only son. Harry currently lives in Delaware.

“My dad was a super athlete in junior high and high school,” Harry said. “In tenth grade, he was offered a pro basketball contract. He just preferred playing baseball.”³

Hank not only preferred to play baseball, but he was good at it, too, having pitched two no-hitters during his high school career. Hank was encouraged to use his talent to try out for the New York Giants by his older brother, Al Feldman, who was seventeen years older than Hank and who had taught his younger brother how to play stick ball.

The Giants tryouts were held each year at the Polo Grounds and hopefuls from all over would come in an attempt to make their dreams become reality. In fact, so many prospective ball players showed up each year, it was hard for one young man to stand out from the crowd.

“The way my mother told it, they wouldn’t give him

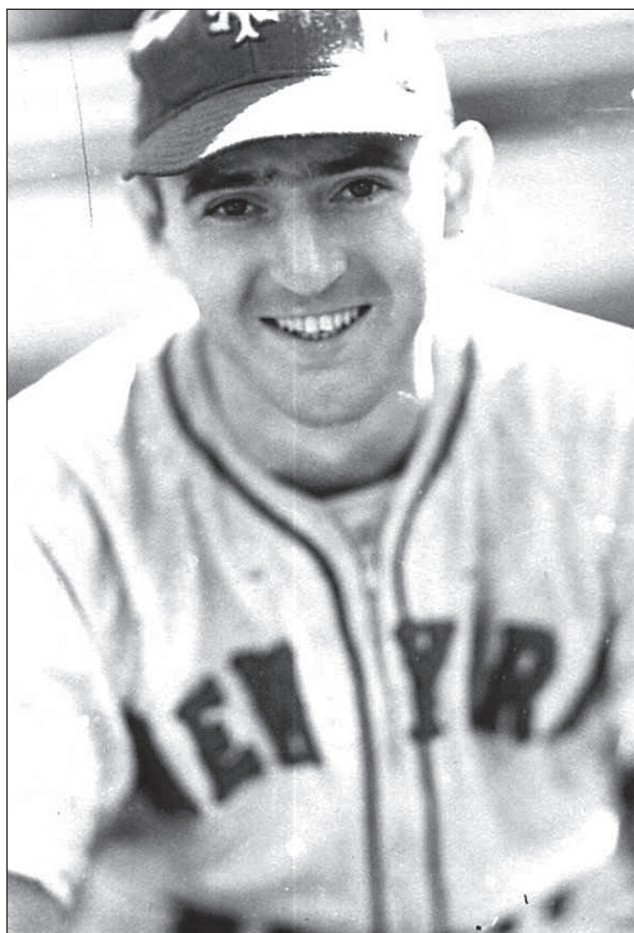


PHOTO COURTESY OF J. HARRY FELDMAN

THIS UNDATED PHOTO shows Hank Feldman in his New York Giants uniform.

a chance until he spoke up,” Brodie said.⁴

Tim Wiles, director of research with the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum in Cooperstown, New York, elaborated on the story. Hank was in his early twenties when he attended a three-day tryout event for the New York Giants in New York City in the late 1930s. The young man did not get much attention until he “kind of nudged management,” Wiles said. Hank approached Bill Terry, the Giants’ first baseman and team manager. “He [Hank] walked up and said, ‘I have a job making shirts making thirteen cents an hour,’” Wiles said. Hank explained that he was attending the tryout event on his vacation and wondered if the team could make him a better offer than simply returning to



PHOTOS COURTESY OF J. HARRY FELDMAN

(ABOVE) This 1938 photo shows the roster of the 1938 Fort Smith Giants. Hank Feldman can be seen on the front row, far left.

(LEFT) This photo, from 1923 or 1924, shows a young Hank Feldman with his older brother, Al Feldman, who was working as a street car conductor at the time.



his shirt-making job. That boldness helped Hank stand out from the rest of the hopefuls, earning him a chance to show Terry and the other Giants' chiefs what he could do. They were impressed enough to sign him. "To me," Wiles said, "Feldman is also an interesting figure. I've heard a lot of stories about how guys got into the major leagues, but this one is kind of unique."⁵

Coming To Arkansas

Hank, a six-foot, 175-pound right hander, began pitching in the minor leagues in 1938, first at Blytheville, Arkansas. "His first season, he was 13-1 at Blytheville," Brodie said. That success led to a mid-season bump up to the Fort Smith team, where his win-loss numbers were 7-7. "Blytheville and Fort Smith were big towns for baseball at that time." Mansfield also had semi-pro ball teams.⁶

Wiles confirmed that the Class C baseball leagues in Arkansas were important to the sport.

"Arkansas was important in the first two-thirds of the twentieth century. They produced more than their



PHOTO COURTESY OF ELIZABETH LIBBY BRODIE

THIS UNDATED PHOTO SHOWS THE ROSTER of the New York Giants sometime between 1941 and 1945. Hank Feldman, who can be seen on the back row, third from right, wrote the names of each of his teammates on the photo.

share of major league players during that time.” Hank played again for the Fort Smith Giants in 1939 and then was again bumped up, this time to the Jersey City, New Jersey, Giants, where he played in 1940 and 1941.⁷

Even before he was playing for the Fort Smith Giants, Hank had occasion to visit the city. “The baseball team used to come here to practice,” Brodie said. “The players would stay at the Goldman Hotel.” The Goldman sat on the corner of Garrison Avenue and Thirteenth Street, having opened in 1911, and the glamorous hotel hosted the stay of numerous celebrities and provided a large well-appointed ballroom for major social events through the beginning of World War II.⁸

It was in the spring of 1938 while in Fort Smith attending a fair that Hank met his future wife, Lauretta Myatt. The couple continued to see each other when Hank was in town. The romance blossomed, and the couple married March 3, 1941, prior to Hank being called up to the majors. He debuted with the New York Giants on September 10, 1941.⁹

Life in the Majors

Initially, the newlyweds lived in the Bronx, where they welcomed their first child, Harry, in 1942. The Bronx was still home to Hank, and he had hundreds of relatives living in New York at the time, according to Harry. “Mom went to all of the home games. My mother remarked to me that father was unusual in that

he wanted his family to be with him throughout the season.” So his wife and child often traveled with Hank when the Giants went on road trips.

Hank tried to enlist in the service like many other young men his age during World War II, but he was turned down by the military because “he was a carrier of tuberculosis.” In fact, Hank missed part of the 1942 season with the New York Giants when he was forced to stay in a Booneville, Arkansas, sanatorium for treatment of the disease.¹⁰

“He did have tuberculosis,” Wiles said of Hank, “but it didn’t hurt his ability to pitch baseball. He did play in ’42,” Wiles added. “In fact, that year he made quite a splash.” Hank’s win-loss record for the Giants in 1942 was 7-1. On August 27, 1942, at Crosley Field in Cincinnati, Ohio, Feldman pitched eleven shutout innings, and the Giants won 2-0. The Giants lineup included two future Hall of Famers, Mel Ott and Johnny Mize. While they both went hitless in this game, Feldman had two hits and drove in one of the two Giant runs.¹¹ The 1944 and 1945 seasons were also particularly good ones for Hank with him posting records of 11-13 and 12-13, respectively.

A major league starting pitcher has to be in the game at least five innings to be counted as officially participating, Wiles explained. “So even the losses, he was in the game and depended upon. ... His [Hank’s] numbers are pretty average overall, but he was a valued and sig-

The Mexican League—In Feldman's Own Words

Below are Hank Feldman's words transcribed from a talk show commentary broadcast over KWHN radio:

Do you remember when some American baseball players hopped over to the Mexican League in 1946? And do you remember what some smart aleck newspaper sportswriters were calling them in their columns? Sure you do—like Mexican Jumping Beans, Hot Tamales, Peso Players and all that sort of stuff! But now what are they saying? It looks to me like the picture and the name calling are a little different now! This probably won't get in the newspapers in any city, but at least I can tell you fine radio fans.

Do you know just how many players, both minor and major leaguers, who went to the Mexican League? Well—counting Vern Stephens, who went and then jumped right back again—and in my opinion, was put up to do just that very thing by the St. Louis Browns, so as to discourage other players from going to Mexico—well, there was a grand total of twenty-eight minor and major leaguers who decided to play in the Mexican League! That's quite a lot of ball players, isn't it? And then, naturally, the great Commissioner of Baseball, Happy—who isn't so happy now!—Chandler, put a five-year suspension on these players, barring them from organized baseball.

Well, there's no kick on that,

because being that I was one of those players who went to Mexico, we knew we'd be barred for five years—but barred only from organized baseball. But then what happened? Organized baseball had the low down audacity to keep some of these same players from making a living in semi-pro baseball! Believe me I know what I'm talking about, because I myself was kept out of participating in the Arkansas State Semi-Pro Tournament, which is sanctioned by the National Baseball Congress of Wichita, Kansas. And then on top of that, just last summer, when I played on Max Lanier's All Stars—a team composed of former major and minor league players who before had played in Mexico—we were forced to quit, because, once again, organized baseball couldn't stand to see us try to make a living! I sincerely believe that the ordinary fan, which are you people, can see what I'm driving at.

Really, these boys who are suing organized baseball are not suing because they were barred for five years, but are suing because they were deprived of trying to make a living in semi-pro baseball!

Don't get me wrong. This little story is not a gripe. I'm just merely telling you this because you baseball fans will someday have to judge some of these players for yourselves.

Now, just one more thing about Max Lanier's, Fred Martin's and Danny Gardella's lawsuit against

organized baseball. Naturally, anybody can sue, if they think they have a just cause—and can sue for as much as they think it's worth. Well, I think the three of them have a just cause, all right, and I think they'll win their case. But how much they'll win—I just couldn't say. My guess would be somewhere between 25 and 50 thousand dollars.

But I do know this, though: that the great Mr. Not-So-Happy Chandler really butchered the cow. If he didn't have to wait and see what the baseball club owners should tell him to do, he could have reinstated all these players last February and [could have avoided] all this mess! It was last February that all these players, except Gardella, pleaded to Chandler to reinstate us then! But the club owners just couldn't get together so they could inform Mr. Chandler what to do next! Isn't that awful, to be the Commissioner of Baseball, at fifty thousand dollars a year, and yet can't do things the way you want to do them?

But, like I said before, this story is not a gripe! You fans are the ones who have made baseball the great American sport it is today—and, therefore, I feel that you're entitled to know what's going on.

If you care to drop me a penny postcard here at Radio Station KFSA and let me know what you think about the situation, good or bad, I sure would appreciate it.

nificant member of the team.”¹²

Hank's career took a major turn after five seasons in the major leagues, however, when in 1946 contract disputes broke out between the players and the managers of many major league teams.

“Players in the '40s were trying to develop labor consciousness,” Wiles explained. “The Mexican League chapter (of baseball history) is an important one: The

owners tried to paint the players as black sheep, but they were fighting for labor rights.”

And, in fact, the players did have some success in this fight. Beginning with the 1947 season, minimum salaries and pension plans were established on behalf of players, according to a display at the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum. But the players still appeared to be the underdogs.

“The owners had all the power,” Harry said. “While the players made good money, they were still considered chattel,” being traded or let go with little or no warning. Hank’s annual salary of \$10,000 with the Giants was low compared to what was offered when the five Pasquel brothers—Jorge, Bernardo, Mario, Alfonso, and Gerardo—came from Mexico to lure players, according to an article in the June 24, 1946, issue of *Life* magazine.¹³

Baseball was very popular in Mexico at the time, Harry said, and the Pasquel brothers were willing to pay American players far more to come south of the border to play.

According to the *Life* article, Jorge Pasquel was a very successful customs broker and backer of the then-twenty-two-year-old, eight-team Mexican League. The Mexican League had been drawing minor league players from the United States for several years, according to *Life*, but during the contract disputes in the mid-1940s, the Pasquel brothers decided to use their considerable financial resources to lure major league players from the United States in an effort to improve the Mexican League.

In addition to hefty salaries for playing ball south of the border, the Pasquels offered the players significant signing bonuses and arranged for them to have housing, domestic staffs and monthly household stipends. Hank was one of twenty-seven major league players from various teams enticed to walk out on the contract disputes in the States and play ball in Mexico instead, Harry said.¹⁴

“[Hank] was just as interesting for his decisions off the field as on,” Wiles said of this part of Hank Feldman’s baseball career.

Harry Feldman recalled the family’s time in Mexico fondly. In fact, Harry served as a bat boy for the Vera Cruz team on which Hank played. “There’s a famous picture of me with all of the ball players where I’m looking very bored,” Harry said.¹⁵

Harry and his younger sister, Kaye, enjoyed their time outside the United States. The two youngsters missed a lot of school, which they had to make up, but that was nothing new since they traveled so much with their father while still in the United States. Harry and Kaye picked up the native language quickly and often served as translators for their parents.

Setting Down Roots

The signing bonus Hank received from the Mexican League in 1946 was \$15,000. Some of that money was used to buy a home back in Fort Smith, where the family lived during the off-season. That house was located at 1406 North Thirty-Ninth Street and cost the family \$4,000.

“My dad just loved Fort Smith,” Harry said, and



PHOTO COURTESY OF J. HARRY FELDMAN

THIS FAMILY PHOTO SHOWS Laretta, Hank, Kaye, and J. Harry Feldman around 1947.

so he had no problem planning to settle down there at some point. Buying the house in Fort Smith was a definite step in that direction.

“I grew up across the street from Ray Baker,” Harry said. Virginian Charles Ray Baker also played for the Fort Smith Giants farm team, and he, too, took a bride, Helen Westbrook, whom he met while in Fort Smith. Their son, former Fort Smith Mayor C. Ray Baker, was two years older than Harry.¹⁶

The Feldman clan actively practiced their faith. “My mother, being a good Southern Baptist, as we all are, tithed \$1,500 to Immanuel Baptist Church on Dodson Avenue,” the church the family attended, Harry said of yet another portion of Hank’s Mexican League signing bonus. That money went to purchase a chime system that the church used until it burned down years later.

The year after Mexico, Hank took his family to Havana, Cuba, to play winter baseball. The family planned ahead this time, Harry said, and Laretta Feldman got the children’s lesson plans from the school and taught them while they were out of the country.

All of the players who went to Mexico to play baseball were banned from playing in the major league in the United States for five years afterward. That did not mean they could not play minor league ball, however, and many did. Hank played for a team in Sherbrooke, Quebec, Canada, for a while in 1949, splitting time

there and with the San Francisco Seals of the Triple A Pacific Coast League. Similar to Fort Smith's Class C professional team, San Francisco was in the Giants farm system only at the top.

"We weren't there [Sherbrooke] very long when Dad got a call from the San Francisco Seals," Harry said. Hank played for the Seals for two years, 1949 and 1950. The Seals "were a minor league team but still a very high level of baseball, well respected," Wiles said. The 1949 Seals had Arky Vaughn as a player but the DiMaggio brothers, Joe and Dominic, each of whom had played three years for San Francisco in the Pacific Coast League, were by this time well-established major league stars with the Yankees and the Red Sox. Hank won eleven and lost sixteen games with the Seals in 1950, his last year of professional baseball, but that was good enough to rank him the number three hurler on the Seals staff that year, especially considering he had twelve complete games and one shutout for a second division club in Triple A.¹⁷

During the off-season, Hank would bring his family back to Fort Smith, and he would work at the train station, unloading freight cars as a way to keep in shape and stay busy.

Then in 1952, despite the expiration of the ban on major league play for Hank, he did not return to baseball; there are two possible explanations for that, according to Harry, who heard both given at different times. The truth may include a little bit of both.

The first is that Hank had an offer to return to the New York Giants as a player, but his children begged him not to go. "We were tired of being pulled out of school," Harry said.

The other story is that Hank was indeed offered a position with the Giants, but only as a scouting agent.

Building a Legacy

Whatever the reason, the family settled in Fort Smith to stay beginning in 1952, and Hank sought a business to own and operate.

