



# The JOURNAL



## New Voices In History

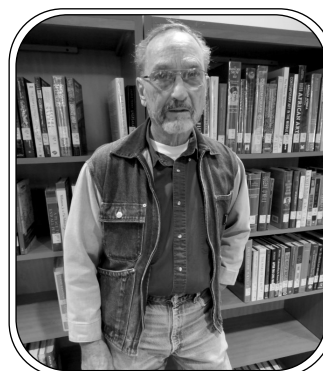
*Students delve into John Drennen, Pebley Collection, Trixie Goldman*



Aviation in Fort Smith  
*by Amrit Kannan*



Adventures of Benjamin  
Bonneville: Part II  
*by Matt Myers*



Fort Smith and the Great  
War: Part II  
*by Jerry Akins*

Vol. 39, No. 1, April 2015



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See the Google group, Fort Smith History Forum, for a bulletin board of current research questions. Readers may post their own research questions or topics in hopes of furthering their own research.

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# The JOURNAL

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COVER: Main photo—Authors, clockwise from right, Jerry Wing, Amanda Sexton, Christina Butterfield, Katie Dunn, and Jacquelynn Rupp. (Photo by Rachel Putman, UAfS)

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# In This Issue ...

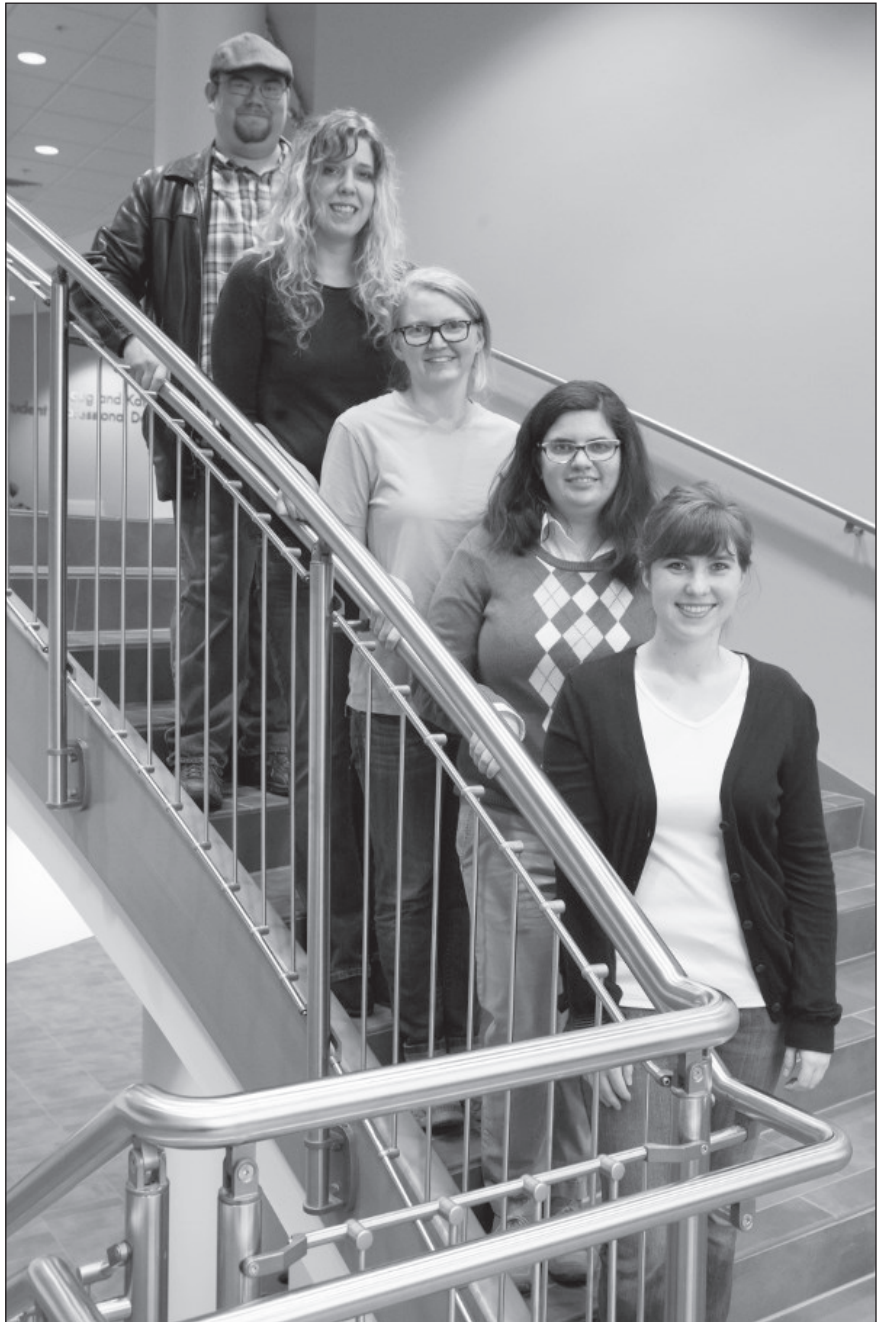
In this issue, the *Journal of the Fort Smith Historical Society* welcomes the outstanding work of six young authors. Christina Butterfield, Katie Dunn, Jacquelynn Rupp, Amanda Sexton, and Jerry Wing are all students at the University of Arkansas-Fort Smith. Amrit Kannan is a sophomore at Southside High School. In addition, Matthew Myers, a UA Fort Smith graduate who is now in a graduate studies program at University of Louisiana-Lafayette contributes a second part to his interesting study on Benjamin Bonneville. Young-at-heart returning author for this issue is Jerry Akins, who continues his contributions to the *Journal* as writer, researcher, and dependable member of the Fort Smith Historical Society.

This issue breaks ground in another way, too, by giving special recognition to these young authors in placing them on the cover of the *Journal*.

Complementing the articles written by these authors are our regular features, which are favorite and strong sections of the *Journal* for our readership. Those include the "Newspapers of 100 years ago" by Crystal Jenkins and the "Who Knew" column by our inquiry coordinator/researcher, Mary Jeanne Black.

Readers may notice that three of the articles have a common theme, John Drennen, often called the Founder of Van Buren. Each of the authors explores separate aspects of Drennen's antebellum life and times.

Taken together, they afford the most comprehensively documented study of Drennen to appear in print.



**JERRY WING**, from left, Christina Butterfield, Jacquelynn Rupp, Amanda Sexton, and Katie Dunn

(Photo by Rachel Putman, UAfS)

The Drennen-Scott home built in the 1830s is now a campus/visitor center/museum of the University of Arkansas-Fort Smith under the su-

pervision of Assistant Professor Tom Wing, who has afforded his expertise and research assistance for these three authors.



# NEWS & OPPORTUNITIES

## Fort Smith Historical Society Quarterly Meeting

**6:00 p.m. Wednesday, April 8, 2015**  
**Community Room, Main Branch,**  
**Fort Smith Public Library**

Agenda includes program by Joe Wasson about the Veteran interviews he has conducted and the annual election of board and officers. Ballot enclosed in this issue of the *Journal*.

\*\*\*

## ‘Fort Smith and Indian Removal’ Talk at UAFS

Ark-Homa Chapter of the Arkansas Archeological Society and the UAFS Department of Behavioral Sciences

**“Fort Smith and Indian Removal,”**

**a public talk by**

**Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr.**

**Thursday, April 16, 2015, 7:00 p.m.**

University of Arkansas-Fort Smith, Latture Conference Center, located in the Business Industrial Institute building at the corner of Grand and North Fiftieth Street

Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr., holds a Ph.D. degree from Oklahoma State University and was a classroom teacher for forty-five years. He has been a faculty member at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock since 1970, and from 1983 to 2005 he was director of the American Native Press Archives, the world’s largest archival repository of Native American newspapers and periodicals. In 2005, he left teaching and became director of the Sequoyah National Research Center, which houses the Archives and the Dr. J. W. Wiggins Collection of Native American Art.

\*\*\*

## Fort Smith Museum of History Schedule

❖ April 30-August 30: “Motorcycle Memories” on exhibit. Opening reception and program, May 2 (11 a.m.-1 p.m.)

❖ April 18 (1 p.m.): Mark Potter will present “Richard Smoot: Orbiting Booth’s Inner Circle.”

❖ May 7 (6 p.m.): Denny Flynn will give a program on

the history of the rodeo in Fort Smith.

❖ May 16 (10 a.m.): Chuck Girard will present “Garrison Avenue: A Look Back.” (11 a.m.) Take a stroll through downtown with Judge and Mrs. Parker as they discuss downtown’s architecture.

❖ May 25 (following the rodeo parade that begins at 10 a.m.): Cowboy Poets presentation.

❖ May 28 (1-3 p.m.): Queen’s Tea honoring current and past rodeo queens and dandies.

❖ July 4 (2-4 p.m.): Crafts for Kids—patriotic craft making for our young Americans.

\*\*\*

## Clayton House History Programs

❖ Sunday, April 26: Family History Series –

“Railroads to Splendor: Family Roots.” Fort Smith native and history buff Joe Irwin shares his family history, featuring his maternal grandfather, 1800s railroad entrepreneur Angus MacLeod, and the three Joseph C. Irwin generations. 1:30 p.m.

❖ Saturday, May 23: “Civil War Days at the Sutton Mansion: An Earlier Clayton House Chapter,” 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Historians and historic re-enactors share the story of this home serving as a U.S. General Hospital beginning in 1863 and provide overviews of the Civil War in Arkansas and Fort Smith and of medical practices during the war.

❖ Sunday, May 31: Family History Series—“Sicard Family History: Building a Bank and City” Sam T. Sicard, president and CEO of First National Bank of Fort Smith, shares the history of his family’s five generations presiding over the historic bank. 1:30 p.m.

❖ Sunday, June 28: Family History Series—“100 Years of Pharmacy: The Smets Family.” Retired pharmacist Charles Smets is joined by his son, third generation pharmacist Mike Smets, and daughter, Caron Roberts, to share the family’s history.

\*\*\*

## Drennen-Scott House Events

**Van Buren, Arkansas**

Crawford County Chronicles program on April 12 will focus on the 1943 Flood with pictures stories and audience participation. Attendees are encouraged to bring photos

and stories to help document the flood.

In conjunction with Fort Smith Heritage days in May, Drennen-Scott will host a fur trapper camp re-enactment.