Jerry Kerwin and his father owned a popular sporting goods and luggage store at 707 Garrison Avenue, and Hank made an offer to buy the Kerwin business.¹⁸ "He [Hank] was looking for somewhere to settle down," Jerry Kerwin said. "He knew he couldn't pitch baseball his whole life. And I think he had some money to burn and was looking for something to invest in."

When Bill and Jerry Kerwin told Hank they were not interested in selling, Hank went a few storefronts down Garrison and purchased Elmore's Records at 715 Garrison Avenue, a business he was familiar with from his previous time in Fort Smith.

"My dad, as a kid, had always loved music, especially the big bands," Harry said. "He'd skip school to hear one of the big bands play."¹⁹



PHOTO COURTESY OF ELIZABETH LIBBY BRODIE

SINGER EDDY ARNOLD, second from left, can be seen during a promotional appearance at Elmore's Records in Fort Smith in the 1950s. Hank Feldman, second from right, can be seen shaking Arnold's hand.

"He didn't have any business experience really, but he thought he could handle that," Kerwin said of Hank's interest in the record store.

"It was just buying [and selling .45 RPM and LP] records," Kerwin said, "and all of the high-school-age kids were already in there all the time."

Elmore's was a favorite hangout for young and old alike because of its listening booths, a novelty at the time where customers could sit and listen to records before deciding to buy them. "Hank was a very gregarious, outgoing man," Kerwin said. "I don't think anyone around didn't like him."²⁰

Hank did well at Elmore's and established some branch locations. The main store carried phonograph records and RCA, GE, and Zenith radio and television sets. Though Hank came into the record business just as Elvis, Johnny Cash, Motown, and the whole rock 'n' roll age were boosting record sales dramatically all across the country, his business success may well have been due to his baseball career, Hank being a "pretty well-known celebrity in Fort Smith."²¹

The Feldman children had had occasion to rub elbows with celebrities because of their father. Harry remembers meeting comedian Milton Berle at the Polo Grounds. Brodie recalled several baseball players being dinner guests of the family in their New York home, including the Giants' Mel Ott, Rube Fischer, "Big" Bill Voiselle, and, the "Sultan of Swat" himself, the Yankees' Babe Ruth. Brodie remembered singer Eddy Arnold making an appearance at Elmore's Records.²²

Hank stayed involved with sports by announcing local sporting events on radio station KWHN. Harry used to do some of the announcing, too, especially for games played at Andrews Field.

Hank also became involved in various youth organizations such as the Boys & Girls Clubs in Fort Smith and helped to expand the area's youth baseball opportunities, Harry said.

"Dad was in on the beginning of the Church League." At the time, there were baseball programs for youngsters up to twelve years of age, and then American Legion baseball served sixteen- to eighteen-year-olds, but there were limited opportunities for those in the thirteen- to fifteen-year-old age group who wanted to play baseball. So Hank became "real involved in the development of the Church League," which provided a growing baseball program for that age.²³

A Life Cut Short

Hank died of a heart attack on March 16, 1962, at the age of forty-two. At the time of his death, Hank and Lauretta had five children. Harry, the oldest, was twenty at the time. The youngest of the four girls, Laura, was just eighteen months old when her father died.

Hank, an avid fisherman, had gone on a fishing trip to Lake Tenkiller in Oklahoma with the family's next-door neighbor, Bill Kimmons. Hank was alone installing a new battery in the boat when he died.

Hank's death was "quite a shock" to the community. "He died suddenly and after his death, the Church League couldn't think of enough things to do to honor him."²⁴

For instance, the Church League was temporarily renamed the Hank Feldman League, Kerwin recalled.

In June 1963, a baseball field named for Hank was dedicated in the Leigh's Hollow area. That field is no longer there, having given way to construction of other facilities, and the Church League has grown exponentially since.

The very first Hank Feldman award from the Fort Smith Church League was presented to David Lundquist on August 11, 1963. That honor continues to the present, as evinced by Hank's grandson, Blake Brodie's winning the award more than four decades after Hank's passing.

Steve Peterson is a freelance writer who contributed this article to The Journal.

Endnotes

- ¹ The constitution and by-laws of the Fort Smith Church Baseball League, Inc., as amended and adopted March 2011.
- ² Interview with Elizabeth Libby Brodie, December 5, 2011. Interview notes in possession of author. Subsequent references to and quotations from Libby Brodie in this article are from the same interview.
- ³ Telephone interview with J. (James) Harry Feldman, January 11, 2012. Interview notes in possession of author. Subsequent references to and quotations from Harry Feldman in this article are from the same interview.
- ⁴ Brodie interview.
- ⁵ Telephone interview with Tim Wiles, December 14, 2011. Interview notes in possession of author. Subsequent references to and quotations from Tim Wiles in this article are from the same interview.

tations from Tim Wiles in this article are from the same interview.

- ⁶ Brodie interview. Hank Feldman win-loss records verified using Baseball-Reference.com, <http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/f/feldmha01.shtml>. Accessed December 7, 2011. Subsequent references to Hank Feldman statistics and dates on team rosters verified through same source. See also *The Baseball Encyclopedia* (New York: Macmillan, 1993), 1846, which shows Feldman as hitting .282 in 1942 with one home run. He had another homer in 1945.
 - ⁷ Wiles interview. Hank Feldman win-loss records verified using Baseball-Reference.com, <http://www.baseball-reference.com/players/f/feldmha01.shtml>. Accessed December 7, 2011. Subsequent references to Hank Feldman statistics and dates on team rosters verified through same source.
 - ⁸ Ben Boulden, "The Lost Hotel," Fort Smith Historical Society, Inc., website, <http://www.fortsmithhistory.org/archive/goldman.html>. Accessed February 6, 2012.
 - ⁹ Hank Feldman's Major League debut verified using Baseball-Reference.com.
 - ¹⁰ Brodie interview.
 - ¹¹ Retrosheet on line box scores and game summaries from *Society for American Baseball Research* (SABR): <http://www.retrosheet.org/boxesetc/1942/B08270CIN1942.htm> The 1942 Giants also had Carl Hubbell known as "The Meal Ticket." Hubbell went into the Hall of Fame, making three with that great honor who were teammates of Hank Feldman on the New York Giants.
 - ¹² Wiles interview.
 - ¹³ Harry Feldman interview; Frank Schersche, "Mexican Baseball: Tempting bonuses and salaries draw players from big leagues," *Life*, Volume 20, Number 25, June 24, 1946, pages 119-122, 125.
 - ¹⁴ Figure verified by Harry Feldman entry on Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry_Feldman. Accessed December 7, 2011.
 - ¹⁵ Harry Feldman interview. A Puerto Rican player, Luis Olmo, signed a Mexican League contract after playing with the Brooklyn Dodgers. Olmo was one of the best of the 27 signed by the Pasquel brothers and played for awhile with the Vera Cruz team.
 - ¹⁶ Barbara Minor, "Baseball," *The Journal*, Volume 8, Number 2, September 1984, page 9.
 - ¹⁷ Society for American Baseball Research (SABR): <http://www.baseball-reference.com/minors/team>
 - ¹⁸ Telephone interview with Jerry Kerwin, December 19, 2011. Interview notes in possession of author. Subsequent references to and quotations from Jerry Kerwin in this article are from the same interview.
 - ¹⁹ Harry Feldman interview.
 - ²⁰ Kerwin interview.
 - ²¹ Harry Feldman interview.
 - ²² Brodie interview.
 - ²³ Brodie interview.
 - ²⁴ Kerwin interview.
- Additional information and assistance going into this article was provided by:*
- ❖ Martin Abramowitz, founder of Jewish Major Leaguers, Inc., and <http://www.jewishmajorleaguers.org>.
 - ❖ James Wagoner, chairman of the board, Babe Ruth League, Inc.



PHOTO COURTESY OF JERRY GLIDEWELL, FORT SMITH BOYS & GIRLS CLUB
KERWINS SPORTSMEN, *Katzer Tournament champions, 2011*

The Big K in Front

Kerwins American Legion Baseball

By Jeremy Nguyen

I grew up with summer baseball at the Fort Smith Boys & Girls Club. My parents, like many, signed up their kid, ages ranging from preschool to high school to play in the many leagues of the Boys & Girls Club. My most influential summer came in 2004, when I was fifteen years old and on a Junior Babe Ruth League team sponsored by the Eagles Lodge of Fort Smith. What impacted my life came from witnessing a certain team take batting practice at Hunts Park in the cages right next to the ball field where I played. I soon found out that this team, the Kerwins Sportsmen, won the 2004 State American Legion Tournament. That was the first experience I would have with this baseball team. But it was not Kerwins first state championship.

Besides watching the American Legion team with the admiring eyes of a younger player, I since have learned several things about Kerwins not known to many people, even some of the players who have played for the team. Most know Kerwins is named for an athletic store now found on Burrough Road just off U.S. Highway 71. The

store sponsors the team. Kerwins baseball is a “tradition” to its alumni and even to its rivals. Before the Kerwins store moved to Burroughs Road, it had three previous locations, the first in Charleston, Arkansas. In 1886, the original Kerwins was a harness store owned and operated by Mr. John Kerwin. The store supplied breeders and farmers with harnesses and saddles for their horses. After two years, Mr. Kerwin moved the store to Van Buren where it stayed for a year. In 1889, the owner moved to 707 Garrison Avenue in downtown Fort Smith.¹

The Kerwins store sold premium leather luggage, under the helm of John Kerwin’s son, Bill Kerwin. Approached by Spaulding and Wilson salesmen, Bill saw a new opportunity for a more diverse customer base. Kerwins began to offer the newest sporting goods alongside leather luggage. Only the best products and equipment would be carried. The inventory ranged from golf to baseball to football. Young kids and their parents walked into the store full of excitement to look for a new ball glove or be sized for a pair of cleats, or even a baseball cap. These were the



PHOTO COURTESY OF JERRY GLIDEWELL, FORT SMITH BOYS & GIRLS CLUB
LAWRENCE "SQUEAKY" SMITH in the Kerwins store when it was located at 707 Garrison Avenue.

years before adjustable straps, and the store carried boxes and boxes of caps in each size, from 6 $\frac{7}{8}$ to 8 $\frac{1}{2}$. With its creaking wood floors and a delightful smell of leather, the store on Garrison brought moments of joy and excitement for many young kids. The ten-foot long rack of Louisville Slugger ashwood bats bearing the signatures of major leaguers like Jackie Robinson, Stan Musial, and Mickey Mantle produced pure joy in those young hands that lifted one of those bats off the rack and gripped the handle—Aaron's was a thin handle, Robinson's so thick small hands could barely get around it. Such elements are still fresh in the memories of Mr. Steve Core of Barling, Arkansas. Core remembers as a young lad, walking in and smelling the leather that the store's merchandise offered. Core said, "Anything you could think of, they had it."² Kerwins had adopted the wider inventory, due to the invention of the automobile, which made the harness and saddles once in stock almost obsolete. Automobiles were becoming more popular, and harnesses were slowly disappearing.³

Mr. Butch Edwards, now with Edwards Funeral Home in Fort Smith, told me of his first encounter with the Kerwins store when he was growing up. "It always smelled like new gloves. Every time you entered the store, the first thing you noticed was the rawhide, clean smell of brand new baseball gloves and baseballs."⁴

The Fort Smith Boys Club [Fort Smith Boys & Girls Club] had operated the local American Legion Baseball

program since 1928, and before long, Mr. Bill Kerwin was approached by Clarence Higgins, who was the director at the Fort Smith Boys Club from 1946-1971.⁵ Mr. Higgins, who wanted to expand the Legion program in Fort Smith, persuaded Mr. Kerwin to sponsor a new team for high school age boys.⁶ Kerwins supplied uniforms and the equipment needed and, ironically, Kerwins offered the team even more than bats, balls, and suits.

An employee of Kerwins Sporting Goods, Lawrence Smith, was called "Squeaky" by his friends in his hometown of Barling. In 1949, Squeaky began work at Kerwins. In describing Squeaky, Jerry Kerwin, who grew up in his father's store and was closely associated with Squeaky and who knew him well, made these remarks: "He [Squeaky] was not too tall and a little heavy. He talked a lot, and there was never a dull moment."⁷ Squeaky started coaching the new Kerwins team at its beginning in 1951.

Danny Loyd of Van Buren remembered playing for Squeaky in the summers of 1966-68. Loyd explained that everything under Squeaky was "hard work" and you always "hustled."⁸ It was Squeaky who transformed Kerwins from the junior American Legion team to a perennial powerhouse. Using tactics of small-ball and outworking the opponent, Squeaky, who held the reigns of the program until 1983, led the Sportsmen to more than 1,300 victories in his thirty-three years. With the help of his assistant and longtime friend, E. B. Brown, the Sportsmen accumulated thirty district titles and won four state championships in 1964, 1968, 1970, and 1974.⁹ In 1992, Squeaky was inducted into the Arkansas Sports Hall of Fame for his career coaching record with Kerwins. Two years later in 1994, Squeaky passed away, leaving many friends and former players.

Mr. Jerry Glidewell, the Boys & Girls Club executive director, when in high school at Hartford, played for Squeaky's teams in the summers of 1973, 1974, and 1975¹⁰ and helped with a state championship in 1974. The Sportsmen were undefeated going into the state tournament. After winning the state tournament, they went on to the regional tournament and finished second. The following year, in 1975, Glidewell described the thrill of playing on George Cole Field, now Baum Stadium in Fayetteville, Arkansas, home to the Razorbacks. He described the state tournament that summer: "There were no lights on the field, so we had to play in the heat of the day. We didn't have the talent we had the year before, but we were still pretty good."¹¹

Squeaky Smith's last team had two young men on it who in 2011 were named head college football coaches, Gus Malzahn at Arkansas State University in Jonesboro and Mark Hudson at Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana.

In 1984, Kerwins had a new manager, Chuck Holcombe. Holcombe coached from 1984 to 2004, when

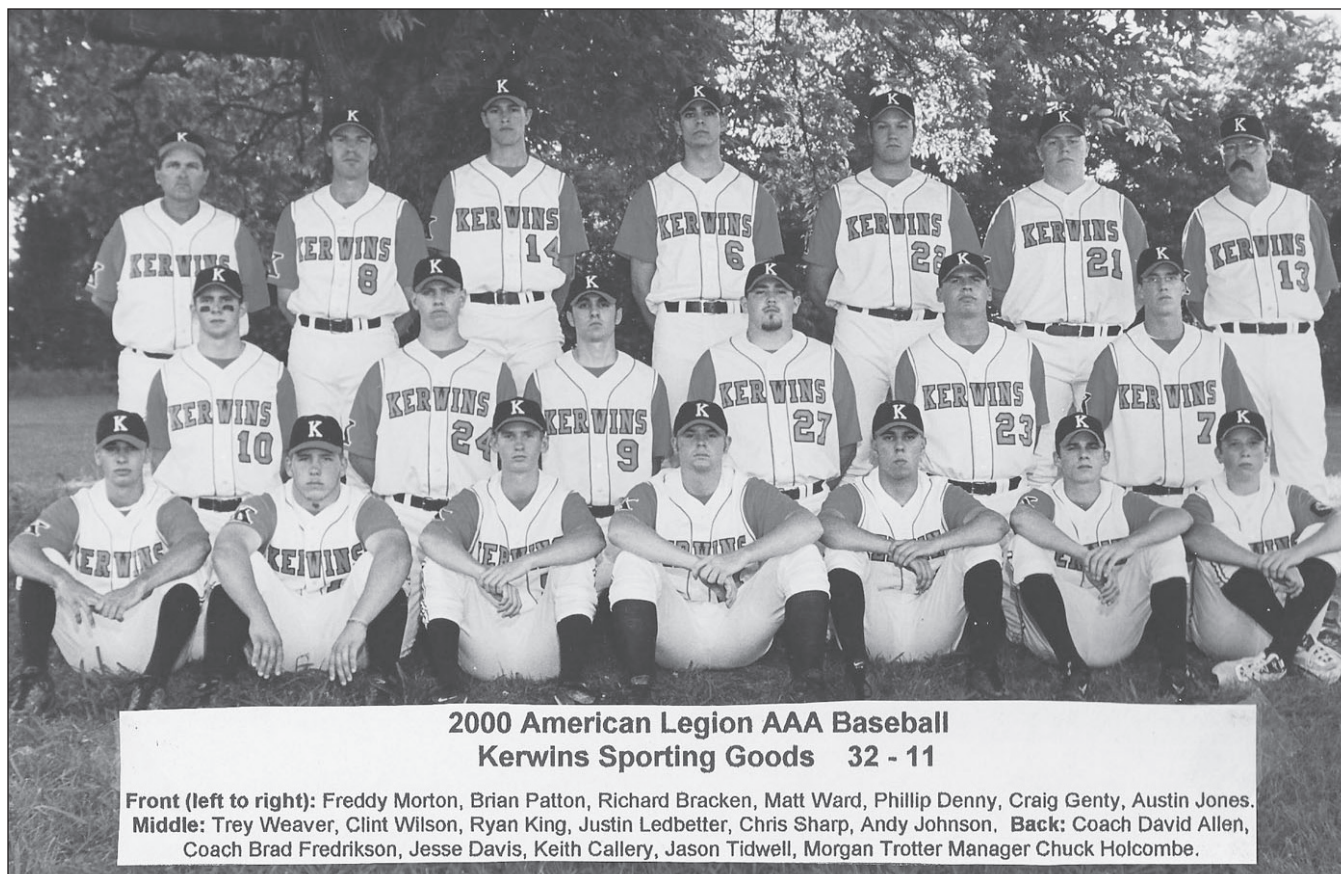


PHOTO COURTESY OF JERRY GLIDEWELL, FORT SMITH BOYS & GIRLS CLUB
KERWINS SPORTSMEN, 2000

his employer, Rheem Manufacturing, relocated him out of state. In his stretch as skipper, Holcombe recorded 668 wins and 317 losses. Holcombe's teams won eight district titles, five runner-up titles, and in 1991 and 2004 won two state titles. His Kerwins team made eighty tournament appearances, fifty-three of which made it to the championship round. Thirty-one of those appearances resulted in championship titles. Seventy-five of his former players received scholarships to play college baseball and one of them, Craig Gentry, got the biggest prize in baseball when he started for the Texas Rangers in the 2011 World Series.

His players knew Chuck Holcombe as a demanding coach. Former player, Daniel Loyd (1993-1995) of Van Buren, recalled playing for Holcombe: "Defensively, Coach knew what he was talking about. He knew when to move a player, and he expected a lot out of everyone."¹² Holcombe had strict team rules of conduct that every player was to respect. Breaking them brought consequences to the guilty player or players. Holcombe's team rules are as listed:

KERWINS' TEAM RULES

1. Players will be dressed in full uniforms at all times when at the ballpark (shirt-tails in). No dressing at

the ballpark. *

2. The Kerwins Hat will be worn properly at all times. The big "K" in the front. *
 3. Players will arrive 50 minutes prior to game start. *
 4. Players will not throw equipment (bats/helmets) *
 5. No communications with the fans or parents during the game. Gatorade/water will be supplied. *
 6. Players will not argue with umpires. **
 7. Players will not argue with the opponent. **
 8. Above all, no arguing with your teammates or coaches. ***
 9. Hustle on and off the field at all times. *
 10. Road-trips: Behavior is a must. No alcoholic beverages. Room care. Curfew! ***
 11. Players driving their own car will follow the coach to and from the game. These are games such as Van Buren/Alma/Greenwood. The only time this would happen is if the van isn't available.
- (*) Removal of current game
(**) One game suspension
(***) Indefinite¹³

Holcombe's 2004 team, his last and with an overall record of 43-9, won the Arkansas AAA American Legion State Baseball Championship with a 9-6, ten-

inning win over Bryant at Crowder Field on the campus of the University of Arkansas-Fort Smith, a victory that gave Kerwins its first state title since 1991 and sent the Sportsmen on to represent Arkansas in the American Legion Mid-South Regional Tournament at Crowley, Louisiana. Coach Holcombe capped his twenty-one year era with this memorable season.

Holcombe's right-hand man and assistant coach was David Allen, a longtime baseball volunteer coach who had grown up playing for Kerwins and in 1968 led the team to a state championship. He was a left-hander who threw hard and was even considered one of the best pitchers to come out of Fort Smith.¹⁴

Allen set a national Junior College record by pitching ten complete game shutouts for the Westark [UA Fort Smith] Lions. After his playing days at Westark, Allen accepted a baseball scholarship with the University of Oklahoma. Arm surgery prevented Allen from continuing his playing career, and this started his coaching career. In 1979, David helped found the Fort Smith Red Sox, a semi-pro team based at Hunts Park that participated in the Jayhawk League and made it to several national tournaments. In 1991, Coach Allen served as the pitching coach for the Kerwins American Legion team that won the state

championship.

In 2005, following the final year of Holcombe, the third manager took the helm, Denny Lundquist. Lundquist's assistant coaches during his five years coaching were Randy Milam and his brother, Tim Lundquist. Denny and his coaching colleagues all played for Kerwins teams coached by Squeaky Smith, keeping a great tradition passed down from those who had Kerwins bloodlines.

Denny was a standout high school athlete at St. Anne's Academy. He played college football at Arkansas State before switching to baseball first with the Westark Lions and then with the University of Arkansas Razorbacks. His first Kerwins team in 2005 finished as the state runner-up. During Lundquist's five years as coach, the Kerwins' record was 132-53.¹⁵

Mark Kincannon followed Lundquist as manager of the Sportsmen. In a press release issued June 1, 2010, Kincannon was quoted, "I am very excited about this upcoming season. The Kerwins team has a very strong tradition, and I am humbled by this opportunity." Kincannon played second base in college baseball at Westark College where he was named to the All-Regional Tournament team. He was an NJCAA



COACH MARK KINCANNON *explains the situation to his base runner.*

Academic All-American. His junior and senior seasons were played at the University of Indianapolis and University of Arkansas-Little Rock. He was head coach of Fort Smith Christian [Union Christian Academy] for three years. As a volunteer coach, he led the Forsgren American Legion team to an A state championship in 2004. He coached Forsgren for three summers and Fort Smith Coke for two summers.¹⁶

Mark's coaches in 2010 included his father, Bill Kincannon, Daniel Loyd, Brandon Dunn, and me, the author of this piece. In the following summer, Trey Prieur was added as an assistant coach. Mark's two-year run as head manager brought a record of 36-21. In 2011, Mark and staff led the Sportsmen to an overall record of 25-11, finishing third in the state tournament.

This past year, Mark stepped down as head coach of Kerwins to become an assistant coach for the University of Arkansas-Fort Smith Lions baseball team. In recognition of Mark's tenure as head coach, his assistant, Trey Prieur, said:

Kerwins has a lot of history in Fort Smith. You talk to older guys who absolutely love the "K." Coach Holcombe is a legend around here, and there are so many quality players to come from the "K" program. You add the Lundquist family in that mix when they took over, and it just keeps the "K" tradition going. Then when Mark took over, he kept the history of Kerwins alive and brought back the winning atmosphere. Whoever is the next coach has a lot to live up to because of the high expectations the Kerwins program demands.

Coach Prieur also said this: "He [Mark] is your classic coach that you can turn to for on-the-field and off-the-field questions. He coaches the right way and lets the kids have fun while playing the game right."¹⁷ A couple examples of this are from Mark's players, Chance Scamardo and Koda Glover. Glover had this to say about Mark, "Coach K taught me a lot about baseball but more importantly about life. He taught me to play the game as hard as you can but at the end of the day it is just a game. He made the game fun. He expected us to play hard during the game but after the game we could joke and kid around."¹⁸ Scamardo adds by saying, "The summer after I graduated [2010], when I got to play for Kerwins, it helped me find leisure when playing a baseball game again, and I believe that played a huge role as I went into college ball [Carl Albert State College] and had such a great freshman spring. The mindset I had and use now comes from the coaching staff, especially coach Kincannon."¹⁹

Since 1951, only four coaches have been the head of Kerwins Sportsmen: Lawrence "Squeaky" Smith, Chuck Holcombe, Denny Lundquist, and Mark Kincannon. Not once did any of these four coaches suffer a losing

record. Kerwins—winning is what they do.

But winning is not all they do. Kerwins is respected throughout the state because that name means sportsmanship and class on the field. Thus a great tradition of winning games while displaying the better qualities of competition earned the team its nickname, the Sportsmen. Built on the focus of the sponsor, its four superb managers, the Fort Smith Boys & Girls Club, and the local American Legion members, the Big K in front stands out as one of Fort Smith's proudest traditions.



Jeremy Nguyen is a student at University of Arkansas Fort Smith who played American Legion baseball in 2005 and became an assistant coach of Kerwins in 2010.

Endnotes

- ¹ Jerry Kerwin, interview by author, Fort Smith, Arkansas, September 28, 2011. Jerry's grandfather was John Kerwin who started the business. After Mr. John Kerwin's death in 1932, his son, Bill, operated the Kerwins store. Jerry Kerwin was the third-generation owner. In 1990, Jerry Kerwin retired, selling the store and its name to the present owners Larry and Kay Phillips.
- ² Steve Core, interview by author, Barling, Arkansas, September 9, 2011.
- ³ Kerwin interview.
- ⁴ Delmar "Butch" Edwards, interview by author. Fort Smith, Arkansas. September 26, 2011.
- ⁵ Jerry Glidewell, interview by author, Fort Smith, Arkansas, November 9, 2011.
- ⁶ Kerwins began sponsoring a junior American Legion team in the early 1950s, Kerwin interview.
- ⁷ Kerwin interview.
- ⁸ Danny Loyd, interview by author, Greenwood, Arkansas, October 22, 2011.
- ⁹ Kerwin interview.
- ¹⁰ Glidewell interview.
- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² Daniel Loyd, telephone interview by author, November 20, 2011.
- ¹³ Holcombe's team rules, courtesy of the Fort Smith Boys & Girls Club.
- ¹⁴ The obituary of David Allen, in *FSBGC Newsletter: Mourns Loss of Volunteer Baseball Coach David Allen*, Winter 2005.
- ¹⁵ The obituary of Denny Lundquist, in *FSBGC Newsletter: With Special Memories*, Fall 2010; 5.
- ¹⁶ Press clipping dated June 1, 2010, in the FSBGC archives, *Kincannon Takes Over Helm for Kerwin's*.
- ¹⁷ Trey Prieur, interview by author. Fort Smith, Arkansas, November 22, 2011.
- ¹⁸ Koda Glover, interview by author. Fort Smith, Arkansas, November 21, 2011.
- ¹⁹ Chance Scamardo, Interview by author. Fort Smith, Arkansas, November 21, 2011.

From Rags to Roses

A Biographical Sketch of Espy L. O'Neel

By George O'Neel

A hundred years or so ago, a fourteen-year-old boy, basically an orphan, arrived in Fort Smith from Lincoln County in south Arkansas. He sold newspapers on the city streets, sometimes sleeping at the *Times Record* while waiting for the papers for delivery.

He told his family of the time when he was barefooted in the winter snow and a man of compassion bought him a pair of shoes. This boy was Espy O'Neel, who became a florist and a successful businessman in the city spanning over three decades.

Much of the history of Espy's middle teen years is lost in the distant past. His formal education ended at the eighth grade. But he was a highly motivated individual and learned a great deal in the "school of hard knocks," as did a lot of others in his generation.

By the age of eighteen, Espy was employed as a delivery boy for the George Rye flower shop, located on "The Plaza," at Garrison Avenue between Tenth and Eleventh streets.

Previously, the business had been located at 16 North Sixth Street with a greenhouse at 1119 North Ninth Street. Young Espy boarded with the George Rye family at 710 North Seventeenth Street.

Fort Smith at one time had a professional baseball team that played its games at Andrews Field. The Fort Smith Giants played there from 1938 to 1949 and then the Fort Smith Indians in the early 1950s. These were farm teams of the New York Giants and the Cleveland Indians. For a time in the 1940s, George Rye, the florist, would announce on the field before each game the pitcher and catcher for that game. He used a megaphone and began announcing to the fans seated in the first-base section, then announced to the home-plate section, and finished on the third-base side.

Photos of the George Rye Florist shop on North Eleventh Street reveal a two-story brick building beside it that housed The Plaza Motor Company. The flower shop's address was 19 North Eleventh Street; the motor company's address was 21-23 North Eleventh Street. Later, the flower shop was torn down to make way for the construction of a Greyhound bus station, but the motor company building remained, which currently houses Bercher Tire and Service Center. An elevator once lifted automobiles to the second story for storage.



PHOTO COURTESY OF GEORGE O'NEEL

GEORGE RYE, right, in front of the flower shop with an unidentified youth.

Espy continued to work for George Rye as a clerk learning the florist business until the mid 1930s. On June 3, 1934, he married George Anna Powers, who worked for the Boston Store in the cosmetics department. By 1936, Espy was employed as a flower arranger for Lee's Seed & Flower Shop at 1115-17 Garrison Avenue.

In the late 1930s and early 1940s, two children were born to the couple, George on March 3, 1938, and his younger sister, Jan (Mrs. Wayne Haver), on March 3, 1943. In 1938 Espy built a red brick house at 25 Hiland Drive in the Hillcrest area. George Anna was active in the Hillcrest Garden Club of which she



PHOTO COURTESY OF GEORGE O'NEEL

HILLCREST FRIED CHICKEN SUPPER serving table from left to right are: Jay Medlen, Troy McNeill, M. J. Miller, Espy O'Neel, Bill Carter, J. M. Crawford, and Percy Darby.

was a charter member. Every summer the club hosted a potluck fried chicken supper either at a home that had a big backyard or the circle park in Hillcrest.

In early October 1945, Espy opened his own business at 2211 North B Street. He always wore a dress shirt and tie to work. His slogan was, "Say It With Flowers, and Say It With Ours." His easy-to-remember telephone number was 7373. Without any question, his favorite flower was a red rose. The store was open seven days a week from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. except for morning hours on Sundays when he prepared flower arrangements for delivery to local churches. George Anna also worked alongside her husband in the flower shop taking orders and waiting on customers primarily while the children were in school.

To make a living as a florist, it was essential to keep the cut flowers fresh. To do that sometimes meant picking up a large box of carnations, usually from Denver, Colorado, at the train or bus station in the

*His slogan was, "Say It With
Flowers, and Say It With Ours."*

evenings. From time to time, we met a plane at the airport to pick up a shipment of roses flown in from Kansas City. As young children, we found this to be a fun thing to do. But then we had to take the flowers to the shop, cut off the bottom of the stems, put them in vases to get a fresh drink of water, and then place them into the large, walk-in refrigerator for arrangements the next day. Espy's children, George and Jan, grew to be teenagers and learned the procedure. Sometimes even their dates included those activities.

Every fall, Espy would order large, long-stemmed



PHOTO COURTESY OF GEORGE O'NEEL

ESPY O'NEEL'S FLOWER SHOP

bronze, yellow, and white mums. These made lovely large bouquets or funeral sprays. Single mums like these made beautiful corsages. Often a guy would invite his girlfriend to a Grizzly football game and give one for her to wear. Espy would select a white mum, carefully place a red "F" in the middle of it and attach a red bow of ribbon in keeping with the Fort Smith Senior High School colors. For the University of Arkansas Razorback games, he would instead place a red "A" on the white mum with matching ribbon, making it an attractive corsage for a young lady to wear proudly to a Razorback game in Fayetteville.

One of the problems with this large mum is that in handling it, if it is bumped against something, then it can easily shatter. Petals start falling off and if one or two do, it starts a domino effect and the flower is gone. This can get costly, and so when a mum first begins to shatter, a good florist gives it immediate attention. He drips some candlewax where the petals started falling out, lets the wax cool, and the beauty of the flower remains intact. It's one of the tricks of the trade.