Other events scheduled for the Chronicles series include programs on colonial and early Arkansas. For reservations and more information contact Tom Wing at 479-262-2750 or [tom.wing@uafs.edu](mailto:tom.wing@uafs.edu)

\*\*\*

## Arkansas Historical Association 74th Annual Conference

West Memphis, Arkansas

April 9-11, 2015

Theme: "To Bind up the Nation's Wounds."

Friday sessions at the Eugene Woods Civic Center;  
Saturday sessions at the Mid-South Community College.

You may register for the conference using this link:  
<http://arkansashistoricalassociation.org>

\*\*\*

## Choctaw Nation Stickball Demonstration

Museum of the Hardwood Tree in cooperation with the Choctaw Nation and the Fort Smith Historical Site presents

**Choctaw Nation Stickball Demonstration**

**May 9, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.**

Adult stickball game at 1 p.m.

Fort Smith National Historic Site, 301 Parker Ave.,  
Fort Smith, Arkansas.

No admission charged.

\*\*\*

## Juneteenth Celebration

A grass roots community Juneteenth freedom day celebration with music, spoken word, art and dance. Contact: [FortSmithJuneteenth@yahoo.com](mailto:FortSmithJuneteenth@yahoo.com)

\*\*\*

## Gifts & Memorials

❖ Oklahoma Historical Society gift of original *Fort Smith Elevator* newspapers, the complete years of 1901 and 1902.

❖ Alberta Blackman, Ada, Oklahoma

❖ Emery Lundquist

❖ Alvin S. Tilles Endowment

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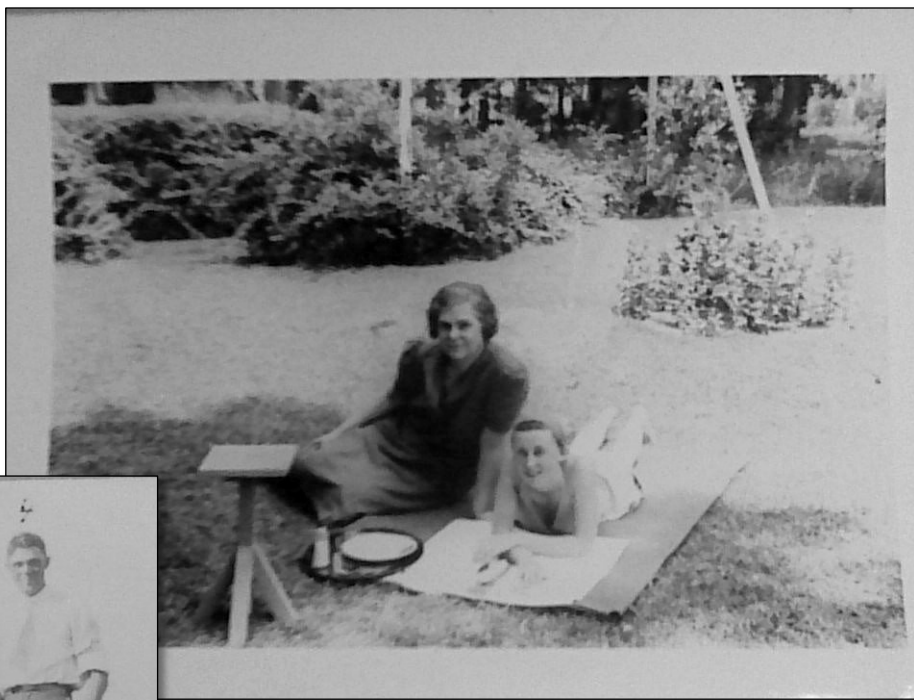
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479/784-9427

479/646-9140

479-484-5502



**(TOP LEFT)** A.C. and J.F. Goodbar in 1863

**(ABOVE)** Alice Goodbar, left, in her backyard at 2123 North G Street in Fort Smith.

**(LEFT)** Alice Goodbar, second from left, with a group of friends on Barbecue Day, August 29, 1912, on the roof of a rice mill in Lonoke, Arkansas

*(Photos courtesy of the Pebley Center at the University of Arkansas-Fort Smith)*

# Preserving the Past

*Goff Collection at the Pebley Center at the UAFS Boreham library*

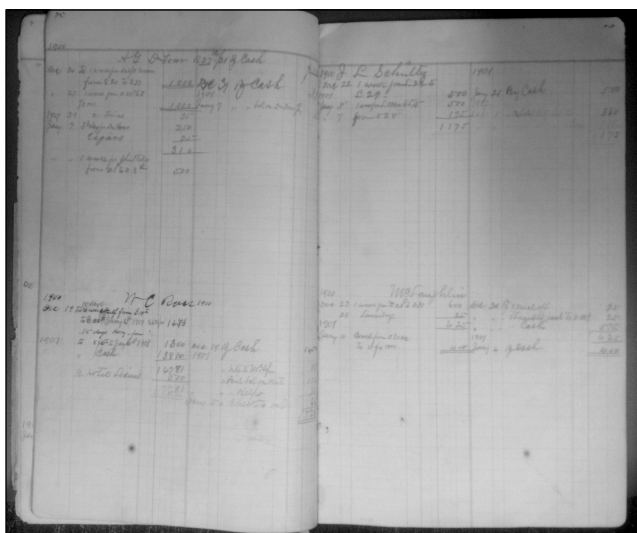
## By Christina Butterfield

**T**he Pebley Center for Arkansas Historical & Cultural Materials in the Boreham Library at the University of Arkansas-Fort Smith holds donated collections that help unlock the past because aware people understood the importance of preserving their family's history through saving personal documents which are called primary sources.

One of the collections in the Pebley Center is the Goff Collection, which was donated in 2004 by Lucille Jackson Goff of Fort Smith. Found in the attic of Miss Laura's in Fort Smith, Arkansas, this collection holds many interesting findings and ties to the Fort Smith area. The main family documented in the Goff collection is the Goodbar fami-

ly. Mary Alice Goodbar Southard, who went by her middle name Alice, kept correspondence, photographs, and official documents about her family that cover nearly a century. The documents are well-preserved, making this collection even more valuable considering some of the documents are 150 years old.

Going through the collection, the researcher can follow the migration of Alice's parents, Jesse Franklin (J.F.) Goodbar and Alice Catherine (A.C.) Gardenhire Goodbar, from Tennessee to Arkansas. Alice Catherine Gardenhire and Jesse Franklin Goodbar were married on January 24, 1861, in Sparta, Tennessee. During this marriage five children were born, with Alice being the youngest and the only girl. In 1874 the Goodbars moved from Sparta, Tennessee, to Lonoke, Arkansas. Jesse Franklin Goodbar had a successful career as a merchant, a real estate agent, man-



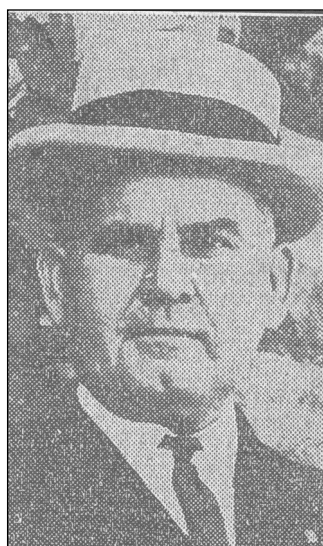
**LEDGER BELONGING TO J. F. GOODBAR** showing services during his time as manager at the Laclede Hotel in Little Rock, Arkansas.

*(Photos courtesy of the Pebley Center at the University of Arkansas-Fort Smith)*

ager of the Laclede Hotel in Little Rock, and as a salesman for Capital Broom Company of Little Rock. The collection contains ledgers showing the transactions Goodbar made for those businesses.

Alice Catherine Gardenhire was born in Livingston, Tennessee, to a prominent family. Her father was Erasmus Lee Gardenhire, a well-known man from Tennessee. In 1836, he volunteered to help Texans fight for their independence from Mexico. After his service in the Texas Revolution, Gardenhire studied law in Livingston, Tennessee, and was elected judge for White County, Tennessee, in 1858. Following secession, Gardenhire was elected to represent Tennessee in the First Confederate Congress from 1862 to 1864. This position allowed him to witness the inauguration of Jefferson Davis as the first (and only) president of the Confederacy. After the war ended, Gardenhire was without an occupation since ex-Confederates were barred from practicing law. He resumed his profession as a lawyer in Sparta, Tennessee, after that law was overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1866. Appointed by Tennessee Governor James D. Porter, Gardenhire accepted the position of judge for the Tennessee Supreme Court Commission in 1874. The Goff Collection holds memoirs written by Erasmus Lee Gardenhire.

Documents in the collection give a glimpse of how Southerners adjusted to life after the war was lost and the Thirteen Amendment abolishing slavery was ratified and became a part of the U.S. Constitution. A letter dated September 30, 1869, sent to A.C. from her cousin Alta from Texas, gives a glimpse of the agony some southerners felt. The letter addresses Alta's dislike of another person who agreed with the abolishment of slavery as she writes, "... I have no use for her & disclaim any relationship with her. Any one that has



**DR. R. M. SOUTHARD**

sympathized with the North I have no regard for them." Ending the letter, Alta expresses her concern about her and Alice's grandmother's adjustment without slaves, asking "How is [she] getting along? Has all of her (N)egroes left her?"

Even though born into a prominent Tennessean family at a time when women were not supposed to have a career other than taking care of home and children, Alice Catherine Gardenhire Goodbar possessed independent and well-advanced views about the role of women in society. Leaving her husband and young daughter

back in Arkansas, A. C. enrolled at the Homeopathic Medical College of Missouri in St. Louis and earned the degree of Doctor of Homeopathic Medicine in 1890. She found support and admiration from Mrs. James P. Eagle (wife of an Arkansas governor) in a letter written to her and in the collection. After graduation, Jesse Franklin and young Alice joined Dr. A.C. Goodbar in St. Louis who by this time was with the St. Louis Children's hospital where she practiced for several years. The Goodbar family moved back to Arkansas in 1900 and A.C. continued her work as a medical doctor. The Goff Collection contains a 1901-1903 ledger in which Dr. A.C. Goodbar made notes about her patients, their treatment and money owed.

On June 3, 1915, A.C. and J. F.'s daughter, Alice Goodbar, married Dr. Richard Murrell Southard, a prominent physician, of Charleston, Arkansas.<sup>1</sup> The couple moved to Fort Smith and resided there for the rest of their lives. Richard had two children from his first marriage, but no further children were born during his marriage to Alice.