With a name like O'Neel, it was easy for Espy to

enjoy being an Irishman. On St. Patrick's Day every year, he would always have some green carnations on hand. He would send some of them to the staff at the KFPW radio station in care of Joe "O'Roppolo," an announcer, who would in turn play some great Irish music in keeping with the day and give Espy some free advertising. Even an Italian like Joe Roppolo could be Irish one day out of the year.

During the winter months and especially when the temperature was expected to dip into the low teens, Espy would call his friend Jim Harmon at the Fort Smith Weather Bureau to see how low the temperature was to drop. This was in the days prior to the weather forecasts on local television. Espy could then determine how to set the gas space heater so that it would not be too hot or too cold for the potted plants.

Through the years, Espy hired a number of delivery boys, who worked often after school and/or on holidays like Christmas, Valentine's Day, Mother's Day, and Easter. Some of these were Johnny Bonds, Rodney "Skipper" Vick, Albert "Hoppy" Swan, John "Eddie" Framel, Richard "Dicky" Udouj, Larry Cruse, Joe Dan Cruse, John Paul "Cookie" Cruse, Andy O'Kelly, Gary

Wisener, William “Bill” Buergher, and David Vonder Heide as well as the author. Most, if not all, of these former delivery boys have become successful in their respective life’s endeavors.

To the delight of all the delivery boys, Espy always had cold sodas in the refrigerator along with the flowers but kept them out of sight. Either in the morning or afternoon, one of the boys would walk a half block to Syfert’s Bakery on Rogers Avenue and return with sweet rolls. One of the fond memories of Espy’s employees was enjoying a cold Coke and a cinnamon roll, donut, or another delicious pastry as a daily routine.

Espy and George Anna were active in Immanuel Baptist Church by Belle Point School and later in First Baptist Church by Carnegie Library. George Anna served on numerous committees, including the Flower Committee. She loved children and enjoyed being a children’s worker for more than twenty-five years. Espy served on various committees as well as a deacon.

Espy and George Anna reared their children in a Christian home and consistently lived their faith before them. George enjoyed being active in church especially during his teen years. Those two factors—family and church—were very influential in his call to the pastoral ministry. After graduating from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, in January 1964, he was called as pastor of East Side Baptist Church in Fort Smith in June of that year. In 1972, he resigned to become director of Christian education at Christ Episcopal Church in Little Rock. After serving there for four years, he was called as pastor of the Bella Vista Baptist Church in Bella Vista, Arkansas. He ministered there for twenty-seven years where his wife, the former Arlene Moore, served as church organist and taught in the Bentonville school system. The couple retired to Fort Smith in 2003.

Jan O’Neel married Wayne Haver in September 1964. After Wayne finished military training at Fort Hood, Texas, they returned to Fort Smith, where Jan taught first grade at Ballman Elementary School for thirty years. Wayne is the longstanding principal of Southside High School. In 2003, Jan began serving as administrative assistant to the election commission coordinator for Sebastian County.

Espy was active in the Lions Club, which met at the Goldman Hotel at noon. For more than twenty years, he served the club as secretary and later as president. The family took vacations to Lions International Conventions in Chicago and Miami Beach. The entertainment was always excellent! Espy was a member of Gideon’s International, the men’s Bible distributing organization, and served as a director for the Arkansas State Florists Association.

Motivated by his being deprived of a high school

*Motivated by his being deprived
of a high school education,
Espy from time to time reminded
not only his children but also
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one can take away from you.”*

education, Espy from time to time reminded not only his children but also his delivery boys, “Get a good education! It’s something that no one can take away from you.” He also advised, “If you always tell the truth, you don’t have to remember what you said.” And when he sensed the need, he encouraged with the words, “Where there’s a will, there’s a way!”

In his wise sayings, Solomon asserts, “A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches.” (Proverbs 22:1) Espy took that saying as a word that he would live by and left his good name as a greater-than-wealth legacy to a grateful family.

In the spring of 1964, Espy sold the florist business to Gene Loris, who later moved it to another location. Suffice it to say that for well more than forty years many a colorful bouquet, corsage, and potted plant along with countless beautiful roses artistically arranged by Espy O’Neel graced the homes, businesses and churches of Fort Smith.

Espy O’Neel died on August 1, 1964. The Reverend Dan Cameron conducted the funeral, and Espy was buried at Forest Park Cemetery. With the late mayor of Fort Smith, Honorable Ray Baker, designating a slogan for the city and a red rose as Fort Smith’s official flower, it is worth noting that this city where “Life is worth living” was indeed that for Espy O’Neel and provided an opportunity for him to go from rags to riches as a florist.

George O’Neel is a retired pastor who lives in Fort Smith.

Acknowledgment

The author thanks Lea Anne Haver Brooks for suggesting the title.

Source

Documentation for dates and addresses for George Rye’s business and home locations are from Fort Smith city directories of 1914, 1918, 1919-1923, and 1925-1926.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL MULTICULTURAL WESTERN HERITAGE MUSEUM, FORT WORTH, TEXAS
DEPUTY U.S. MARSHAL BASS REEVES is standing in the doorway of the railroad car. Deputy U.S. Marshal Bud Ledbetter is standing on the far left. No other individuals have been identified. The photo is circa 1900 and most likely was taken near Muskogee, Indian Territory.

Bass Reeves and the National Media of the Frontier Era

By Art T. Burton

In recent years, Deputy U.S. Marshal Bass Reeves has garnered quite a bit of national publicity. My last book, published in 2006 by the University of Nebraska Press, was a biography on Reeves titled *Black Gun, Silver Star: The Life and Legend of Frontier Marshal Bass Reeves*. The following year, the book won an award from the Western Writers of America as a finalist for Best Biography of 2007. Author Vaunda Nelson wrote a children's book on Reeves titled, *Bad News for Outlaws*, which won the American Library Association's Coretta Scott King Award as best children's book in 2010. Recently, the bridge across the Arkansas River in Muskogee, Oklahoma, was named the Bass Reeves Memorial

Bridge, and in Fort Smith, there will be a statue of Bass Reeves unveiled on May 26, 2012.

This article is not about the recent media attention on Reeves, but the attention he received in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries from around the nation. As a continuation to my research on Reeves, none of the noted newspaper narratives in this article appear in my biography on Reeves. The articles start in the early 1880s and stop at the time of his death in 1910.

The first article is from the *Fort Smith Elevator* from August 11, 1882:

Deputy Marshal Bass Reeves came in on Monday

with sixteen prisoners as follows: W. S. Smith, violating revenue law – on bond; Austin Lafflore, Jake Gardener, Charles Holmes, larceny; Dick Randolph, Thos. McGiesey, G. W. Brashears, Russell Rowland, introducing liquor in the Territory: Chas. McNally, Boss Kemp, Chas. Carter, N. R. Rozell, W. H. Wynne, assault with intent to kill; W. F. Skeggs, Richard Robinson, arson.

Nearly twenty years, later McGiesey [sic/McGeisy], a Seminole Indian, would be involved in one of the most sensational murder cases involving Oklahoma and Indian Territories, known as the Seminole Burnings. McGeisy became superintendent of Seminole schools and his son, Lincoln, was murdered by a white mob along with another Seminole in January 1898.

On August 20, 1883, from the *Fort Smith Elevator*:

Deputy Marshal Bass Reeves reported on Monday with the following prisoners, thirteen in all: Jeremiah Wilson, (white), Tommy Lowe, Cheeky, Jakey-meeko, Paddy (Indians), Caesar Jones, Isaac Frazier (negroes), all charged with larceny; Simon, Little George, Wallaska, Scotsie, Homalney, Wilsey Willow (Indians), all whiskey cases; Phillip Jackson (negro), assault with intent to kill. . . .

It is interesting to note that sometimes the newspaper gave the ethnicity of parties arrested and sometimes it did not. The same newspaper on July 20, 1883, carried another item on Reeves:

W. T. Haynes, a white man, was lodged in jail Wednesday by deputy Bass Reeves. He was caught as he was crossing the river with some two gallons of alcohol and whiskey in his saddle bags which he had purchased in this city.

St. Louis, Missouri, was a major gateway city to the American west in the nineteenth century. A newspaper from that city called the *St. Louis Globe Democrat* carried a story February 3, 1884, on Reeves' police work:

Captured in the Indian Territory

Fort Smith, Ark., February 2 – Deputy United States Marshal Bass Reeves [sic/Reeves] came in this morning with twelve prisoners from the Indian country. Among the number was John Black, charged with the murder of Arthur Hancock in the Chickasaw Nation, on Christmas. He had a partial hearing before the United States Commissioner this afternoon and his case was continued till Monday, when it will likely receive

the attention of the Grand Jury, which meets Monday morning.

Back in Arkansas, the *Fort Smith Elevator* carried a story on Reeves on February 29, 1884, which read:

Horse Thief Jailed

On Monday last Robert Landers and Bill Wilson were arrested in this city by Deputy Marshals Wilson and Reeves, assisted by Charlie Leflore, of the Indian police. Landers has been here about three weeks, and was recognized by Leflore as a man who had stolen some horses at Gainesville, Texas, about six weeks ago, and for whom the Texas Stock Association offers a large reward. Leflore says he is one of a gang of thieves and robbers who have committed depredations in the Indian Territory, Texas and Missouri for some time. He recently robbed a man near Cherokee Town of \$120, and is said to be one of the gang who robbed the telegraph operations at Colbert Station a short time since. One of his pals was arrested a few days ago in the Nation and told of some of the plans of the gang, one of which was to rob Alex McKinney, who lives between Stringtown and Atoka. Landers will likely be taken to Gainesville, the authorities there having been telegraphed to. He sold a horse at Van Buren a few weeks ago. . . .

Undoubtedly the deputy identified as Wilson in the above article was Floyd Wilson, who worked with Reeves on numerous occasions during the 1880s. Wilson would later be killed in the 1890s by the famous bank robber Henry Starr. Charles Leflore also had a celebrated law enforcement career and would later become the captain of the U.S. Indian Police, headquartered at Muskogee, Indian Territory. Leflore was one of the most famous Indian lawmen of the frontier era.

The following article from the *Elevator* on April 25, 1884, discusses Wilson and Reeves working together:

Deputies Reeves and Wilson came in Wednesday with the following prisoners: James Greeson, assault with intent to kill; Eleck Bruner, Aaron Sancho and Hotabisy, larceny; Crolsey Fixico, Tobey Hill, Golmo Jessee, Wiley Hawkins, Noah, Charley Jones, Amos Hill and G. H. Brewer, introducing spirituous liquors. One of the prisoners who was severely wounded while resisting arrest had to be left in the Territory, a physician saying that to move him would endanger his life.

The newspaper in the capital city of Arkansas, Little Rock, the *Arkansas Gazette*, carried a short item on Reeves on April 25, 1884:

Prisoners Arrive

Fort Smith, Ark., April 24 - ...Deputy Marshal Bass Reeves brought in twelve prisoners from the Indian Territory yesterday charged with various offenses.

The *Arkansas Gazette* wrote about Reeves later in the year on September 2, 1884:

A Good Haul Fifteen Prisoners Brought to Fort Smith from the Nation

Fort Smith, Sept. 1 - Deputy Marshal Bass Reeves came in this afternoon with fifteen prisoners, two of whom Chub Moore and Hanna, are charged with murder. Chub was severely wounded in the leg at the time of arrest, on the 7th of August, but nevertheless was hauled down here a distance of about 265 miles, lying on his back on a mattress, and stood the trip very well. He was at the head of a gang of men who hung a negro about two years ago, who was charged with having attempted to commit a rape. On the trip Reeves killed one Frank Buck in self-defense. Buck was charged with larceny.

The *St. Louis Globe Democrat* newspaper carried an article concerning the same trip into the Indian Territory made by Reeves and his posse on September 6, 1884:

A Disabled Desperado

Ft. Smith, Ark., September 5 - Chub Moore, the Indian desperado who was brought in last Monday by Deputy Marshal Reeves, and who was severely wounded in the thigh on August 7 by the officer who made the arrest, is now in a precarious condition in the United States Jail, and the jail physician has decided to amputate his leg near the hip. The operation will be performed tomorrow at 12 o'clock. Chub is charged with murder.

Chub Moore had been arrested by Reeves and his posse in the Chickasaw Nation. He had a warrant for murder for leading a lynch mob that killed a young African American. Chub Moore died in the Fort Smith federal jail.

The *Arkansas Gazette* of Little Rock wrote the following on Reeves on March 10, 1885:

Fort Smith, March 9 — ...Criminal Notes

Deputy United States Marshal Bass Reeves came in on Saturday with thirteen prisoners from the Indian country. Eleven of them were Indians, one a white man and one a negro. The latter gave bond. Eleven of them are charged with introducing and selling whiskey in the nation, one with murder, and one with larceny. The one

charged with murder is an ignorant, uncouth Indian boy, who says he is only 13 years old, but is probably 17 or 18. This invoice swells the number in jail to 106.

The *St. Louis Globe Democrat* on October 27, 1885, carried an in-depth article on the men Reeves captured:

A Batch of United States Prisoners

Fort Smith, Ark., October 26—Deputy United States Marshal Bass Reeves [Reeves] came about dark tonight with seventeen prisoners from the Indian Territory, all of whom were lodged in the United States Jail. Among them is Hens Hosey, a white man well known all through the district, who is charged with murder of Mitchell Collins, a Creek Indian, on the 11th of March last. Hens claims that Collins stole his horse, and he followed and killed him in recovering the animal.

One Delderick is a white man, and is charged with the murder of a Creek Indian in the Choctaw Nation on the 7th of September last in a manner that places his neck in jeopardy. It is said that the Indian seduced the daughter of Delderick, and that Delderick slipped up to a lot at night when his victim was attending to some stock and shot him down without warning.

John Robinson is charged with assault with intent to kill, while Robert Johnson, Wiley Kelly, Colbert Lasley, and an old man named Crump are charged with larceny. The others are all for introducing and selling whiskey in the Indian country. There are now nearly 100 prisoners in jail here, notwithstanding twenty-nine were taken to Detroit last week. Thirty-two of them are awaiting trial for murder.

The *Arkansas Gazette* from Little Rock, Arkansas, on October 28, 1885, discussed the same trip made by Reeves:

The Border City Seventeen Prisoners from the Indian Territory Lodged in Jail

Fort Smith, Oct. 27 - Deputy United States Marshal Bass Reeves returned late last night to the United States jail with seventeen prisoners, the fruits of a five weeks trip in the Indian Territory. Two of them Hens Posey and one Deidrick, both white men, are charged with murder. . . .

In 1891, another St. Louis newspaper, the *St. Louis Republic*, printed a story concerning Reeves on February 11:

An Outlaw's Hiding Place

Tahlequah, I.T., Feb. 10—The report that Bass Reeves, a negro deputy United States marshal, had

been killed by the Cherokee desperado, Ned Christy, who lives 16 miles northeast of this place, is without foundation. At the time of the reported killing Reeves was not in the Cherokee Nation. Christy, the desperado, is still at large, remaining a portion of his time at the "old fort," his place of refuge. This place, where Christy has hidden, is located in a dense forest amid briars and low shrubbery. The "old fort" is made of logs, roughly hewn, and resembles an old bear trap, with port holes and without doors. The outlaw has a fine collection of "curs," and at the rustling of leaves they made an unearthly noise, which can be heard a long distance. A man cannot be found in the Christy settlement who would tell a word of the outlaw's whereabouts.