Jefferson Davis Southard, Richard's brother, was a prominent physician in Fort Smith. Documents in the Goff Collection show that Dr. J.D. Southard delivered two children to Rosa Lee Reed, better known as Pearl Starr. The children, son Arthur E. Erbach and daughter Jeanette Andrews, were born in St. John's Hospital in Fort Smith, which is today Sparks Regional Medical Center. A spiral notebook has detailed information about Pearl's property purchases and personal life.

Reading through the well-preserved letters, it is clear that Alice Goodbar Southard had a loving relationship with her brothers and their families. Many letters and pictures were sent to her residence in Fort Smith. Due to the



(TOP LEFT) An undated photo of Pearl Starr.

(TOP RIGHT) Postcards Mack Dean sent to his wife, Bertha, while he was traveling the U.S.

(RIGHT) Bertha and Mack Dean in front of their home at 123 First Street in Fort Smith

(Photos courtesy of the Pebley Center at the University of Arkansas-Fort Smith)



well-preserved correspondences, it becomes clear what social status Alice, wife of a prominent medical doctor, had as a woman in the mid-twentieth century. In 1946, Alice made several recommendations to help her nephew, Joseph Ernest Goodbar, in his attempt to become president of the University of Arkansas-Fayetteville, a quest that ultimately fell through. Alice and Joseph exchanged many letters in which the status of the presidency was discussed. The Goff Collection holds many notes that Alice made in preparation for phone calls to the university's president, Arthur M. Harding, and a copy of a letter Alice sent to Dr. Hemphill M. Hosford, dean of the College of Arts & Sciences, to promote her nephew and relate his past achievements.

The Goff Collection contains items belonging to "Big Bertha" Dean, a madam and successor to Miss Laura's bordello at 123 First Street in Fort Smith. Documents include postcards and telegrams that Mack Dean, Bertha's husband, sent to her while he traveled about the United States. Mack Dean suffered from tuberculosis, for which he was treated at the Arkansas Tuberculosis Sanatorium in Booneville, Arkansas, from February 9 to August 26, 1914. Coincidentally, Dr. J. D. Southard was on the Board of Trustees of the sanatorium in Booneville while Dean was treated there. Mack Dean died in 1922, five years into their marriage. Bertha continued to live at 123 First Street until her death in 1948. The status of relationship between Bertha Dean and Jules Bartholomy is unclear, but Bertha left him her property, including the house on 123 First Street, after her passing.<sup>2</sup> Property assessment lists show that Bartholomy lived at the property with Bertha from 1935 to 1940.

Alice Goodbar Southard passed away February 1, 1969, in Charleston, Arkansas.<sup>3</sup> Although it is unclear on how the Goff Collection ended up in Miss Laura's attic, it is clear that in regards to the Goodbar family, Alice's disposition for preserving family, medical practice, and business documents and Lucille Goff's understanding of its historical significance led to the collection being archived in the Pebley Center. Such preservation gives future researchers the opportunity to perceive and understand the past through a window of primary source material.



Christina A. Butterfield from Nuremberg, Germany, is a Middle School Education Major at UAFS and will graduate in May 2015.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Amelia Whitaker Martin, *Physicians and Medicine: Crawford County and Sebastian Counties, Arkansas, 1817-1976: Bicentennial Project* (Sebastian County Medical Society, 1977), 570.

<sup>2</sup> Fort Smith Historical Society, "Bertha Dean," <http://www.fortsmithhistory.org/archive/msbertha.html> (accessed February 8, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> *Physicians and Medicine*, 570.





(Image courtesy of Quay Bell)

# ‘We Are the Dead Game of Trixie Goldman’

*The Life of a Fort Smith Madam through Postcards*

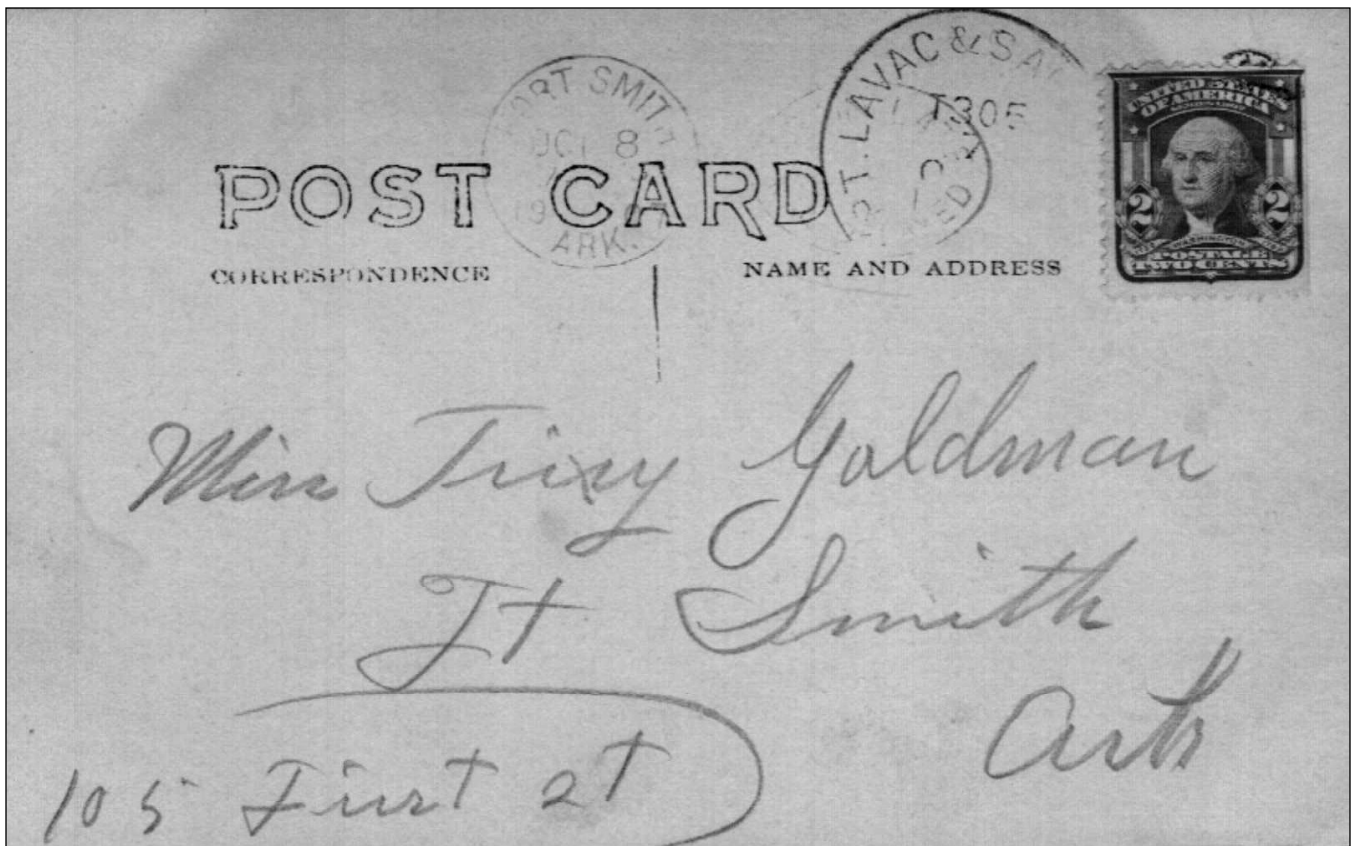
**By Amanda Sexton**

**D**uring the summer of 2014, I began an internship at the Drennen-Scott Historic site. A special collection was given to the historic site, which I handled. The collection was a binder of early twentieth century postcards with a connection to Fort Smith and its bordellos. The binder containing the early postcards consisted of slightly more than 200 cards, most addressed to one woman, who went by several different names throughout the early 1900s. The most prominent name in the collection is Trixie Goldman, spelled every possible way. Little is known about the woman who became Trixie Goldman, or who she was before taking a pseudonym,

other than she was most likely a madam in Fort Smith.

Today “one of the most celebrated bordellos in the Southwest” serves as Fort Smith’s visitors center.<sup>1</sup> The bordello is known as Miss Laura’s, a glamorous place for an unglamorous profession. Miss Laura’s was in the red-light district known as the “row” along Fort Smith’s Front Street. Miss Laura’s was not the only house of ill fame on the row. One house was thought to be owned by Trixie Goldman.

With little information, I started deciphering the early 1900s cursive of several different people and began recognizing patterns—patterns of places, postmarks, handwriting, types of postcards, and people. From there it became a puzzle to solve how all the names and places fit together

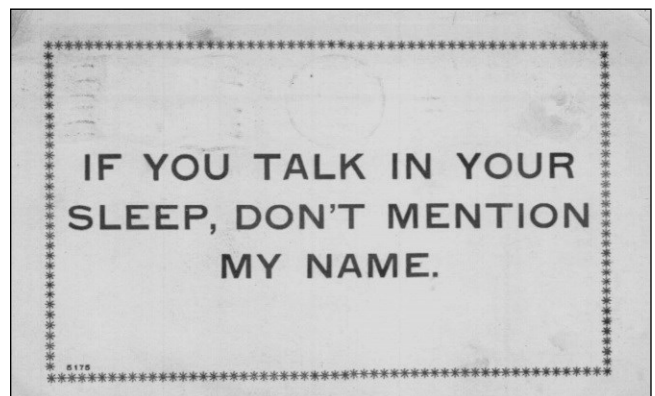


(Image courtesy of Quay Bell)

and connected to one another. The first clue became the link between the different names of the addressee, such as the cards sent to Miss Ida Gilchrest in 1905 and 1906. By late 1906, more cards were being addressed to Trixie Goldman of Fort Smith, Arkansas. The name changes to Mrs. John Bruder, or Mrs. Ida Bruder in 1909.

After cataloging the postcards, the story of Trixie Goldman began to emerge through the senders' words. Chronologically, the names that Trixie Goldman used and her actual name progressed from 1905 to 1910. It appears that Trixie Goldman started life as Ida Gilchrest (confirmed from a postcard from her mother) in Fort Worth, Texas. At one point, she moved to Fort Smith, perhaps to take a job in a brothel, under an assumed name Trixie Goldman. A 1909 message from Marie, quotes, "Send us your new name." Though Trixie Goldman's mailing address tended to be Fort Smith, it's not completely consistent throughout the timeline, changing to Fort Worth, Hot Springs, Little Rock and later San Antonio. The change in address to San Antonio suggests that Gilchrest was her maiden name, because in 1909 she became Mrs. John Bruder. I assumed that Ida Gilchrest, also known as Trixie Goldman, married John Bruder.

After 1910, two people become quite consistent—



(Image courtesy of Quay Bell)

Cousin Nate and a man who signs his name as Red. Cousin Nate sent several cards throughout the time frame of 1905 to 1912. He started out in Fort Worth, same as Ida, and wrote later that he made it to California. If anything, Nate's messages simply displayed life of the times. He invited his cousin Ida to the 1910 World's Fair in San Francisco, where he was marching with the Brewery Workers Union in a parade, and he wrote that he wished

he could make it to Texas for Thanksgiving.

The character known as Red was pointed out by the owner of the collection who believed Red was John Bruder's informant. After Ida appeared to marry John, Red began corresponding with Mr. Bruder. His messages at times seem enigmatic—perhaps Red has discovered the true profession of Ida Gilchrest as Trixie Goldman—a past she may have been trying to conceal. Red's following messages were, "I guess you are dying with the blues," and to John Bruder pleading, "John, why don't you write everything is O.K." Subsequently, Mrs. Bruder's cards become Trixie Goldman's cards again and were sent to Denver, Colorado. Even Cousin Nate wrote that his letters can no longer reach Ida.

Who knows if Trixie Goldman was a madam at all? A small log book labeled Memorandum Notebook at the Fort Smith Museum of History, contains lists of madams and the girls who worked in their houses. It is my assumption that the handwritten names at the top of the pages represents madams and below them are their employees. This is the first time Trixie Goldman appears, and her name is scribbled across the top (spelled Trixie), adjacent to Laura Ziegler of Miss Laura's. The list of girls below Goldman coincides with names of the girls on the postcards. This is the only reference to Goldman in the entire book. Later, she was replaced by Bee Lester, but the list of girls are the same as under Goldman's. According to the 1906 Fort Smith Directory, Beatrice Lester lived at 105 First Street, Fort Smith, Arkansas. Trixie Goldman received her mail at that same address while working in Fort Smith.

The postcards make clear that Lester, who often signed her cards simply as Bee, corresponded with Goldman during the time Trixie was absent, between 1907 and 1909. Bee was Trixie's most frequent pen pal. She wrote notes to Trixie about outfits she was shipping via Wells Fargo, bills that hadn't been paid, and the usual inquiry of the well-being of a missed friend. In the collection of postcards is an unsigned, almost cryptic message. The language and handwriting suggests that the sender may have been Bee. The message states, "We the people, we are the dead game of Trixie Goldman."

The row consisted of several gambling halls, restaurants, saloons, and bordellos along the river's edge. The most notable names to come from the row were Laura Zeigler and Pearl Starr, daughter of Belle Starr. Lack of documentation on the women of the row led them to be represented by more fictitious, romantic portrayals of prostitutes like the Miss Kitty-type in the popular *Gunsmoke* television series. In general, based on U.S. Census records, women working as prostitutes were typically white, in their early twenties, and rarely worked more than four years.<sup>2</sup> The time frame of Goldman's postcards supports that she may have not been in the profession long—

the bulk of the cards received were in 1907 to 1911. However, her stint as madam appears to be an even shorter lived role. In the Memorandum Notebook her name is replaced by Bee Lester's. The following year, the postcards are sent to Goldman in Little Rock, Hot Springs, and Fort Worth.

At the time Trixie Goldman was working at 105 First Street, the Fort Smith City Council passed an ordinance, legalizing prostitution within the row, and defining boundaries of prostitution.<sup>3</sup> According to a 1907 Police Docket, getting caught outside of the boundaries led to a fine of ten dollars for using a room for immoral purposes. Prostitution was confined to the row, and men under twenty-one were not allowed into the houses, while women under eighteen were not allowed to work in one. Bi-monthly health inspections by a health officer were required for both the madams and the working girls.

"You had to act as if you didn't know it existed, though everyone knew about it," Thyra Samter Winslow wrote.<sup>4</sup> Winslow was an author originally from Fort Smith, who wrote for the *New Yorker* and eventually did screenwriting in the 1930s. Published in *The New Yorker* in 1934, her story *Ruby Moon*, Winslow writes about a madam, who she disguises as Ruby Moon. Her vague description of Ruby Moon, makes it hard to identify who she might be based on—it could be Trixie Goldman, or perhaps a combination of several women belonging to the row. Winslow describes the women as wearing bright colors and large hats, a couple of decades out of fashion, a detail she overlooked as a young woman, but realized this was how they marked themselves. She would rush to the New York Store (a fictionalized Boston Store) to hear the latest gossip about the women of the row.

The case of Trixie Goldman leads to more questions than answers. The postcards do give an insight into the life of a madam in the early twentieth century. For most of the girls, it was only a stage of life.



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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Fort Smith Convention & Visitors Bureau. Miss Laura's Visitor Center. Fort Smith: Fort Smith Convention & Visitor's Bureau, 2014. Visitor Brochure.

<sup>2</sup> Benjamin Boulden. *Living Under a Red Light: Fort Smith's Bordello Row, 1898 to 1948* (1994), 8.

<sup>3</sup> Boulden, 16.

<sup>4</sup> Thyra Samter Winslow, "Ruby Moon," *The New Yorker*, June 28, 1934, 52.

# Wealth, Slaves, and John Drennen

*A look at an antebellum Arkansas businessman*

**By Katie Dunn**

**S**lavery existed in the United States well into the nineteenth-century, ending with the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution in December 1865. While the ethical issues of slavery and its long-lasting societal influences have been researched and documented, in order to fully understand the impact of slavery, the historian must take into account the economic importance of the business of slaves. Alfred Conrad and John Meyer state in *The Economics of Slavery in the Ante Bellum South* that the “outstanding economic characteristics of southern agriculture before the Civil War were a high degree of specialization and virtually exclusive reliance on a slave labor force.”<sup>1</sup> But was slave ownership vital to success and wealth for all individuals in the South? Other economic pursuits, such as mercantile stores and banking resulted in economic success for some individuals. And then there were still others whose wealth stemmed from a combination of traditional business pursuits and slaveholding. Such is the case of John Drennen, an early Arkansas entrepreneur. One of the key founders of Van Buren, Arkansas, Drennen served in the state legislature, was appointed as federal Indian agent for the Choctaw, and had interest in or held positions in many businesses, one of which was a working plantation that ran on slave labor.<sup>2</sup> By examining the life and economic pursuits of John Drennen, this research will focus on the importance of slaves as a component of Drennen’s financial success.

To aid in examining John Drennen’s financial pursuits, it is important to understand the man himself. Drennen was born in Pennsylvania in 1801. He married Emily Deadrick Stuart in 1826 and later moved to Nashville, Tennessee, where three daughters were born. Eventually, the family settled in Crawford County, Arkansas, in the early 1830s. Drennen, along with his business partner and brother-in-law David Thompson purchased 265 acres from Thomas and David Phillips and laid out the plans for the city of Van Buren. Alt-

hough the Phillips brothers had already established a community, Drennen and Thompson were responsible for the town’s growth. In 1844, Drennen’s wife died, and he later married Kate Humphry of Chicot County on March 28, 1848. They had three sons, two of whom died as young adults. While traveling to Virginia, Drennen was stricken with yellow fever at Indianapolis, Indiana, and died on September 27, 1855. His burial site is located in the Fairview Cemetery on land that he donated to the city of Van Buren.<sup>3</sup>

Soon after arriving in Crawford County, Drennen emerged as a civic leader and prominent figure. Representing Crawford County at the constitutional convention in 1835, Drennen helped to write the first constitution for Arkansas. The following year Arkansas became a state, and John Drennen was elected as a representative to the First General Assembly of the state of Arkansas.<sup>4</sup> Beginning in 1849, Drennen was appointed as the Choctaw Agent and later as acting superintendent of Indian Affairs of the Western Territory. He was responsible for the Cherokee Indian tribal membership roll known as the Drennen Roll.<sup>5</sup> While Drennen probably never received extra pay for the work he did as superintendent, the position was most likely used for financial gain. The superintendent of Indian Affairs had the authority to give contracts on behalf of the United States government. This meant that Drennen could decide who would sell food, clothing, and supplies for building homes, as well as who would provide transportation for the tribes as they were removed. Drennen may or may not have profited directly from the sales of these items; he most likely did profit indirectly. Drennen did sell some supplies for the removal of the Indians, and had an interest in a store at Fort Gibson with his son-in-law Charles Scott, where some of the tribes were required to pick up their money from the government; the designation of Fort Gibson as the site for the dispersal of the money was by Drennen.<sup>6</sup>

Drennen served as postmaster for Van Buren from 1836 to 1843. He obtained subscriptions from the Dwight and Van Buren Turnpike Company that was

organized in 1838, and he was in charge of the books of the Arkansas Mining and Manufacturing Company. In 1840, Drennen was elected a director of a real estate bank in Van Buren.<sup>7</sup> This would prove to be advantageous as Drennen purchased real estate.<sup>8</sup> In June 1846, Drennen was elected captain for the Arkansas Frontier Guards, an infantry company that later became cavalry. During the Mexican War, he was given the rank of colonel. While no record of payment for this service has yet been discovered, Drennen did furnish the company with supplies, which most likely was for profit.<sup>9</sup> Drennen served as the first president of the Little Rock-Fort Smith railway, which was organized in 1853.<sup>10</sup> As with many of the other positions mentioned above, no records have been located that indicate the monetary compensation for Drennen's services; however, these positions do show that Drennen was a prominent figure in early Arkansas and was well-connected in the business world of his time.

In addition to these various positions, Drennen was involved in real estate and agricultural endeavors. Prior to moving to Arkansas, Drennen and his brother-in-law David Thompson owned a mercantile business in Tennessee. Sometime in 1830, they arrived and settled in Little Rock, Arkansas. By November 1831, "they advertised a large stock of goods at Little Rock and Washington, Hempstead county [sic]." By 1832, the business was sold to Edward Cunningham of Van Buren, who apparently was a business partner. It is not clear if the Drennens settled in Columbus first and then moved to Van Buren, which was nearby, but an advertisement states that Drennen was a member of the firm of John Henry and Company at Columbus.<sup>11</sup> In addition, Drennen cleared some of the land at Columbus and sold firewood to steamboats for their boilers as they traveled down the Arkansas River. This land was used for farming; in 1848, the land served as a campground to those going west during the gold rush. No other records have been found concerning the Columbus business, but it may have continued at least until 1840, when the community was destroyed in a flood of the Arkansas River.<sup>12</sup>

In 1836, Drennen and Thompson purchased the ferry boat Van Buren from Thomas Phillips that was used to carry passengers, produce, the mail and the Butterfield Stage across the Arkansas River. Since there was no bridge, the river had to be crossed by ferry, and the location of Drennen's ferry made traveling between Van Buren and Fort Smith convenient. The Butterfield Stage carried both passengers and the mail, so along with regular fares paid by individuals, Drennen profited from a government contract for the stage's passage as well.