By the 1890s, even the Texas newspapers began to write stories about Reeves' exploits in the Indian Territory. A good example is the following story from the *Fort Worth Gazette*, from Fort Worth, Texas, on June 17, 1891:

A Good Batch of Prisoners

Eufaula, I.T., June 16 – Deputy Marshal Boss [Bass] Reeves passed through Eufaula today with nine prisoners for the Fort Smith court. There were three white men, three Indians, two negro men, and one negro woman; names and crimes as follows. Ugly Bear, murder, whiskey peddling, and horsetealing; John Simmons murder; One McDonnell, murder; One Custer, murder; William Evelina Hawkins, larceny; Phillip Cyrus, introducing and selling whiskey; Sam Lasley, introducing and selling whiskey. Ugly Bear is an all-around desperado, who has for years eluded the law and terrorized all classes of people in the Indian country west of here. He is wanted to answer several charges of murder, horse theft, and whiskey peddling, and other crimes in both the United States and Indian courts. The Eufaula judicial district alone has a reward of \$400 offered for him. His partner, John Simmons, ranks pretty closely on to him in bloody and lawless deeds.

Joe Spencer, charged with murder, used to be a preacher, and yet has preacher spells sometimes. Last year he humbugged the citizens of Okmulgee by initiating them into a supposed order of Masonry. He instituted a lodge there, and, for \$15 a candidate, put them through the first degree, promising to come back in a few weeks to give them the other degrees. He never showed up again, and when his Okmulgee Masons began to make signs at the genuine Masons they were thought to be crazy or drunk.

Boss [Bass] Reeves is the most successful marshal that rides in the Indian country. He is a big ginger-cake colored negro, but is a holy terror to the lawless characters in the west. About every other month he makes a trip west, and after a few days passes back

through with from one to two wagons of prisoners to Fort Smith. It is probable that in the past few years he has taken more prisoners, from the Indian Territory, than any other officer.

The *Arkansas Gazette* of Little Rock covered an incident of Reeves' outstanding police work on June 21, 1891:

A Bad Gang Broken Up

Fort Smith, June 20—Deputy United States Marshal Bass Reeves came in this afternoon with nine prisoners, among them William Wright, a negro, charged with the murder of his own father in the Creek Nation about a year ago. Wily Bear and John Simmons, Creek Indians, wanted for the murder of Deputy Marshal Phillips and his posse; two white men named McDonald and Cords, charged with killing a negro a few weeks ago. Wiley [sic] Bear is also wanted in the Creek Nation for murdering a woman, and for several cases of horse stealing. He is the last of notorious Wiley Barnett gang, and the Creek authorities offer \$400 reward for him.

The notorious Indian gang alluded to in the above article was not the Wiley Barnett gang but the Wesley Barnett gang.

The major city in Texas in the late nineteenth century was Galveston. On August 26, 1892, Reeves exploits were covered by the *Galveston Daily News*:

Old Man Horribly Abused.

South McAlester, I.T., Aug. 25.—Parties in from the vicinity of Leador [Leader], I.T., report a deplorable outrage upon an old man residing there which may result fatally. J. Lyons, who is some 60 years of age, was generally supposed to be possessed of some money on account of his thrifty and frugal habits. On Friday of last week, Lyons was accosted by a young person named Billy the Kid and his money demanded, failing to produce which he was horribly maltreated, dragged some distance from home and finally struck upon the head and left for dead. He lay out in the broiling sun from Friday until Sunday, when he was found and cared for, and it thought that there is a bare chance for his recovery. Deputies from Fort Smith were placed in possession of the facts and Deputy Bass Reeves has succeeded in capturing the Kid.

The above article notates an outlaw named Billy the Kid, this was not the Billy the Kid of New Mexico fame who had been killed by the time this incident occurred.

About ten years later, we find Reeves being covered by one of the most famous and long-serving newspapers in Texas history, the *Dallas Morning*

News, on May 21, 1902:

**Brought Twenty-Four Prisoners
Men Charged with Participation in Braggs Race War
Arrested.**

Muskogee, I.T., May 20—Deputy United States Marshals Adams and Reeves came in from Braggs today with twenty-four prisoners who are charged with taking part in the race war. The fifteen white men are: Henry Steel, Tom Hull, Alex Fryer, John Nicholson, John Luman, J. W. Hart, S. Foy, Jon Lovett, Bill Nixon, Ed Guinn, Frank Lambert, Willard Smith, Bill Watkins, George Kirk, and E. M. Kirkpatrick. The negroes are: William Richard, Henry, Ed, and Dave Thompson, Sam and Jesse Roach, Gus Williams, Richard Parker, and Joe Matthews.

The deputies made the arrests without resistance. All prisoners were bound over and will be tried in the United States Court tomorrow.

The same Dallas, Texas, newspaper carried a story involving Reeves on June 29, 1906:

Muskogee, I.T., June 28—Twenty men who were sentenced to the penitentiary at Fort Leavenworth were taken to the penitentiary last night. They were in charge of Chief Deputy Marshal E. H. Hubbard, assisted by George Ledbetter, Theodore Stidham, J. H. Long, Bass Reeves, and Richard Wood.

The above trip undoubtedly gave Reeves a chance to visit his son; Bennie was doing time in Leavenworth, Kansas, federal prison for murder at that time. Bennie had been arrested in Muskogee by his father for domestic murder in 1902.

After Oklahoma statehood, the major town in southwest Oklahoma became Lawton; its newspaper wrote an article concerning Reeves. This item came from the *Lawton Constitution Democrat* on March 10, 1908:

Former Negro Deputy a Policeman

Muskogee, Okla., Jan. 3.—Former Deputy United States Marshal Bass Reeves, a giant negro, who was in many battles with outlaws in the wild days of Indian Territory and during Judge Parker's reign at Fort Smith, is on the Muskogee police force. Reeves was twice tried for murder while he was an officer. He is now over 70 years old and walks with a cane. A bullet in his leg received while in the government service gives him considerable trouble. He is as quick of trigger, however, as in the days when gunmen were in demand.

When Bass Reeves died on January 12, 1910, his death was covered by newspapers from around the

United States. An example of the coverage follows.

The Logansport Pharos, Indiana, January 13, 1910:

U.S. Marshal Dead

Muskogee, Okla., Jan. 13—Bass Reeves, for thirty years a deputy U.S. marshal in Old Indian Territory, is dead here. He was the most noted man hunter in the territory.

Daily Oklahoman, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, January 13, 1910:

BASS REEVES DEAD.

Muskogee, Okla., Jan. 12—(Special)—Bass Reeves, the oldest deputy marshal of the old Indian Territory days, died here tonight, of consumption. Reeves served during the days of Judge Parker at Fort Smith, when men were hung every week. He was in the government service in Indian Territory for 30 years and is said to have at least 20 notches on his gun.

The Washington Herald, Washington, D.C., January 13, 1910:

**KILLS SCORE IN HIS TIME
BASS REEVES, NOTED SECRET SERVICE
MAN HUNTER DEAD.**

Muskogee, Okla., January 12. Bass Reeves for thirty years a deputy U.S. Marshal in Old Indian Territory, died here tonight. Reeves had the distinction of being the most noted man hunter in the territory. He is credited with having more notches on his gun than he had fingers and toes.

It is great to see that Bass Reeves receives media recognition today and that a wonderful statue in Fort Smith will cement his legacy for ages to come. It is also good to know that during his era on the frontier as a peace officer, he received recognition for his work, which made him an Arkansas and Oklahoma legend.



Art Burton teaches history at South Suburban College in South Holland, Illinois, and is the author of several books including Black Gun, Silver Star: The Life and Legend of Frontier Marshal Bass Reeves.

[Editor's note: The newspaper excerpts appear as they were written and published. In a few cases, explanation is made of spelling or usage in brackets. Over the years, some styles have changed, including the modern capitalization of the word Negro].

The Aluminum Overcast

by Wayne Haver



PHOTO COURTESY OF WAYNE HAVER

THE B-17, NICKNAMED THE ALUMINUM OVERCAST

When a B-17 Flying Fortress nicknamed the Aluminum Overcast landed at Fayetteville's Drake Field on December 1, 2011, the World War II era plane was eagerly greeted by a group of World War II veterans. The veterans, including two from this city, along with television and newspaper reporters were prepared to take advantage of the opportunity to view and take a ride in this true legend from WW II. Earl Martin and Irvin Sternberg of Fort Smith were among those on the flight.

Earl Martin, a tail gunner, flew thirty-five missions on the B-17 Ruby's Raiders, named for Ruby Newell, the winner of a beauty contest that chose her as the most beautiful WAAC in the United Kingdom. The crew met Ruby and painted her likeness on the side of their ship.

In a Flying Fortress at 30,000 feet on a mission over Germany, a piece of flak blew up Martin's oxygen tank and he was suffocating from lack of oxygen. The right

waist gunner, Maurice Shannon, brought him a portable oxygen tank, saving his life. He told Shannon he would name a son for him, and Dr. Maurice C. Martin, Earl's son, is the fulfillment of that promise. Irvin Sternberg was a training officer during World War II and flew as co-pilot on a B-17 after the war, but he did not fly in combat.

After their arrival at Drake Field with escort Wayne Haver of Fort Smith, the adventure began. First completing some prerequisites such as signing papers and listening to some preflight instructions, about a dozen people boarded the plane. It was quite different from boarding a modern airliner as passages were very narrow, and one had to stoop, bend, crawl, hold on, and maneuver to get past or into certain parts of the plane. Everyone had to be belted in prior to take-off, and seats were in different areas of the plane, nowhere more than three together. After take-off, they were allowed to unbuckle seatbelts and wander around the plane, going everywhere except the belly

gunner's turret and tail gunner's turret. Some pathways were so narrow it was one foot in front of the other. Irvin managed to get up immediately behind the pilot and co-pilot so he could see the instrument panel, and watched the co-pilot adjusting the prop pitch, rpm of the engines and throttles and tried to remember that at one time he was able to do that. He was able to crawl into the nose of the plane, where the bombardier and navigator would have been, and had a good, unobstructed view of the front of the plane. The forty-five-minute flight was long enough for lots of reminiscing and thinking about days long ago. It was interesting to see how excited some of the young media people were at finding themselves aboard a WW II plane.

The Aluminum Overcast

The Experimental Aircraft Association's B-17G-VE, serial number 44-85740—nicknamed Aluminum Overcast—was delivered to the U.S. Army Air Corps on May 18, 1945. Although delivered too late to see action in World War II, the airplane has an interesting history. Purchased as surplus from the military inventory for a mere \$750 in 1946, the airplane has flown more than one million miles. It has served as a cargo hauler, an aerial mapping platform, and in pest control and forest dusting applications.

The Aluminum Overcast was donated to the Experimental Aircraft Association in 1983, and over ten years received extensive restoration and preservation to ensure it remains a living reminder of WW II aviation. The restoration was done with thousands of hours by the dedicated staff of the EAA headquarters in Oshkosh, Wisconsin.

When the airplane was sold in 1946, most of the original military equipment had been removed.¹ Over the years, these items have been located, restored, and returned to the Aluminum Overcast. These include:

- ❖ The Norden bombsight located in the nose of the airplane.
- ❖ Restoration of the navigator's position also located in the nose of the airplane.
- ❖ Installation of the waist guns located on each side of the bomber.
- ❖ Rebuilding the radio compartment, including original communications equipment.
- ❖ Returning the airplane's floor to its original specifications.
- ❖ Installation of a complete tail turret assembly.
- ❖ Installation of a replica top turret just behind the



PHOTOS COURTESY OF WAYNE HAVER

EARL MARTIN AND IRVIN STERNBERG



EARL MARTIN stands by the tail gun that he once crewed on another B-17.

pilot and co-pilot seats.

The Aluminum Overcast proudly carries the colors of the 398th Bomb Group of World War II, which flew hundreds of missions over Nazi-held territory during the war. Aluminum Overcast commemorates B-17G #42-102515, which was shot down on its 34th combat mission over Le Manior, France, on August 13, 1944. Veterans of the 398th helped finance the bomber's restoration.

The airplane was on display at the EAA AirVenture Museum in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, until October 1993, when it was moved to EAA's Kermit Weeks Flight Research Center for maintenance and restoration in preparation for its first national tour in 1994. The B-17 will eventually be housed in the EAA AirVenture Museum's "Eagle Hangar," which features numerous World War II aircraft and exhibits.

Endnote

¹ http://www.b17.org/history/aluminum_overcast.asp



PHOTO COURTESY OF HELEN BRADLEY

THE LOCAL 270 Rush Furniture Manufacturing Company picket line is shown in 1959.

From Picketers To Entrepreneurs

Labor dispute leads to Union Furniture business venture

By Patrick Feight

Union Furniture Manufacturing was founded and formed in 1959 at Fort Smith, Arkansas. The company was started after union workers at Rush Furniture Manufacturing Company had been engaged in a lengthy strike backed by the AFL-CIO. With no progress after a year of picketing, twenty-five of the strikers pooled their money together to start their own manufacturing company. The group from Rush decided to call their venture into private enterprise the Union Furniture Manufacturing Company. Their very first location was at 3228 Midland Boulevard.¹

Helen Jenkins Bradley, an experienced seamstress, and Ruley Sutton, a recently returned Korean War

veteran and upholstery expert employed at Rush, were two of the union workers involved. Bradley said that one of guys had “an old store building in Alma that we built furniture in. We got a sewing machine. It was a junker, but it did the job.”²

The workers improvised, found some furniture plans, acquired some woodworking tools, and then needed a larger place to make their product and so moved back to Fort Smith on Midland Boulevard near the Hoyt Snow car lot. They called their operation Union Furniture because of the strike and the union that had backed them.

Bradley said that, “We just kind of picked Ruley as the leader—Ruley was it.”³ Soon after



A SOFA AND EASY CHAIR *manufactured by Union Furniture.*

PHOTOS COURTESY OF HELEN BRADLEY

the opening of the new upholstered furniture plant, Sutton and Bradley realized that it was difficult to run an efficient company of twenty-five owners with each considering himself the boss. In order to improve the operations, Helen Bradley and Ruley Sutton sought control and offered to buy out the other shares. Bradley said the “other guys didn’t seem too interested.” With borrowed money, Bradley and Sutton did so. The new owners quickly downsized the workforce and released about fourteen employees, keeping nine. Two years later, now managing a growing company, the owners moved manufacturing to Van Buren, Arkansas.

There was ample antecedent for the success here for a furniture business. Between 1960 and 1980, Fort Smith and the surrounding areas were considered to be the furniture Mecca west of the Mississippi. According to the Fort Smith Census Bureau in 1964, there were twenty-eight companies manufacturing upholstered living room suites, bedroom furniture and bed frames, tables and chairs, steel and aluminum outdoor furniture, and hardwood desks and chairs.⁴ The largest of these manufacturers were Ayres Furniture, Ward Furniture, and Riverside.



HELEN BRADLEY *posed with a Christmas cake during the 1959 strike.*



TRUCK AND TRAILOR loaded with hardwood furniture frames.

PHOTO COURTESY OF HELEN BRADLEY

There were part suppliers located in Fort Smith to support the industry, like Carpenter's Foam Fabricators, Fiber Tech Foam, Crane Foam Supply, and Hickory Springs. The metal work companies included Foster Brothers and Liggett and Platt. Ruley Sutton said, "It was nothing to go out on a Monday and buy everything from fabric to foam and metal, then go back to the factory, and fill all work orders before Friday's shipments went out."⁵ A great benefit to the new company was that the infrastructure already existed, as did the know-how in the labor force. Sutton and Bradley faced no big shipping costs for basic materials, most of which could be obtained locally. In the beginning, Union Furniture produced around twenty sets of living room furniture a week.

Sutton took on the role of the company's salesman. He would load down a truck with three or four different styles of living room suites and drive a route through Arkansas and Oklahoma, calling on stores. Store managers would be convinced to buy sets off the truck and then place more orders. A sales tactic Sutton used was to show a catalog with pictures and fabric samples. During this time, there were studios located in Fort Smith like Paragons Photography that specialized in furniture pictures for

"It was nothing to go out on a Monday and buy everything from fabric to foam and metal, then go back to the factory, and fill all work orders before Friday's shipments went out."

—Ruley Sutton, Union Furniture co-founder

the local manufacturing companies.

The salesperson's role eventually passed to another commissioned employee, freeing Sutton to concentrate on more of the daily operations and product production. With the company still growing in 1978, Sutton and Bradley employed twenty workers and constructed a new factory building in Fort Smith at 605 North Third Street, where it still produces a line of upholstered furniture.

While the owners had visions of expanding the size of their operation and competing with the larger manufacturers, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the U.S. economy fell into a recession. As one



PHOTO COURTESY OF PATRICK FEIGHT

(LEFT) Jeff, Ruley, and Dewayne Sutton. (RIGHT) Helen Bradley in 1996 at the Union Furniture plant.



PHOTO COURTESY OF HELEN BRADLEY

remedy to unemployment in places hit hard by the recession, the government offered a subsidy deal to furniture manufacturers if they moved their companies to places like Mississippi, where unemployment was in the double digits. The larger companies were offered tax breaks and guaranteed profits if they relocated and created jobs in that impoverished state. As some key Fort Smith factories closed down and moved there, fewer local suppliers of furniture parts could remain in business. They felt the pinch of an industry shift before the current North American Free Trade Agreement agreement sent industries south of the border.

Union Furniture felt the pain of trying to keep their prices competitive. Now having to bring in materials for the factory, shipping rose to ten percent of the business's costs. Large companies created more intense competition by producing quantities of living room suites. Union's customers started to rely on big-box stores rather than area manufacturing.⁶

Recognizing this shift in the industry, Union adjusted its focus toward the quality of its upholstery products to avoid competing with quantity manufacturers. As a result, its customer base changed, and it started creating more unique pieces, pieces more complicated to fabricate.

In the 1980s, it became more and more common for fabric to be imported into the United States from countries like China. "China could cut, sew, box, and ship fabric at a lower cost than Union Furniture could get it locally."⁷ The biggest problem with imports that Union Furniture faced was that its size operation did not require enough products from the importing countries, so most overseas suppliers were not interested in doing business with them. If it did find a supplier that was interested, then it still had to deal with the fact that there were no laws in place that would guarantee the shipped product would be to the correct specifications needed. When it received an incorrect order, the supplier would not refund the money or correct the problem. Thus, the designers working for Union Furniture were forced to modify their own furniture designs in order to make use of the incorrectly cut fabric anyway.

Around the time of the industry downsizing, Ruley brought his two teenage sons, Dewayne and Jeff, into the business. The young men started by running errands, trying simply to make spending money so they could continue to play local sports like baseball and basketball and afford their gear. Both of the Sutton boys worked at the factory all the way through college. In 2002, after 43 years with Union Furniture, Helen Bradley decided to retire, and the two Sutton boys bought her share of the company,

becoming equal partners with their father.

By the twenty-first century almost all of the Fort Smith furniture manufacturing companies and suppliers had closed or moved their business out of state, but not Union Furniture. Through all that happened to the industry in Fort Smith, it continues to produce unique and excellent quality upholstered furniture. Today's production is about fifty living room suites, or 100 pieces a week, with fourteen full-time employees. The average tenure of its employees is ten years, its longest one having been with the company for sixteen years. Five former employees have retired from the company. When asked whether the original mission statement and the company goals are the same now as fifty-two years ago, Ruley Sutton replied, "Of course." The owners have proved over time that if you work hard, take good care of your employees, and change with the times, you can be rewarded with business longevity.

Mr. Patrick Feight is a veteran of Desert Shield and Desert Strike and is now a student at University of Arkansas-Fort Smith. His early work experience in the furniture industry in Fort Smith prompted his interest in this article as he explains below:

My first experience in the furniture business was in 1983 when I went to work for the Riverside Furniture company, plant number six, in the sanding department. I can remember it as if it were yesterday. There was no air conditioning; in the summer, the heat rose to what felt like at least 110 degrees every morning by 10:00 a.m. The workers all seemed to be content to just go with the flow and do what the lead man wanted them to do at the time. As for me, I sanded little tiny bow-shaped wood pieces, on a balloon sander by the thousands. Six months later, I got the chance to run the biggest and newest sanding machine the company had. I did that job for the next three years.

Sources

Ruley Sutton and his two sons agreed to an interview for this article. Helen Jenkins Bradley was interviewed as part of the Hardwood Tree Museum oral history collection.

Endnotes

- ¹ Fort Smith, Arkansas, City Directory, R. L. Polk and Company, 1964, Fort Smith Public Library
- ² Helen Bradley Interview, November 29, 2011. Pebley Center, UA Fort Smith.
- ³ Ibid.
- ⁴ Insurance Maps of Fort Smith, Arkansas, Volume 1, New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1908. Boreham Library, U of A Fort Smith.
- ⁵ Ruley Sutton Interview, November, 1, 2011. Transcript is in the possession of the author
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ Ibid.

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1912 Newspapers

THE SOUTHWEST AMERICAN

January-June 1912
by Wincie Hendricks

Abstracted from microfilm
in the Fort Smith Public Library.

Editor's note: Most spelling, punctuation and grammar
appear as printed in *The Southwest American*.

January 17, 1912

ANSWERS LAST CALL OF BUGLE

**John W. Reed, Survivor of Famous Battery That
Bore His Name, Succumbs to Pneumonia at Age of
67---For Half Century a Resident of Fort Smith**

John W. Reed, for over half a century a citizen of Fort Smith, died at 12:20 o'clock yesterday afternoon at his home, 501 North Fourth street, following an illness of a few days of pneumonia. He was a survivor of Reed's battery, a company organized here at the beginning of the civil war for service in the Confederate army.

Mr. Reed was 67 years of age and practically all of his life was spent in Fort Smith at his trade as a brickmason. He was for a long time associated with his brother, James H. Reed, now living in McAlester, Okla. In the war he took part in most of the important engagements in this part of the country. He leaves a brother, James H. Reed of McAlester, a sister, Mrs. Laura Robinson of Fort Smith, and children, Charles, John C., Ben, and Mrs. R. R. Brocchus of this city, J. L. and James S. of Haileyville, Okla.

January 20, 1912

HOSPITAL ANNEX ELECTS

Sparks Memorial hospital annex will elect officers at the Ninth street Baptist church Sunday night. Dr. J. H. Moore, an active worker for the negro institution, intends retiring from the presidency of the association. He has served two terms.

February 6, 1912

PIONEER MODE OF TRAVEL BETWEEN FORT SMITH AND VAN BUREN IS ABANDONED AFTER BEING IN USE 10 YEARS---FORCED OUT OF BUSINESS BY THE COMPLETION OF FREE BRIDGE.

After being in operation continuously for fully seventy years, the Scott ferry at Van Buren was abandoned Monday morning and all wheel traffic between Crawford and Sebastian counties diverted to the Free bridge. Both roadways of the bridge were completed last Saturday and the contractors are generously allowing the public to make general use of them in advance of the completion and formal opening of the structure.

The Van Buren ferry has been controlled by the Scott family for about sixty years and up to the time foot passengers were permitted to cross the new bridge, the only means of traffic between Van Buren and Fort Smith, except by steam railroad, was by boat. In later years P. D. Scott accumulated a fortune by the operation of his ferry. In testifying in court last year in a lawsuit to which he was a party, he stated that for a period of six months the ferry netted him a little over \$5,000. The old ferry boat taken out of commission yesterday will now be offered for sale after being in constant use for the past ten years.

Commodore T. M. Arnold, (no relative of Benedict's), who has been in command of the Scott ferry for the past eighteen years and more, having made his first trip as a young man July 1, 1892, came to Fort Smith Monday afternoon to look for a new job. He would like to be appointed watchman for the Free bridge. There are numerous other applicants for the place and the commission probably will announce its selection shortly. It is understood the position will pay about \$75 a month and that there will be two watchmen: one for day and the other for night duty. The men selected probably will hold commissions as deputy constables. No arrangement has yet been made for placing the employment for the operation of the lift span of the bridge. A man who understands electricity will be required for this responsible work.

February 14, 1912

**CHOCTAW STRIP ORDERED SOLD
Chancellor Bourland Finds
for Improvement Boards in Suits
Charging Non-Payment of Assessments
Against Property-Owners Disputed
State's Jurisdiction**

By order of chancery court Tuesday after a somewhat lengthy hearing real property in what is known as the "Choctaw Strip" was condemned to be sold to pay the special improvement taxes levied against it. The hearing was in line with the of two weeks ago in which the defendants lost an important point of two on demurrer. The style of the suits under consideration yesterday was the Board of Improvement of Sewer District No. 2 versus A. N. Sicard and cross-complaint of the defendants and the chancellor sustained a demurrer to that part of the answer which constituted a cross complaint. A decree was then entered condemning the property to be sold in satisfaction of the delinquent improvement taxes, together with penalties and costs.

There are three installments of the paving and sewer taxes involved. The sewer tax assessment each year amounts to \$370.40, exclusive of penalties. The paving tax is much smaller. The land owners in the "strip" have resisted payment on several grounds, one of which was that the "strip" has never been legally made a part of the domain of Arkansas.

Decrees were also entered yesterday in two similar suits involving a considerable number of pieces of property scattered about the city. In one of the actions the First Baptist church et al were defendants, while the other was brought against James B. More et al. Many of those originally involved in these actions have paid the tax. An attorney fee of \$5 per lot was allowed in these cases. In the "strip" cases a fee of \$10 for each piece of land was allowed. The church mentioned is a negro institution and paid the tax since the suit was filed.

February 16, 1912

**HOW DARBY & BLY GROW:
MODERN PRINTING HOUSE**

Six years ago next June, Eugene R. Bly and Percy W. Darby, two well-known young Fort Smith printers formed a partnership and established a modest printing office for commercial work. Their motto was perfect satisfaction to patrons and strict attention

to business, with the highest class workmanship no matter how small or cheap the order might be. A business conducted along such lines was bound to grow, and it did.

Later they leased commodious quarters in the new brick block at No. 104 North Fifth street where they installed presses to enable them to expand their possibilities in the printing line and other modern equipment. Here the business continued to grow amazingly, and from time to time they were compelled to increase their working force, add more material and accessories, and still they were unable to cope with their trade as promptly as they desired.

With the beginning of the new year, 1912, they decided to further increase their equipment to take in other lines of printing, and they leased another store which would give them twice as much working floor space. Now their new addition is about completed, together with the installing of new type and machinery, and they are prepared to print anything that can be done in a first-class printer. They invite the people to call and inspect their modern establishment.

The most important change in their business is the installation of a perfect equipment for printing theatre and circus, race and fair tickets and theatrical window cards and posters. They have been executing this class of work for some time, but its rapid growth necessitated perfection in every way, and today they are ready to fill all orders for this line of printing. In fact they are already receiving orders from many cities in other states.

Messrs. Darby & Bly enjoy the confidence of the business world. These young men are thorough in their business methods and fully equipped to execute with perfect satisfaction every order placed with them.

February 29, 1912

**OPHANS WILL HAVE
NEW \$10,000 HOME**

By means of a donation made by a former Fort Smith man as a memorial to his mother, a building to cost \$10,000 will be erected for the Children's Home. The building will have two stories and a basement, and will be constructed of brick.

The plans for the new building were adopted yesterday by the managers of the home at a meeting held in the office of the architect, E. A. Strong.

The building will stand in the center of the lots owned by the home on North Nineteenth street. The present building will have to be removed to make

room for the new structure, and while it is being erected the children will be housed in the cottage on the lot, and in a tent.

March 29, 1912

**SANFORD LEWIS' MURDER
BRINGS TWO TO PRISON**

**John C. Stowers, Prominent
Building Contractor, and Sam Smith,
Alleged Gambler, Identified as
Members of Saturday Night Mob
That Disgraced Fort Smith**

John C. Stowers, a prominent building contractor, was arrested last evening at 5 o'clock on the charge of murdering Sanford Lewis, the negro hanged by a mob Saturday night on Garrison avenue. He is in jail, as the offense is not a bailable one. Shortly after his arrest Sam Smith, a gambler, according to the police, was arrested as an "accessory before the fact of the crime of murder." He, too, is in jail.

According to Paul E. Little, prosecuting attorney, the testimony before the grand jury indicated that Stowers was a leader of the mob, and fearing that he would leave town before an indictment was returned, he directed Sam Smart, the police captain under suspension, to arrest him. Smart arrested Stowers on Garrison avenue near Tenth, and took him to the county jail. In the meantime Mr. Little had gone before Justice Fisher and filed information charging Stowers with murder.

Stowers immediately had friends called, and one of them, Till Shaw, offered to give bond to the amount of \$20,000 but were informed that the crime charged was not bailable.

Stowers made no statement to the officer when arrested, and refused to discuss the case when questioned. He has employed the firm of Cravens & Cravens to defend him.

Say Stowers Was a Leader.

According to information received by the grand jury, Stowers was one of the principal mob leaders. Captain Smart, who made the arrest, and who was on duty in front of the jail door from the time the negro was locked up till he was taken out by the mob, said that Stowers appeared to be the leader. Captain Smart placed him under arrest at that time and started to lock him up, but the jail keys had been taken away and Captain Smart was forced to let Stowers go and return to the defense of the negro.

Prosecutor a Sleuth

Smith, the other man arrested, is charged with being an accessory to the murder in that he demanded

that the jailer give up the keys to the jail so that Lewis could be secured by the mob. Mr. Little saw Smith on the street and followed him, and seeing Patrolman Frech, had him arrest Smith. Smith has a police record, said Captain Smart last night, having been arrested for petit larceny and vagrancy several times. His brother, Walter Smith, said the captain, was sent to the penitentiary for a term of six years for forgery.

The foregoing are the first of a number of arrests that are expected to be made. The grand jury has as yet returned no indictments, but sensational developments are promised.

"The defiers of law had their inning Saturday night," said the prosecutor last night, "but now the law is taking a hand, and it is the time when those who respect the law are having their inning. The inexcusable outrage upon the law will be fully avenged, I predict."

The grand jury which laid off during Wednesday, election day, resumed its session yesterday and examined about fifteen witnesses. It will resume its work early today.

All who had an active part in breaking into the jail, who took a hand in taking the negro to the place of execution, or in stringing him up, are guilty of the crime of murder under the law, and if indicted will have that charge placed against them.

May 11, 1912

**LOCAL HORSE MARKET
RAPIDLY ENLARGING**

Among the many lines in which Fort Smith is achieving pre-eminence in the southwest in commercial and manufacturing lines as a metropolis there are many large activities of which the public has little knowledge. As an instance, few people realize that this city has become one of the largest horse markets in the whole southwest, drawing from several states in which horses are largely bred and supplying the demand of the whole lower Mississippi valley. That this is true is evidenced by the fact that three of the principal horse dealers have buyers constantly in the field covering four states and have shipped in and sold over fifty carloads of horses within the past five months. The principal markets are found in Arkansas, Louisiana, Tennessee, Mississippi and Alabama. The greatest demand is for the average work horse, ranging in price from \$75 to \$250.

June 18, 1912

THREE CASKETS LOADED WITH BOOZE

**They Each Contained Five Kegs and Each Keg
Contained Five Gallons of "Oh Be Joyful" ---
Watchful Freight Agent Detects Odd Sound and
Discovers Bootleggers Trick.**

Federal authorities are seeking a bootlegger who attempted to ship three caskets filled with whiskey out of this city to Muskogee, Okla. Each casket contained five kegs and each keg contained five gallons of booze which experts say is made of the real stuff. For several months it has been rumored that whiskey was being shipped out of Fort Smith to Muskogee in coffins, but express and railroad companies have always strenuously denied such reports. However, the three caskets held at the Iron Mountain freight depot prove that the system has at least been tried.

"I want to ship three caskets to Muskogee," said a voice over the phone to Night Agent Wood at the Iron Mountain station about 2:30 a.m. Sunday. "What will it cost and what time can I get them there."

The agent told the inquirer of the freight and that the next train out of Fort Smith would be at 5:18 a.m. and due in Muskogee at 10 a.m.

"Well the funerals are to take place at 2 o'clock in the afternoon" said the voice again, "but if they arrive at 10 a.m. that will be time enough."