Drennen's son-in-law, Charles Scott, had a contract with an individual who was responsible for the transportation of mail within the state. Since Scott later controlled much of Drennen's estate, it is likely that Drennen was contracted with the same person. In addition, Drennen owned a steamboat, which he contracted for passengers and freight. The steamboat was used to transport cotton grown on Drennen's plantation in Chicot County to New Orleans. It then brought back goods to sell in his Van Buren mercantile business.<sup>13</sup>

Real estate was another source of wealth for John Drennen. He purchased, sold, and leased much land during his lifetime. Drennen and Thompson purchased the site of Van Buren in 1836 from Thomas Phillip for \$11,000. In 1838, Van Buren was named the county seat; Drennen and Thompson donated land to build a courthouse and town square, and Drennen donated a log cabin courthouse.<sup>14</sup> These gifts guaranteed Van Buren as the county seat, making Drennen's land there more valuable. In addition, he gave land in Lake Village for the county seat and for Episcopalian and Catholic churches and cemeteries.<sup>15</sup> It is reasonable to conclude that Drennen had ample land, even extra if he could afford to donate tracts of it.

Records show that Drennen owned land in twenty-seven Arkansas counties.<sup>16</sup> Some of his land holdings and purchases between the years 1831 and 1839 include: 160 acres in Mathers Bend for \$1,066.66, land in Pulaski County, eighty acres in Crawford County, and land for \$1,000 in Fayetteville, along with several other parcels.<sup>17</sup> He acquired 160 acres in St. Francis and 160 acres in Conway County through tax sales for \$16.80 and \$15.66 respectively.<sup>18</sup> In addition, he purchased sixty acres in St. Francis County and 160 acres in Monroe County through tax sales.<sup>19</sup> Tax records reveal that Drennen owned a little more than 130 acres in Pope County.<sup>20</sup> Drennen owned land in Indiana, Texas, and Tennessee as well.<sup>21</sup>

A civic leader, government employee, and entrepreneur, John Drennen was also a slaveholder. While his residence in Van Buren was not likely used for large scale agriculture, Drennen did own acreage south of the city that was used for livestock. In fact, he is identified as a principal raiser of fine stock in the county. The 1836 census lists him as the owner of four horses and mules, as well as ten head of cattle. The 1840 census data reveals that Drennen owned twenty slaves. Between 1840 and 1860, twelve to twenty slaves were kept in Van Buren. Sources state that these slaves were occupied with caring for the family and children, working the vegetable gardens and fruit trees located at the residence, and raising livestock.<sup>22</sup> There is documenta-



tion of one female slave who was occupied with caring for the Drennen's clothing and serving as a personal maid to Mrs. Drennen. According to the account, this female traveled with the Drennens to Pittsburgh in 1850, where she escaped to freedom via the Underground Railroad.<sup>23</sup>

Along with slaves held in Crawford County, Drennen owned slaves in Chicot County, Arkansas. Drennen was a prominent planter there and owned the Deerfield Plantation, later renamed Drennen Dale, which he purchased in 1836.<sup>24</sup> Based on the existing tax records, during Drennen's lifetime, the peak of the estate is estimated at 1,589 acres with forty-two slaves.<sup>25</sup> In order to be considered a plantation, a farm had to employ an overseer and had to include at least twenty-five slaves.<sup>26</sup> Drennen met the criteria in Chicot County and employed an overseer by the name of John D. Heard.<sup>27</sup> The role of the overseer depended on the size of the plantation and the number of slaves, as well as the owner's participation in the operation and his actual presence there. An overseer might be responsible for the full care of plantation and slaves, including seeing to their personal needs, supervision, and punishment, as well as cultivating the crops.<sup>28</sup> While the 1850 slave schedule does not list the number of slave houses owned by an individual slave owner, the 1860 schedule does. In Chicot County, the estate of John Drennen had twelve slave houses for sixty-five slaves.<sup>29</sup> Drennen had no home of record in Chicot County, and he is listed as a non-resident in the tax records for several years, it is likely that his overseer acted more as the plantation manager than Drennen himself did.

In order to analyze John Drennen's economic success with slaveholding, one must first examine the world in which he lived and worked. In their study of economic factors in the South during and after the antebellum period in *Would Slavery Have Survived without the Civil War?* historians Peter Coclanis and Stanley Engerman found that although slaves accounted for a large percentage of the population, most southerners were not slaveholders.

One always has to keep in mind, for example, that although slaves constituted 35-40 percent of the South's population in 1860, three quarters of free households held no slaves; that among those households that did hold slaves, only 15 or 20 percent held twenty or more slaves—the lower-bound threshold for planter status—which means that planter households constituted only about 3.5-5 percent of free households in the region. More-

over, the median number of slaves held in 1850 was between about 4 and 6.<sup>30</sup>

Considering these statistics, Drennen's status as a planter in Chicot County, along with the slaves he kept in Crawford County, show that Drennen was a prominent business figure in Arkansas.

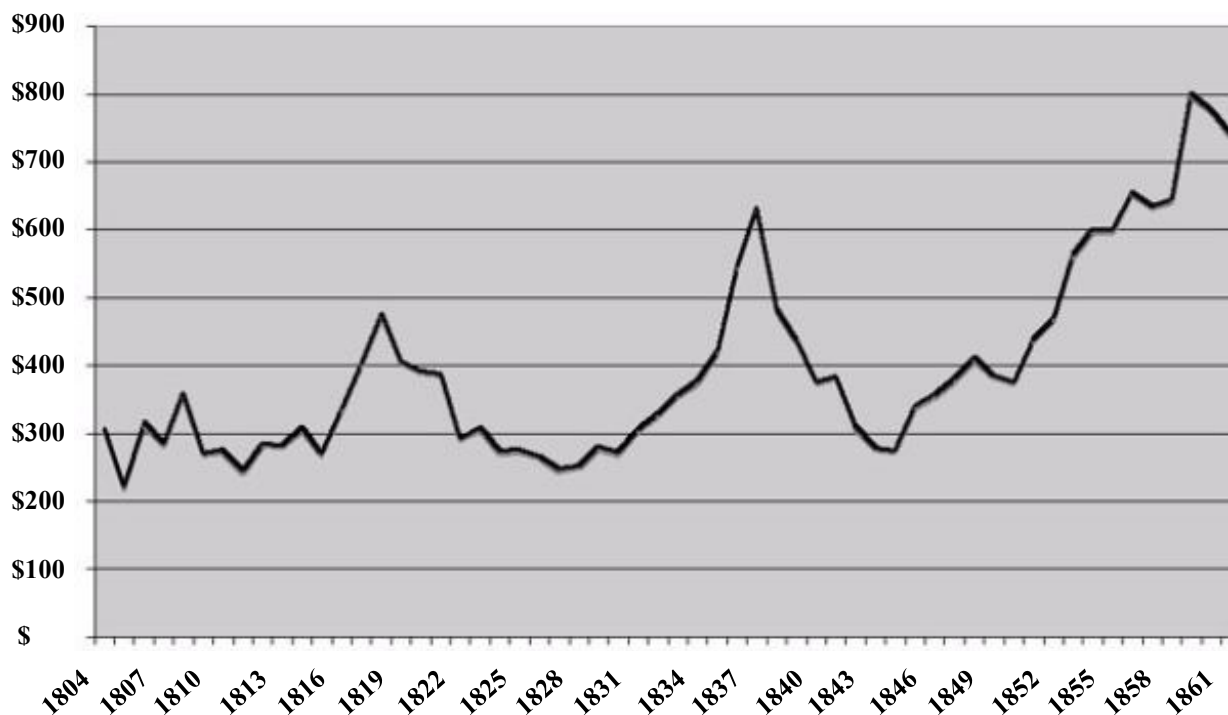
Early laws accentuated and upheld the slave as a piece of property, therefore assigning value to them.<sup>31</sup> Slaves, along with their children, were property of their owners until they died or were sold. The sale of a slave was considered a contract, with the buyer maintaining the right to sue the seller if the slave was sold under false pretenses.<sup>32</sup> Slaves could be taxed as personal estate, willed, deeded, given as gifts, or emancipated by the owner. Emancipated slaves, however, could be seized to pay a debt if the commitment was made by the owner before they freed the slave.<sup>33</sup> A "Negro-stealing" law passed in 1829 established the punishment for theft of a slave as death, the same punishment for valuable animals such as a horse or mule. Laws known as slave codes required that runaway slaves be returned to their owners. As previously mentioned, Mrs. Drennen's personal maid escaped to freedom in Pittsburgh. Drennen placed an advertisement in a newspaper for the "runaway slave." However, she was never returned, and in his mind, Drennen had lost a valuable asset.<sup>34</sup>

According to Samuel H. Williamson and Louis P. Cain in *Measuring Slavery in 2011 Dollars*, there were approximately four million slaves in the United States in 1860, and the average market value per slave was around \$800. That is average. Some top slaves sold for twice that amount and some for much less. Nevertheless, at the average price, Drennen's slave holdings would amount to approximately \$130,000 in today's money, and double his holdings from just fourteen years earlier. Research supports that slaves were considered a valuable investment given the purchase price and the steady increase of market value during the decade of the 1850s as the chart in *Figure 1* shows. When purchasing a slave, however, the buyer had considerations in addition to price. The slave represented an expected output of labor over his lifetime, which was influenced by age, sex, health, physical condition, skills, and location. Possible offspring was a factor to consider when purchasing a female slave.<sup>35</sup> Typically, male slaves were worth more than female slaves of the same age. In comparison, a slave child of about eight was worth more than a slave of middle age, and if a slave possessed a special skill, he or she could be worth even more.<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, a slaveholder had to calcu-

**Figure 1**

**AVERAGE PRICE OF A SLAVE 1804-1861  
CURRENT DOLLARS**

Actual prices for slaves in 1860 dollars ranged from \$2,000 to \$200. This chart shows the fluctuations of slave prices which, like land values, followed the general economic climate of the year. The decade of the 1850s was steadily upward on slave prices because of the greater demand for cotton in those years.