The agent then told the inquirer to deliver the caskets to the Midland station, which is opposite

the Iron Mountain station, and that he would attend the matter. An hour afterward Wood observed two negroes remove three caskets in huge boxes from a dray to the station platform.

Tell Tale Sound

When Wood examined the boxes he failed to find a certificate from the board of health, which is necessary for the removal of a body from one state to another, but concluded that the caskets were empty. He made a further search on the exterior of the boxes to find some instructions for shipping and while thus engaged he heard a peculiar rattle on the inside of one casket. After convincing himself that the rattle did not sound spooky he opened the box and discovered a nice large black casket. For fear that he had made a mistake in opening the box and yet believing he heard a suspicious sound, Wood deliberated for a while before proceeding. At last he decided to continue his investigation. He cautiously removed the heavy wrapping paper from the casket and then opened the lid. Behold, All packed around with excelsior rested peacefully five pretty kegs of booze that actually gurgled every time a shake of sufficient force struck the box containing casket, booze excelsior and the miniature lumber yard that held the kegs in position.

The other caskets were opened and a similar discovery was made. The caskets were of good make and it is said sell at \$35 apiece wholesale. They were made by the Fort Smith Casket company. The caskets were addressed to the Creek Undertaking company at Muskogee.

Letters From Readers

Inquiries will be published in the *Journal* as space allows and should include the following:

- ❖ Your full name and address
- ❖ Full name of ancestor about whom you desire information
- ❖ Definite time period (birth, marriage or death date, or date appearing in a certain record at a definite time period.)
- ❖ Specific place of residence at a certain time period.
- ❖ State the relationships (names of parents, names of children, names of brothers and sisters, or in-laws.)

Material should be submitted using word-processing programs supported by Windows. Do not

abbreviate any words; put all surnames in capital letters; capitalize only the first letter of given names and places; write dates as follows (Day, Month, Year, example: 25 January 1978.)

Suggestions for Submission of Articles

We welcome the submission of articles, previously unpublished, covering significant historical events and persons in the Fort Smith and surrounding area. Manuscripts, including quotations and footnotes, must be double-spaced, using *The Chicago Manual of Style* (University of Chicago Press). Footnotes should

be numbered consecutively in the text, assembled at the end of the article, along with a list of any additional sources. The author's name, address, phone number and email address should appear only on the title page. Manuscripts may be submitted on CD disks, using word-processing programs supported by Windows. Photographs should be submitted in digital format.

All correspondence and manuscripts should be submitted to:

Managing Editors

*The Journal of the Fort Smith
Historical Society*
P.O. Box 3676
Fort Smith, AR 72913-3676.

Finally A Fort

*Hostilities among tribes, white settlers play role
in Fort Smith's beginnings in Arkansas Territory*

by Jerry Akins

An ancient Greek proverb says, "*The mills of the gods grind slowly, but they grind small.*" The mills of government grind slowly, and sometimes seem only to spin and not grind at all. But the wheels were turning for the inhabitants of Arkansas District of the Missouri Territory; small but important wheels.

Despite a declared war with Britain, revelation of an enormous payment to a British spy, an undeclared war with Spain in Florida, and the attending embarrassments for the Madison administration, the inhabitants were being noticed by some members of Congress. In 1812, Edward Hempstead was sent as a delegate to Congress from the Missouri Territory, of which Arkansas was a part. He was recognized by the other delegates as the first man who ever sat in that national council from west of the Mississippi River.

Hempstead represented an area that was vast in both size and potential. It was both hunting ground and battleground for hostile Indian tribes. In 1808, leaders of a group of Cherokees petitioned President Thomas Jefferson for permission to move west of their Appalachian homes in order to continue their tradition of hunting instead of farming. To accommodate them, title to land had to be acquired. Through treaties signed in 1808 and 1809, the Osage tribe had given up a large part of Missouri and most of Arkansas north of the Arkansas River. The boundary line of the divided territory ran from Fort Osage, which is east of present-day Independence, Missouri, at Jackass Bend of the Missouri River, south to intersect the Arkansas River about twenty miles east of Belle Point. As can be expected, hostilities broke out, with robberies and killings of both Indians and whites.

White people had occupied the area along the Arkansas River since the days of French explorers and fur traders, but permanent settlements had come about partly as a result of the factory and trader system set up by the U.S. government in 1795. Managers of trading houses (factors) were licensed and sanctioned by the government to trade goods with the Indians at cost, below the price that independent merchants could sell their goods. The factory system had multiple purposes: to reduce Indian trade with foreigners, to eliminate the whiskey suppliers, and to make Indians dependent

on government trade goods. The words of Thomas Jefferson, in writing to Indiana Territory Governor William Henry Harrison in 1803, sum up the ultimate goal of the factory system. "[A]t our trading houses we mean to sell so low as to repay us cost and charges so as neither to lessen or enlarge our capital; this is what private traders cannot do, for they must gain; they will consequently retire from competition. [T]here is no method more irresistible (sic) of obtaining lands (from Indians) than by letting them get in debt [at factories] which when too heavy to be paid, they are always willing to lop off by a cession of land."¹

John B. Treat opened the first factory at Arkansas Post in 1805, but due to government restrictions on the amount of credit to extend, and the quantity and variety of goods private merchants were able to provide, the Arkansas Post factor could not attract sufficient Indian trade and closed in 1810. But, factor or no factor, the "inhabitants," sixty or seventy families from Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, and some Frenchmen and Spaniards were still there and in need of protection. The male members of these families must have been among the fifty-six signers of the letter of April 1812, who prayed, "that two or more Companies may be ordered to the Post of Arkansas for the protection on our Infant and dispersed Settlements."

By 1812 several thousand Cherokees had removed from the Appalachians to the Arkansas District as a result of the 1809 authorization by President Thomas Jefferson. The Osages who had previously occupied the area and the Cherokees quarreled constantly, stole each other's horses, and killed each other. In response to reports from Arkansas residents and representatives in 1813, Colonel Return Jonathan Meigs, Cherokee Agent in Tennessee, sent his assistant, William L. Lovely, west to establish a sub-agency with the Cherokees of Arkansas.

Lovely immediately reported to William Clark, governor of Missouri Territory, that white hunters were killing large numbers of buffalo for their tallow and bears for their oil, and leaving the carcasses to rot. The game of the area, he believed, belonged to the Indians, and the number of animals killed would have sustained a great number of them for a long time.

Although Lovely raised the ire of white settlers

by setting up unauthorized boundaries south of the Arkansas River and allowing Cherokees to occupy farms of whites, he did parley with the warring tribes to try to make peace among them. But by October 1814, because of continuing friction between Indian tribes and encroachment of whites, Lovely wrote to Governor Clark on October 11, 1814:

It is my opinion absolutely necessary that there should be two Companies of troops stationed here, I beg therefore if the[y] can possibly be spared that you will send two Companies to this place or one at least as there are some white of Worst Character on this Country whose influence with the Indians is Dangerous to the peace of same.

Governor Clark endorsed Lovely's recommendation and replied January 25, 1815, that if the War Department decided to order soldiers to Missouri he promised to send an officer to meet with Lovely. Clark thought it "probable that a Corps will be Station[ed] on the Arkansas this next Summer."

Lovely replied on May 27 of that year, from the Cherokee Agency:

It does me much pleasure to find in your Letter, the probability of troops being stationed in this Quarter. I would recommend their being as high up the Arkansas at least at this place. It would have a tendency to keep the Osages at Bay altho from all accounts they are friendly & generous towards whites...

The optimism of Clark and Lovely may have been misplaced, for it would be more than a year and a half from the date of Lovely's letter before troops arrived in the Arkansas District. During that time, there would be other calls for someone to keep order and control intercourse with the Indians. In April 1816, a delegation of Cherokee chiefs went to St. Louis to protest to Governor Clark about the Osage despoliations on their people. They carried with them a letter from Agent William Lovely repeating his request for a military post on the Arkansas.

The next month, May 1816, Pierre Chouteau, French merchant of St. Louis and agent to the Big and Little Osages, planned to meet with leaders of the Osage and Cherokee Tribes on the Verdigris River. His purpose was to work out an agreement to lessen the hostilities between the two nations.² (However that meeting never took place.) Agent Lovely then traveled with some Cherokee headmen to the mouth of the Verdigris and presided over a meeting of the two adversaries. Again Lovely made a bold and unauthorized move, as he had when he set aside land south of the Arkansas in Arkansas District. His plan was for the federal government to reimburse all Indians holding

depredation claims against the Osages if the Osages would cede a large tract of their land. This land included several counties of present-day northeast Oklahoma and northwest Arkansas, which came to be known as "Lovely's Purchase." Lovely's Purchase was never sanctioned by the U.S. government.

If the allegations of Mr. William Russel of St. Louis, in the Missouri Territory, are true, Agent William Lovely's judgment may have been clouded. In a letter dated December 13, 1813, from Edward Hempstead to the Secretary of War, the delegate forwarded a letter from Mr. Russel "touching on the conduct of one William Lovely assistant Indian Agent to the Cherokee Indians."

"Extract of a letter from William Russel Esq. to Edward Hempstead, dated St. Louis Nov. 1, 1813":

Sir—Last Summer a certain Wm. Lovely Indian agent to the Cherokee arrived at Arkansas, and in latter part of June proceeded up the Arkansas River to a place called Dardanville, near a Cherokee village, where he established himself, called a Council of the Indians, and established certain temporary boundaries with them &c as published by an original publication of which I here enclose you, on which I shall not Comment as it speaks for itself—Of its author Mr. Lovely I shall only say that I had a few days personal acquaintance of him at Arkansas, that I never seen him sober or free from gross intoxication; that those who have known him ever since he has been in that Country have informed me that when a sleep he has his Whiskey bottle by his bed side, and has scarcely if at all been known to be sober since in this country.—He (Mr. Lovely) keeps a Clerk by the name of Richard Witt who is said to be less dissipated and it is Said his principal Council is a most notorious villain who ran away from Tennessee, and who has resided as a trader &c with the Cherokees since they have been on the Arkansas by the name of Lig Chisolm....

The complaining and petitioning by both whites and Indians, and the feuding, killing, and stealing among the Indians continued to escalate through 1816. In the autumn of 1816 a hunting party of Cherokees trespassed into Osage land and stole several horses. The Osages pursued the Cherokees and killed and scalped their leader. At a council in January 1817, the Cherokees decided to crush the Osages. Realizing that the Osages outnumbered them, the western Cherokee sent messages back to their Appalachian tribesmen for reinforcements. The western Cherokees intended to start their action in May when there was grass for their horses, and the Osage were out hunting.

Agent Return J. Meigs and the War Department were alerted that a council of war had taken place and measures were taken to prevent any more reinforcements from going west. On April 1, 1817, Acting Secretary

of War George Graham wrote Governor Clark that hostilities between the Osages and Cherokees were about to begin. He directed Clark to take precautionary measures to prevent war between them. Several boatloads of Cherokees had already started down the Tennessee River by then, but Agent Meigs took measures to prevent any more warriors from joining the western Cherokees. But the stopping of reinforcements did not end the dissatisfaction of the Cherokees.

News of the hostile intentions of the Cherokees caused Acting Secretary of War Graham to send a message to General Andrew Jackson, commander of the Southern District of the Army, on July 30, 1817. Jackson was directed to establish a post “at, or as near to, as circumstance will admit, the point where the Osage boundary crossed the Arkansas River.” The commandant was to be instructed to “take all proper measures for restoration of peace, and the preservation of harmony between the Osage and Cherokee tribes.” The military presence was needed for more than preservation of harmony among the Indians. It was to prevent the white people, whose population was growing in the Arkansas District, from trespassing in the Indian country.³

Eighty-two recruits of the Rifle Regiment were headed for Belle Fontaine, near St. Louis, on the Missouri River. The Secretary of War mistakenly presumed that these men were probably veterans of the War of 1812. On their arrival, General Thomas Adams Smith, commander of the 9th Military District, was disappointed to learn that very few of the men had served during that war. These inexperienced troops were in no way ready for the hard conditions of the Arkansas District. Major Joseph Selden had orders to bring a rifle company up to Belle Fontaine from Baton Rouge and Natchitoches. General Smith had selected Major William Bradford, a combat veteran of 1812, to command the expedition to establish a fort on the Arkansas, and he would be accompanied by Major Stephen H. Long of the Topographical Engineers. Bradford and Long were ordered to descend the Mississippi River until they met Major Selden and the troops traveling up the river to Belle Fontaine. The soldiers were to go with Bradford; Selden was to proceed on to Belle Fontaine.

Major Bradford and Major Long met Major Selden near the mouth of the Ohio River and transferred the troops of Selden’s command, at least twenty-four of whom were sick, to Bradford. Bradford and Long, because they had no surgeon or junior officer, spent much of their time attending to the sick soldiers, three of whom died during the run down the Mississippi. Bradford decided to lay over at Arkansas Post to resupply and to allow the sick soldiers more time to recuperate. Long pushed on up the Arkansas to the

mouth of the Verdigris with a small detachment of men and supplies for twenty-four days.⁴

On his way to the Verdigris, topographical engineer Long was impressed by a place that French trappers and explorers called LaBelle Point. It was near the point twenty miles upstream from the point where the Osage boundary struck the Arkansas River. A letter to Major Bradford Long described the point this way:

The site selected for the Garrison is secure and healthy; and affords a complete command of the rivers above mentioned. Its elevation is about thirty five feet above the water, from which it is accessible by and easy ascent. The point is supported upon a basis of Stratified (sic) sand stone, well adapted to building, and is surrounded by wood land affording and abundance of erecting timber. The soil of the adjacent country is exuberant, producing Corn, Cotton &c in great abundance.⁵

Major Long named the cantonment Camp Smith, and began the erection of some rude shelters. When Long learned that Bradford and his men were again making their way up the Arkansas, he prepared to leave Camp Smith. After modifying the building plan that he had prepared at Belle Fontaine, he left the drawing with the men he planned to leave at Camp Smith. Major Long traveled a circuitous route up the Poteau, crossed the Ouachita Mountains, traveled to the Hot Springs, to Little Rock, and eventually to Herculaneum on the Mississippi.⁶

When Major Bradford made his celebrated arrival on Christmas Day 1817, he and his men were greeted by the men Major Long had left behind to begin the building of the fort.⁷

At last the mills of the gods created a small fort and soon long a small city had come to the Arkansas frontier.

Jerry Akins is a regular contributor to The Journal. His recent book is Hangin’ Times in Fort Smith.

Endnotes

¹ Thomas Jefferson to William Henry Harrison, Washington , February 27, 1803

² Pierre Chouteau to Lovely, May 1, 1816

³ Secretary of War Graham to Jackson, July 30, 1817

⁴ Long to Smith, October 15, 1817

⁵ Long to Smith, May 12, 1818

⁶ Edwin C. Bearss, “In Quest of Peace on the Indian Border: The Establishment of Fort Smith,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 23, 2 (Summer 1964)” 144.

⁷ For historical detail on the Long detachment that preceded Bradford to Belle Point, see Billy D. Higgins, *A Stranger and A Sojourner: Peter Caulder Free Black Frontiersman in Antebellum Arkansas*. (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2004, 41-53.

Book Reviews

Toy Baker, *Creating the Path: C. Ray Baker Childhood Stories*. North Little Rock, Arkansas: Prestige Press, 2011. Forty-eight pages, sixteen illustrations. \$8.

Available at all branches of the Fort Smith Public Library.

We vividly remember Mayor Ray Baker's exuberance and his vigorous right-hand hook as he exclaimed, "Life's Worth Living in Fort Smith, Arkansas!"

We recall his warm, handwritten notes of congratulations or encouragement, his wide smile of recognition and quick hug in the downtown Post Office lobby on a busy workday, the showers of rose petals on citizens young and old. Homes across the city hold treasured long-stem roses, now dried, preserved with their ties of gold and red and blue presented to commemorate an honor or a memorable occasion, or the declaration of a special day, generously pronounced.