Source: Historical Statistics, Table Bb212. Average Slave Price, found in Williamson, Samuel H., and Louis P. Cain. "Measuring Worth - Measuring the Value of a Slave." *Measuring Worth - Measuring the Value of a Slave*. January 1, 2014. Accessed October 15, 2014. <http://www.measuringworth.com/slavery.php>.

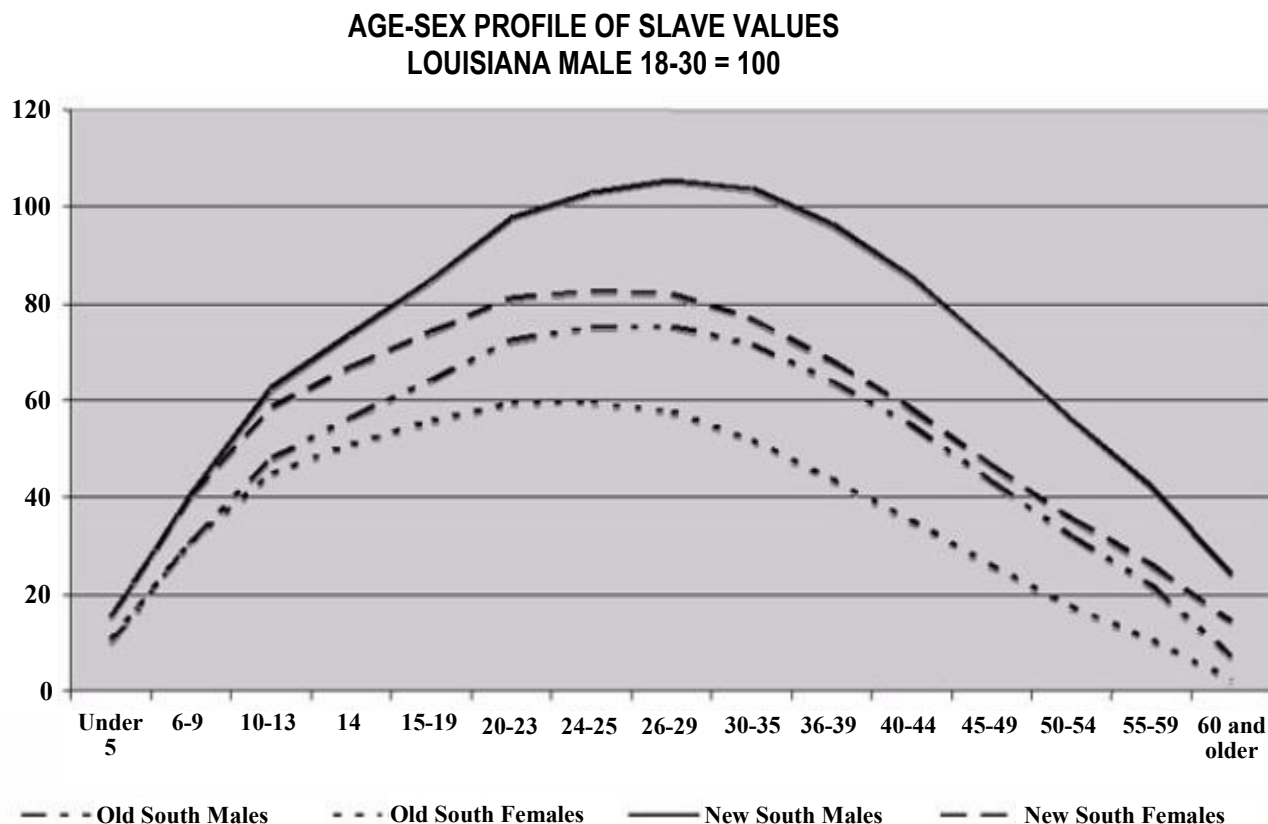
late the costs involved in keeping a slave, such as food, clothing, and shelter, as well as the loss of value as the slave aged (See *Figure 2*). It is estimated that the expenses associated with keeping one field hand was half the value of the revenue the slaveholder received from the slave's labor. Given this information, it is understandable that most economic historians consider slavery profitable.<sup>37</sup> According to Robert William Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman in *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery*, "The purchase of a slave was generally a highly profitable investment which yielded rates of return that compared favorably with the most outstanding investment opportunities in manufacturing."<sup>38</sup>

Drennen records show the exchange of money for the purchase of slaves. Among the Drennen-Scott family papers are deeds that transfer slaves along with land, as well as bills of sale for the purchase of slaves themselves.<sup>39</sup> A bill of sale dated July 26, 1849, for the sale

of one of Drennen's slaves indicates the purchase price was \$500.<sup>40</sup> Based on Williams' findings, this would be approximately \$15,000 in today's money.<sup>41</sup> That amount of monetary value would indicate that slaveholding was profitable. What is more difficult to determine is the worth of the labor provided by those slaves. To date, the researcher has found no Drennen records that contain the amount of money saved by using slave labor or sources that would indicate the cost of keeping slaves. Given the extent of Drennen's business pursuits, it is logical to conclude that slaves would not have been bought or kept if the practice had not been profitable.<sup>42</sup>

As in the rest of the South, slavery was a "vital and growing institution during its existence in Arkansas."<sup>43</sup> Arkansas territory was created in 1819; a year later when the first federal census was taken, the population was 14,273. Of those counted, 1,617 were slaves. Although most people in Arkansas were engaged in agriculture, the majority of farms were small and worked by

**Figure 2**



Source:: Historical Statistics, Table Bb215-218. Index of slave values, by age, sex, and region: 1850. All the values are indexed to that of Louisiana males aged 18-30, found in Williamson, Samuel H., and Louis P. Cain. "Measuring Worth - Measuring the Value of a Slave." *Measuring Worth - Measuring the Value of a Slave*. January 1, 2014. Accessed October 15, 2014. <http://www.measuringworth.com/slavery.php>.

the family without the help of slave labor. As noted above, with the rest of the South, the majority of Arkansans were not slaveholders or members of slaveholding families. Census records show that the average was a little more than one slave for every two families counted. By 1830, the total slave population in Arkansas had risen to 4,576, three times the number a decade earlier, with the total population increasing two times. This means that the average number of slaves to slaveholders did increase during the decade.<sup>44</sup> When Arkansas achieved statehood in 1836, it entered as a slave state. It was during this period that John Drennen moved to Arkansas.<sup>45</sup>

Although John Drennen had land holdings throughout the state, the only known records of Drennen as a slaveholder are found in Crawford and Chicot County. The 1830 census of Crawford County lists 352 slaves residing there; the county ranked third in the state in slave population at the time. That same year shows that Chicot County, located in southern Arkansas along the Mississippi River, ranked low in slave population. By 1850, those population

trends would flip with Chicot County increasing to rank second in slave numbers while Crawford County fell down in rank. One reason for the change is that emigration patterns had shifted by this time. While the northwestern and river valley regions were settled first, the lowlands did not attract as many settlers until agriculture activities, especially cotton production, became a profitable economic endeavor. This is evidenced by the changes in slave population in Chicot County. There were more slaves than whites by 1860, giving a 33:1 ratio of slaves to whites. In Crawford County, the slave population actually decreased by about eighty between 1850 and 1860, from 933 to 858.<sup>46</sup> By 1860, the population of Arkansas had grown to 435,450, while the total slave population was 111,115.<sup>47</sup> Still, only thirteen percent of the population were actually slaveholders.<sup>48</sup>

In order to determine the economic importance or impact of slaveholding to John Drennen, tax records for Crawford and Chicot County have been explored. Tax records for Drennen in Crawford County are available

### Figures 3 and 4

Columns in which John Drennen appears,  
not listed above for Crawford County

\*1847: All household furniture over \$200 in  
value: 300

\*1847: Value of gold watches and jewelry of  
every kind: 100

### Crawford County Tax Records 1834-1838

|      | Dwelling<br>houses | Slaves over<br>10 years old | Pleasure<br>carriages | Horses and<br>mules | Cattle | Slaves between<br>16 and 45 years<br>old | Poll tax |
|------|--------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|--------|--|----------|
| 1834 | 200                | 5                           | 1                     | 4                   | 9      | 4  | 25       |
| 1835 | 100                | 5                           | 1                     | 4                   | 0      | 4  | 25       |
| 1836 | N/A                | 2                           | 0                     | 4                   | 10     | 2  | 25       |
| 1837 |                    |                             |                       |                     |        |  |          |
| 1838 |                    |                             |                       |                     |        |  |          |

### Crawford County Tax Records 1839-1855

|      | No. of Acres | Total Value of Land | No. of Town Lots | Value of Town Lots and<br>Improvements | No. of Slaves over 8 and<br>Under 60 yrs. of age | Value of Slaves | No. of Horses over 3<br>yrs. old | Value of Horses | No. of Mules over<br>2 yrs. old | Value of Mules | No. of Jacks & Jennies<br>over 2 yrs. old |
|------|--------------|---------------------|------------------|--|--|-----------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------|----------------|---|
| 1839 | 102          | \$11,744            | 5                | \$5,600                                | 7  | \$4,200         | 7                                | \$525           |                                 |                |   |
| 1840 | 102          | \$11,744            | 5                | \$5,600                                | 7  | \$4,200         |                                  |                 |                                 |                |   |
| 1841 |              | \$12,194            | 5                | \$5,600                                | 9  | \$5,600         |                                  |                 |                                 |                |   |
| 1842 |              | \$10,527            | 5                | \$5,600                                | 19   | \$8,400         | 12                               | \$500           | 1                               | \$40           |   |
| 1843 |              | \$11,192            | 11               | \$2,700                                | 18   | \$6,300         | 10                               | \$500           | 2                               | \$50           | 1   |
| 1844 |              | \$11,602            | 11               | \$2,700                                | 18   | \$6,300         | 10                               | \$300           |                                 |                | 1   |
| 1845 |              | \$11,800            | 186              | \$6,075                                | 18   | \$6,300         | 10                               | \$300           |                                 |                |   |
| 1846 |              | \$10,269            | 182              | \$5,475                                | 16   | \$5000          |                                  |                 |                                 |                |   |
| 1847 |              | \$8,893             | 182              | \$5,475                                | 21   | \$7,350         | 6                                | \$20            | 5                               | \$175          |   |
| 1848 |              |                     |                  |  |  |                 |                                  |                 |                                 |                |   |
| 1849 |              |                     |                  |  | 20   | \$6,450         |                                  |                 |                                 |                |   |
| 1850 |              | \$8,756             | 305              | \$3,400                                | 5  | \$1,750         |                                  |                 |                                 |                |   |
| 1851 |              | \$8,756             | 302              | \$2,600                                |  |                 |                                  |                 |                                 |                |   |
| 1852 |              |                     |                  |  |  |                 |                                  |                 |                                 |                |   |
| 1853 |              |                     |                  |  |  |                 |                                  |                 |                                 |                |   |
| 1854 |              | \$8,555             | 380              | \$8,700                                | 3,   | \$2,400         | 2                                | \$150           |                                 |                |   |
| 1855 |              | \$8,555             | 331              | \$7,448                                | 3  | \$2,400         | 4                                | \$400           |                                 |                |   |

from 1834 to 1855, the year of his death, with the exception of years 1837, 1838, 1848, 1852, and 1853. These records give an indication of Drennen's finances and changes in his wealth over time. Drennen first appears in the Crawford County tax records in 1834. The records list him as having a dwelling house valued at \$200, five slaves over ten years old, no wheeled carriage, four horses and mules, nine cattle, four slaves between sixteen and forty-five years old, and paid a poll tax of twenty-five dollars.

The records show that Drennen had steady economic growth in Crawford County. In 1839, tax records list Drennen's land valued at \$1,177, town lots and improvements as \$5,600, seven slaves over eight and under sixty years of age at \$4,200. In addition, Drennen had seven horses or mares over three years old valued at \$525, thirty neat (domesticated) cattle over three years old valued at \$450. The total value of Drennen's property for the year was \$22,549.45. In 1845, Drennen's land was worth \$11,602 and he owned eighteen slaves valued at \$6,300. For that year, his total taxable property was \$21,262. Drennen consistently held total taxable property values in the \$20,000 range from the period of the 1840s until the year of his death in 1855, with the exception of only a few years. When he died of an accident in Illinois, Drennen had three slaves valued at \$2,400 and his total value of taxable property in Crawford County was \$19,858.<sup>49</sup>

Drennen first appeared in the Chicot County tax records in 1841. Records are not available for 1846, 1848, and 1849 in Chicot County.<sup>50</sup> In 1841 Drennen had 160 acres valued at \$960, but was not listed as owning any slaves. Drennen shows a slower progression in Chicot County with no real improvements on his property until 1850. In that year, he is listed as owning twenty-three slaves valued at \$11,500. A few years later in 1853, Drennen's property had grown to thirty-eight slaves valued at \$26,600 and a total value of taxable property of \$46,075. In 1855 the records list Drennen as owning forty slaves, five horses, twenty-one mules and forty cattle. His total taxable property was \$59,860.<sup>51</sup> It is interesting to note that the first year John Drennen showed significant growth in Chicot County, 1850, was a year that the county was the leading cotton producer in Arkansas.<sup>52</sup> According to University of Arkansas-Fort Smith Professor Thomas Wing, Drennen's principal crop produced in Chicot County was cotton.<sup>53</sup>

To establish a more complete picture of Drennen's worth, his total taxable property values were combined for the years 1841, 1845, 1850, and 1855. In addition, total taxable property was compared with the value of the slaves for that year. These comparisons show the progression of his taxable wealth and how much of that wealth was attributed to slaves, when information was provided. By 1841, Drennen's first year on the Chicot County tax records, he was already es-

tablished as a land and slave owner in Crawford County. In 1841 in Crawford County, he had nine slaves worth \$5,600 with his total value of taxable property being \$12,194. That same year Chicot County tax records show Drennen's property value as \$960. The combined total value of taxable property for the two counties in 1841 is \$13,154 with his slaves making up approximately forty-three percent of his wealth in property.

In 1845 Crawford County, Drennen's land was worth \$11,602, and he had eighteen slaves valued at \$6,300, with a total value of \$21,262. In Chicot County, Drennen's total taxable property is listed as \$960. When combining this value with the one listed in Crawford County, Drennen's overall taxable property for the two counties in 1845 is \$22,222. His slaves were approximately twenty-eight percent of his overall property.

In 1850, Crawford County tax records show that Drennen had five slaves valued at \$1,750 and a total taxable property value of \$11,356. In that same year in Chicot County, he had twenty-three slaves worth \$11,500 and his total value of taxable property was \$21,000. For 1850, his combined total value of taxable property was \$32,356 with slaves making up forty-one percent of his taxable property.

At the time of his death in 1855, Drennen was listed as having a total value of taxable property of \$19,858 in Crawford County and \$59,650 in Chicot County. Combined, his wealth based on these tax records was \$79,508 at the time of his death. His slaves made up \$27,260 of his total taxable property, or approximately thirty-four percent. Using the nominal GDP per capita value ("the 'average' per-person output of the economy in the prices of the current year"), this is approximately \$27,600,000 in today's money as of the year 2011.<sup>54</sup>

Determining the actual importance of slaves to Drennen's wealth is complicated. The tax records used represent only a percentage of the actual value of the property. In addition, according to Williamson and Cain in *Measuring Slavery in 2011 Dollars*, there are multiple values that can be used, such as the real price, labor value, and economic status when computing the value of slaves. The "real price" was used to compare the cost of buying a slave in the year 2011 "by multiplying the value in the past by the increase in the consumer price index (CPI)." This value is not an exact measure, however, since there were no national surveys on the average consumer available to use. Using the value of \$400 for the price of a slave in 1850, Williamson states that the value is the equivalent of approximately \$12,000 in the year 2011. Since the average price of a slave was above \$400, it is more equal to \$20,000 in today's money; however this does not account for the value of a slave's labor. When thinking about the labor services of a slave, a labor or income value is used



to measure the worth. According to Williamson, \$400 in 1850 would be \$82,000 today in labor value. In terms of economic status, \$400 in 1850 would be \$175,000 in today's money. Economic status often refers to "the ability to purchase expensive goods," such as an expensive car. "The average slave price in 1850 was roughly equal to the average price of a house, so the purchase of even one slave would have given the purchaser some status."<sup>55</sup> Regardless of which measure is used to evaluate the worth of Drennen's slaves, the data at this time indicates that they were a significant portion of his wealth and gave him substantial economic status.

While the research does support that John Drennen was a successful civic leader, businessman, and slaveholder, a complete picture of Drennen's wealth is still lacking. The research does not fully indicate the actual contribution slaveholding made to his overall business success. Questions remain about how much of his wealth came from his roles as civil servant, as well as entrepreneur and real estate dealer. In addition, the research to date only includes tax records pertaining to Crawford and Chicot counties. Drennen owned land in numerous counties in Arkansas, as well as in other states, which only contributed to his overall wealth. Further research is needed to fully establish the impact slaveholding had on his wealth. More records to be explored include tax and land records for the counties in which Drennen owned land.

Looking into tax records and documents of Drennen's business partners, such as Charles Scott and David Thompson, might also shed more light on Drennen's financial successes or failures. In addition, the Agricultural Census for 1850 and 1860, along with cotton receipts from Drennen's plantation in Chicot County, would indicate his profits there. Receipts for the sale of cotton bales from the Chicot County plantation, along with other family records are located in the University of Texas at Austin archives. If this information can be found and added, the contribution of his slaves as a percentage of John Drennen's total worth may have to be adjusted.



Katie Dunn is from Mulberry and is a graduating senior in history at University of Arkansas–Fort Smith. She plans on attending graduate school next year.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Alfred H. Conrad and John R. Meyer, "The Economics of Slavery in the Ante Bellum South." *The Journal of Political Economy* 66, no.2 (1958), 95.
- <sup>2</sup> Thomas Wing, Director of the Drennen-Scott Historic site, Interviewed by author, Van Buren, Arkansas, Drennen-Scott Historic Site, October 29, 2014. Interview in possession of

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- <sup>3</sup> Clara B. Eno, *History of Crawford County, Arkansas*. Van Buren, Arkansas: Press Argus, 1950, 57.
- <sup>4</sup> Milner and Associates. 2006. Drennen – Scott Historic Site Property Report. John Milner & Associates Inc. House Historic Site Reference Manual, Located at Drennen – Scott House, Van Buren, Arkansas, 54-56, timeline.
- <sup>5</sup> Eno, 57.
- <sup>6</sup> Wing Interview.
- <sup>7</sup> Eno, 56.
- <sup>8</sup> Wing Interview.
- <sup>9</sup> Milner and Associates, Timeline.
- <sup>10</sup> Eula Hopkins and Wanda M. Gray, eds. *History of Crawford County, Arkansas*. Van Buren: Historical Preservation Association of Crawford County, 2001, 230.
- <sup>11</sup> Eno, 55-56.
- <sup>12</sup> Wing Interview.
- <sup>13</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>14</sup> Eula Hopkins and Wanda M. Gray, 101.
- <sup>15</sup> Brannon, Shelia Ferrell, *A Tribute to Chicot County*. Vol. 1. 2000, 54, 168.
- <sup>16</sup> Wing Interview.
- <sup>17</sup> Deed dated November 9, 1835; deed dated November 14, 1831; deed dated September 24 between George Washington Know and John Drennen. Charles Scott Papers. Digital copy provided by Thomas Wing. Deed dated 1838. Charles Scott Papers. Digital copy provided by Thomas Wing.
- <sup>18</sup> Tax sale deeds to John Drennen from state of Arkansas dated February 8, 1841. Charles Scott Papers. Digital copy provided by Thomas Wing.
- <sup>19</sup> Tax sale deed to Drennen February 8, 1841. Charles Scott Papers. Digital copy provided by Tom Wing.
- <sup>20</sup> 1850 Census of Chicot County retrieved from [www.Argenweb.net/pope/delinquent.htm](http://www.Argenweb.net/pope/delinquent.htm).
- <sup>21</sup> Wing interview.
- <sup>22</sup> Milner and Associates, 54.
- <sup>23</sup> University of Pittsburgh. 2009. "The Escape of the Drennen Slave Girl." *Fugitive Slave Laws and Great Escapes. Free at Last? Slavery in Pittsburgh in the 18th and 19th Centuries*.
- <sup>24</sup> Wing Interview.
- <sup>25</sup> Chicot County Tax Record, 1829-1855, Microfilm Roll 68, Arkansas History Commission, Little Rock, Arkansas.
- <sup>26</sup> Taylor, Orville W. 1958, *Negro Slavery in Arkansas*, Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 92.
- <sup>27</sup> Seventh Census of the United States, 1850: Arkansas, Chicot County.
- <sup>28</sup> Taylor, 103.
- <sup>29</sup> Population Schedules of the Eighth Census of the United States, 1850 -1860: Arkansas, Chicot County, Microcopy 653, Roll 53, National Archives.
- <sup>30</sup> Coclanis, Peter A., and Stanley L. Engerman. "Would Slav-

ery have Survived without the Civil War?" *Southern Cultures* 19, 2 (2013): 66-90, 70.