Those of us who were privileged to be members of his Uplifters Class or students of American history or government recount many moving anecdotes of his humor and enthusiasm. Now we can add to these stories borrowed memories from one who knows Ray Baker best, telling stories only the author can tell. In a book recently published, Baker's sister, Toy, has given us insight into the mischievous child who was older by slightly more than one year and who shared childhood adventures and escapades. Her stories open a window into the accomplished adult he became. The story is familiar: a scholar and teacher whose accomplishments inspired generations of students and a community of grateful citizens.

The legacy of this truly amazing man will not be forgotten. The Rose Society of Fort Smith has arranged to have a red rose, soon to be available for sale, hybridized with his name, and a move is under way to rename the Anniversary Rose Garden in downtown Fort Smith in his honor.

An untiring worker, Ray Baker encouraged others to serve. Now a Habitat for Humanity dwelling is called a "Baker Build" home, and Southside High School students are raising funds to help finish the residence. City employees, calling themselves "Baker's Dozens," run a relay in his honor.

When Ray Baker left home for college, he wrote in

large letters on his sister's bedroom wall, "Hitch Your Wagon to a Star." His life has left a legacy to inspire an entire community.

Clara Jane Rubarth
Editorial Board

The Journal of the Fort Smith Historical Society

Gregory Armstrong, Matthew Grow, and Dennis Siler, Editors. *Parley P. Pratt and the Making of Mormonism*. Norman, Oklahoma: The Arthur H. Clark Company. 2011. Pp. 351. \$46.00.

Unless you are of the Mormon faith, you likely never heard of nineteenth century religious leader Parley P. Pratt, nor would you have the slightest interest in what he contributed to the development of a religion that many mainstream Christian denominations, then and still, consider at best a misguided cult, or at worst, a complete heresy. This work brings to life not just a Mormon of some historic stature, but a real American character, whether you agree with his movement or not, who left a profound impact on the spiritual inclinations of several millions, here and around the world, over the last century and a half.

Structurally, the work consists of an introduction by the editors followed by eleven chapters based on the individual research projects of a number of distinguished contributors, including Mormon Church historians, professors who have a specialty in Mormon history or Pratt biographies forthcoming, and in the case of two of them, actual descendants of Parley Pratt. It is stated in the introduction that much of this research was presented at a conference held in 2007 in Fort Smith, Arkansas, to commemorate the sesquicentennial of his death in 1857. Pratt died outside Van Buren, Arkansas, just north of Fort Smith, the victim of a murder. He is buried in the Arkansas ground where he expired, the location of which has been made into a National Shrine by the Latter-day Saints. While the editors state that the conference was supported by grants from various humanities programs, it would be interesting to know whether the Mormon Church was also directly involved. Each chapter is richly documented with sometimes copious footnotes, citing the records of Mormon Church history, the large number of primary source letters, editorials, documents in Pratt's own hand, including his posthumously published

Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt, and recognized authors of secondary source scholarly books and journal articles.

While many of the chapters in this work have a biographical focus, it is also very much the story of how Parley Pratt created a body of theological writings that when published and disseminated, built the literary foundations of the early Mormon Church, only second in influence to the founder Joseph Smith's pronouncements. Born in 1807, Parley Pratt entered his adulthood as a classic example of a "seeker," (p. 21) a person looking for a spiritual place that traditional Christian denominations at the time could not provide him. Married young to a woman ten years his senior, his early life set the stage for his lifelong itinerancy and was influenced by a number of preachers, none of whom actually settled his spiritual quest. He eventually encountered "a very strange book," (p. 23) in 1830, Joseph Smith's Book of Mormon. After that, his seeking ended. Pratt traveled to New York from Ohio, embraced the new religion as the truth, and quickly became a leader in the Mormon movement, rather than a follower, rising to an exalted position on the Council (Quorum) of the Twelve Apostles.

Pratt embraced missionary travel, frequently leaving his wife [wives] and children in the care of friends or relatives, or to fend for themselves in the most humbling conditions in Ohio, Missouri, Utah, and even in England, where he frequently traveled and stayed for months, preaching, writing, and publishing. During the 1830s, he suffered the Mormon persecutions in Missouri, even being arrested and imprisoned during 1838-1839. But his pen never ceased, explaining Mormon theology, answering criticism from Christian leaders, or extolling Mormonism's Hebraic roots, the restoration of a New Testament adherence, and the coming of a new Zion. He wrote numerous missionary tracts, edited Mormon newspapers from England to California, and published long apologetics, defending the Latter-day Saints.

After escaping the persecution in Missouri, Pratt and his second wife settled in Nauvoo, Illinois. There, in 1843, Parley Pratt embraced polygamy, or taking plural wives, at first a secret tenant of the Mormon faith limited to the church hierarchy. In 1844, Mormon founder Joseph Smith and his brother were murdered in Illinois, raising questions about leadership succession. Brigham Young emerged, but not all theological points, particularly, who could approve plural marriages, were settled to everyone's perfect agreement. Pratt continued to add wives, with or without Young's consent, eventually marrying twelve women. Migration to Utah, setting up a home for multiple families, and the man just making a living were frequently interrupted as the church leaders continued to send Pratt on distant mission trips, as far as Chile, and giving him the duty of supervising Mormon activities over the entire Pacific

rim. His ability to preach, write, and codify the Mormon message made him nearly indispensable to the church mission by the beginning of the 1850s, according to the conclusions of a number of the contributors.

Pratt's tragic end on a dusty road outside Van Buren, Arkansas, leaves the reader to answer for himself whether he was some kind of martyr for his faith or just the unlucky victim of a jealous man who claimed his honor despoiled. Pratt had taken for his twelfth wife, Eleanor McLean, a woman with children still technically married to one Hector McLean. McLean believed Pratt had seduced Eleanor, despite her claims that she had left of her own will due to abuse. McLean wanted satisfaction. Contributor Patrick Mason explained in Chapter 8 that the McLeans were Southerners and were, "deeply rooted in the system of beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and relationships that scholars refer to in shorthand as 'honor.'" (p. 249) After McLean caught Pratt and dispatched him in cold blood with both knife and gun, the general reaction of the public and non-Mormon press was reflected in the words of the *Daily Missouri Republican*, "deeply do we sympathize with McLean in the unfortunate condition in which Mormon villainy and fanaticism, namely Pratt's seduction of his wife, 'has placed him.'" (p. 261)

In Chapter 9, contributor Matthew Grow provides much ammunition to address the ultimate question about Parley Pratt's personal life; was he a "martyred apostle or un-saintly seducer?" (p. 275) While individual readers may form their own opinion from the in-depth biographical material in the collection of essays as to which camp Pratt falls into, it is important not to lose sight of his real contribution, which was the making and shaping of the Mormon message, from its origins in the nineteenth century well into the twentieth.

There is a degree of redundancy as one reads from one chapter to the next, as nearly all eleven recount his murder, multiple marriages, and major theological works in some way. But, as each of the collected essays was originally presented as a single academic endeavor, quite capable of standing alone on the merit of each contributor's individual scholarship, as a collection they compliment each other and provide a detailed picture of a man with a mission who pursued it literally to his last breath. Most of the chapter essays appear to be presented in that neutral, non-biased tone historians love. The contributors and editors are to be commended. Readers will not come away feeling as though they have been proselytized by this work. All told, it is an important record for Mormon and non-Mormon readers, researchers, and historians, who seek insight into Parley Pratt and the religion he championed.

Robert Willoughby
Chair, Department of History
University of Arkansas-Fort Smith

Book Notes

Soon to be available books by Fort Smith authors:

❖ Jerry Akins. *Hangin' Times in Fort Smith: A History of Executions in Judge Parker's Court*. Little Rock: Butler Center Books. Release date, April 2012.

❖ Ben Boulden. *Hidden History of Fort Smith, Arkansas*. Charleston, South Carolina: The History Press, 2012.

❖ Phil Karber. *Fear and Faith in Paradise: Exploring Conflict and Religion in the Middle*

East. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers. Release date, July 16, 2012.

❖ Bob Willoughby. *The Brothers Robidoux and the Opening of the American West*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press. Release date, Fall 2012.

❖ Jennifer Paddock. *The Weight of Memory*. MacAdam Cage Publishing. Release date May 2012.

Visit Our Website www.fortsmithhistory.org

Find the links listed below to aid your research!

❖ **Arkansas Stories**—A site dedicated to the stories, studies and songs from Arkansas' past, Arkansas' future.

❖ **Arkansas Freedmen of the Frontier**—The African-American experience in northwest Arkansas is chronicled here. It has a lot of great links and information.

❖ **Arkansas Historical Association**—The mission of the Arkansas Historical Association is to promote the preservation, writing, publishing, teaching, and understanding of Arkansas history through the publication of the Arkansas Historical Quarterly as well as other activities.

❖ **Arkansas History Commission and State Archives**—The Arkansas History Commission is one of the oldest existing state agencies in The Natural State and Arkansas' official state archives are maintained by the commission.

❖ **Black Men Who Rode For Parker**—A site dedicated to the African-American deputy marshals who enforced the law in the federal court district of western Arkansas and Oklahoma. Judge Isaac Parker presided over the district in the late nineteenth century.

❖ **Center for Local History and Memory**—The Center for Local History and Memory at the University of Arkansas-Fort Smith grew out of student-faculty efforts in 1997 to collect oral history interviews to document the first seventy years of the college.

❖ **Arkansas Civil War Sites**—The Arkansas Civil War Sesquicentennial Commission website with information on Arkansas' participation in the 150th anniversary of our country's struggle with itself.

❖ **The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture**—The Encyclopedia of Arkansas Project is proud to present these initial entries.

❖ **Fort Smith Trolley Museum**—For more than 20 years, Fort Smith's trolley museum has worked to educate people about transportation history, restore and maintain antique trolley cars, and even give riders a trip back in time in those streetcars.

❖ **Fort Smith Museum of History**—The Fort Smith Museum of History acquires, preserves, exhibits and interprets objects of historical significance relevant to the founding and growth of Fort Smith and the region.

❖ **Fort Smith Air Museum**—Located at the Fort Smith Airport; the museum is a treasure trove of facts and artifacts that tell the story

of Fort Smith's aviation history. Our readers might also enjoy this site on The History of Flight, submitted by one of our readers (Tony, a history researcher and student of Ms. Brooke Pierce in Delaware)—the site provides a fantastic time line that breaks down the early history of flight in America.

❖ **Historic Fort Smith**—A page containing some general information about Fort Smith history, heritage tourism in the city and links to other sites.

❖ **Oak Cemetery**—A recognized National Historic Landmark with more than 152 years of history is home to the burial sites of outlaws hanged by order of Judge Isaac C. Parker, marshals, deputy marshals, an Arkansas governor, fifteen mayors of Fort Smith, and the founder of Fort Smith, John Rogers.

❖ **The Old State House Museum of Arkansas History**—Set in the oldest surviving state capitol west of the Mississippi; it houses a multimedia museum of Arkansas history with a special emphasis on women's history, political history and special programming for children.

❖ **Richard C. Butler Center for Arkansas Studies**—The Center for Arkansas Studies proudly presents what we hope will one day become the premier online resource for historical information related to Arkansas.

❖ **South Sebastian County Historical Society**—The South Sebastian County Historical Society, located in Greenwood, Arkansas, is an excellent resource on the history and landmarks of the area.

❖ **Wikipedia Entry for Fort Smith**—The online, user-created encyclopedia has a descriptive entry about the largest city in western Arkansas.

More Genealogical Links

❖ **Fort Smith Library Genealogy Department**—One of the greatest resources of local genealogical information to be found in the city. The Fort Smith Public Library is also a frequent gathering place of local historians and history buffs.

❖ **Crawford County, AR cemeteries**—A rich genealogical resource for Van Buren and Crawford County.

❖ **LeFlore County, OK Genealogy**—Find birth and death records in support of your genealogical searches involving LeFlore County, Oklahoma.

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- NOTES:**
- # - some sort of graphic is used, other than a portrait.
 - * - a portrait of the person(s) named is on page indicated.
 - (- - -) - for such as title, marital status, degree, etc.
 - "- - -" - for nickname or special emphasis.
 - (-) - dash between page numbers indicates the name of the person, place, etc. is carried throughout the story.
 - (gp) - group picture
 - (pc) - postcard

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UAFS alumni Justin Huss and former UAFS instructors Bobby Turner and Jerry Turner display crayon art drawn by a Vietnamese refugee who went through the 1975 Relocation Project at Fort Chaffee. The works were gifted by the Turners to the Pebley Center at the UAFS Boreham Library.



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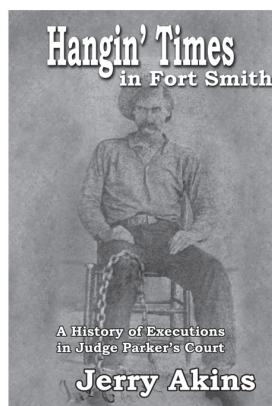


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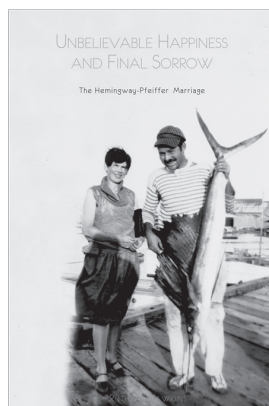


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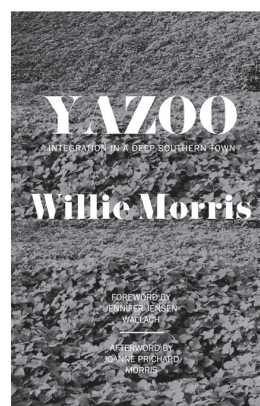


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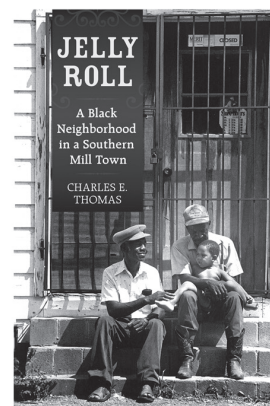


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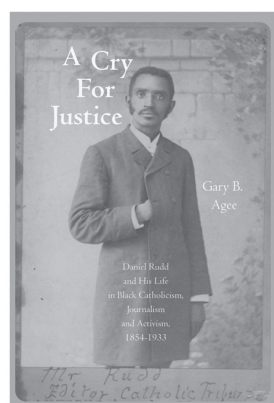


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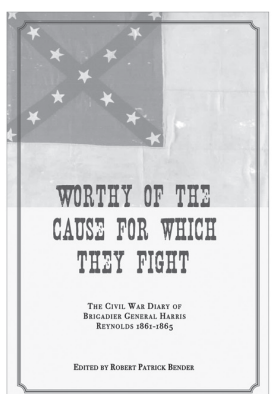


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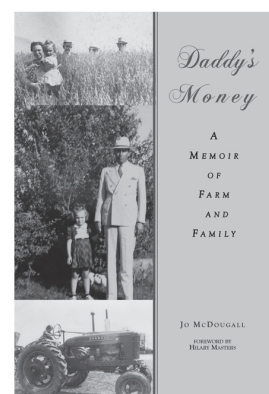
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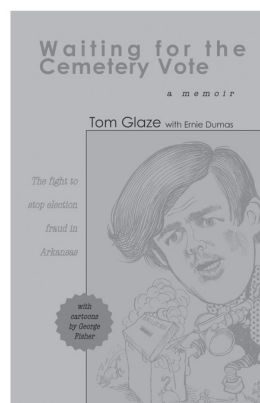
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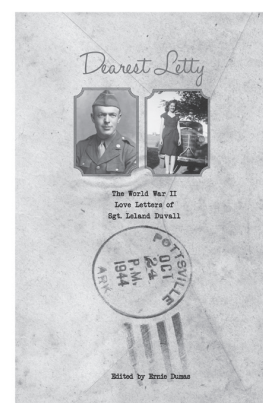
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