<sup>31</sup> Taylor, 30.

<sup>32</sup> Williamson, Samuel H., and Louis P. Cain, "Measuring Worth - Measuring Slavery in 2011 Dollars." *Measuring Worth - Measuring the Value of a Slave*, January 1, 2014.

<sup>33</sup> Taylor, 30 – 32, 230.

<sup>34</sup> Wing Interview.

<sup>35</sup> Williamson and Cain, "Measuring Slavery in 2011 Dollars."

<sup>36</sup> Taylor, 81.

<sup>37</sup> Williamson and Cain, "Measuring Slavery in 2011 Dollars."

<sup>38</sup> Robert William Fogel and Stanley L. Engerman. *Time on the Cross: The Economics of American Negro Slavery*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1974, 4.

<sup>39</sup> Deed dated March 7, 1842; Bill of sale for slaves, Phineas White to Phil Pennywitt dated September 24, 1849. Charles Scott Papers.

<sup>40</sup> Bill of sale for \$500 drawn up and signed by John Drennen for slave Ben to Caroline Scott dated July 26, 1849. Charles Scott Papers.

<sup>41</sup> Williamson and Cain, "Measuring Slavery in 2011 Dollars."

<sup>42</sup> Wing interview.

<sup>43</sup> Taylor, 47.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. 26, 27.

<sup>45</sup> Milner and Associates.

<sup>46</sup> Taylor, 26-27, 52-57.

<sup>47</sup> Carl H. Moneyhon, "Slavery," *The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture*.

<sup>48</sup> Taylor, 8.

<sup>49</sup> Crawford County Tax Records, 1821-1851, Microfilm Roll 22; 1854-1868, Microfilm Roll 23, Arkansas History Commission, Little Rock, Arkansas.

<sup>50</sup> Chicot County Tax Records. In addition, it is important to note that Drennen is listed with the non-residents in the Chicot County tax records, which means that the researcher must go to the end of the year to find Drennen's name.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> McNeilly, Donald P. *The Old South Frontier: Cotton Plantations and the Formation of Arkansas Society, 1819-1861*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2000, 24.

<sup>53</sup> Wing Interview.

<sup>54</sup> Samuel H. Williamson, "Seven Ways to Compute the Relative Value of a U.S. Dollar Amount, 1774 to present," *MeasuringWorth*, April 2015.

<sup>55</sup> Williamson and Cain, "Measuring Slavery in 2011 Dollars."

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# Drennen Slave Escapes On Trip To Pittsburgh

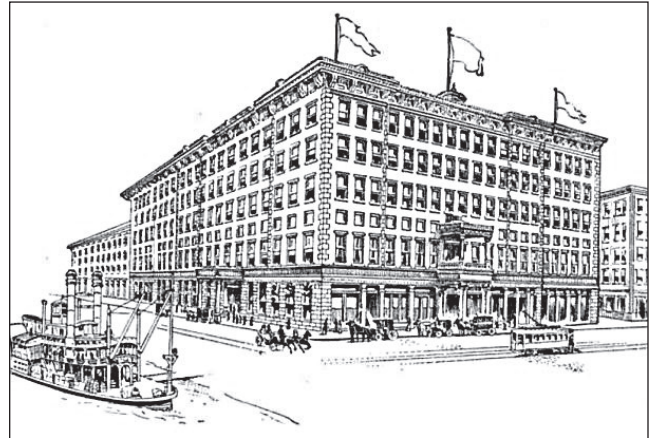
By Jacquelynn Rupp

In 1850, a fourteen-year-old girl stood in the Monongahela House, a luxury hotel in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She had been a slave for her entire life in Van Buren, Arkansas. At that moment, she had a decision to make—remain enslaved or attempt escape. She chose to try for a life of freedom and left the hotel while her owner, wealthy businessman John Drennen ate with his wife, unknowing of the fact that he lost his slave. The girl was known in oral tradition among African Americans as Susan. No documentation of that name has appeared, but it seems likely it was her Christian name and will be used in this account.

The story has beginnings in the expansion of the country and the slavery issue that heated up over that expansion. In 1845, newspaper editor John L. O’Sullivan proclaimed it was “our manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions.”<sup>1</sup> After they heard this, many Americans packed their belongings and headed west to California and Oregon in hopes of fulfilling America’s manifest destiny. Beasts of burden pulled the settlers’ wagons through plains, mountains, and deserts. The settlers faced enormous difficulties while they traveled, and death was never too far from them. The settlers who survived the journey to their destination received a new start and maybe a brighter future.<sup>2</sup>

The land that Americans hoped to possess in their fulfillment of Manifest Destiny caused conflict between sections. The issue of statehood for California and Texas brought up the question of slavery.<sup>3</sup>

Most of the people who lived in California held anti-slavery beliefs. They did not oppose slavery for moral reasons or practically, they opposed it because they did not want to compete with slave labor. At this point in American history, an equal balance between free and slave states still existed in the Senate. Those who lived in the South knew that if California was admitted as a free state, it would end that balance, giving the North more power. Henry Clay proposed a compromise with California being admitted into the union as a free state and making a harsher Fugitive Slave Law. Each of these sections passed sepa-



**MONONGAHELA HOUSE HOTEL**

*Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania*

*(Image courtesy of Dickinson College, House Divided Project)*

rately. Fugitive slaves were a problem to both sections, since the North held anti-slavery sympathies while the South practiced slavery.<sup>4</sup>

Before this, slaves who escaped into free states became free according to those states’ laws. Slave owners wanted a law that gave them the right to go into free states and recapture their property. Although there had been a fugitive slave law since 1793, U.S. Supreme Court decisions had recognized state personal liberty laws that prevented slave owners from getting their slaves back and slave owners wanted a stricter fugitive slave law. Part of Clay’s compromise was the more stringent Fugitive Slave Law of 1850.<sup>5</sup>

The new fugitive slave law commanded, “All good citizens...to aid and assist in the prompt and efficient execution of this law whenever their services may be required.”<sup>6</sup> This went against the belief of many in the North at the time. Some had an apathetic stance on the view of slavery while others held strong anti-slavery beliefs. Regardless of their beliefs, the law required citizens to help in recapturing fugitive slaves. The seventh section dealt with those who hindered in the recapture of a slave. They could be fined up to one thousand dollars and receive a jail sentence of up to six months. They also had to pay \$1,000 for every slave claimant they lost. Section 8 dealt with the

payment to the people that heard the cases of supposed runaways. Federal commissioners who decided runaway slave cases would be paid five dollars for ruling that a person was not a runaway slave. They would be paid ten dollars if they ruled that the person was a runaway slave. The Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 gave incentive to federal commissioners to side with the slave owners.<sup>7</sup>

Northern states quickly responded with opposition to the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 on the state level. Some free states in the North immediately started passing new personal liberty laws that prohibited the use of state jails in holding supposed runaways and prohibited state officials from carrying out the law. Some northern states deemed the Fugitive Slave Act unconstitutional and felt they did not have to enforce it.<sup>8</sup>

The South approved, but it wanted something more from the Compromise of 1850. People in the South believed that the federal government sided with the North in most matters. Much like the North believed that there was a slave conspiracy in the South, the South believed that the government partook in a northern conspiracy. In the Compromise of 1850, the only thing that the South received was the Fugitive Slave Act. Southerners in Georgia believed that, "the compromise measures with the exception of the Fugitive Slave Bill, were aggressive upon the institutions of the South."<sup>9</sup> Similar beliefs were held by other southerners. They were happy with the new stricter Fugitive Slave Act but southerners were unhappy that the North refused to return their slaves, even though they had an obligation to under the new stricter law. As a result, they felt they were being cheated on the only provision of the Compromise of 1850 they received.<sup>10</sup>

The public in the North reacted negatively toward the harsher law, which fueled increasing anti-slavery beliefs and encouraged many to help runaway slaves. Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in response to the passing of the Fugitive Slave Act. The book depicted the cruelties and harsh conditions of slavery. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* opened apathetic people's eyes to the cruelties of slavery. People in the North who had previously been content with slavery's condition in the South grew unhappy. Northern fence-sitters did not want Southern states to have the upper hand in the federal government, so they felt like they had to resist the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850.<sup>11</sup>

African Americans in the North felt outraged at the new law. Fugitives and free black people had the most to lose, as they risked being taken back into bondage or brought to bondage for the first time. Some fled to Canada. Others took the responsibility of defying the law. Organizations were created to protect fugitives from recapture. They provided a safe haven for fugitives and gave them food and clothing. The people involved would aid in preventing the

recapture of fugitive slaves by alerting the townspeople, and establishing free zones, where slave catchers were warned to enter at their own risk. Some of this work took place with the help of the Underground Railroad.<sup>12</sup>

Even prior to this, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, was home to many people who held strong abolitionist and anti-slavery views. They saw it as their responsibility to help African Americans, free, fugitive, or slave. John B. Vashon created the African Education Society in 1832 to educate African Americans of all ages. In 1833, the Anti-Slavery Society of Pittsburgh was formed. Later, the Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society formed. In 1839, the Union Anti-Slavery Society of Pittsburgh and Allegheny formed. Newspapers played a part in the abolitionist movement in Pittsburgh. Frederick Douglass ran his newspaper, *The North Star*, out of Pittsburgh. The Underground Railroad had escape routes in Pittsburgh. Many successful escapes occurred and many abolitionists aided in escapes from Pittsburgh. One of these strongholds was the Monongahela House.<sup>13</sup>

James McDonald Crossan built the 210-room hotel in 1840 easily accessed from the steamboat landing on the Monongahela River. In 1845, the hotel burned, but John Crossan and his brother James reopened it in 1847, with more rooms and more decor. Many travelers enjoyed staying there, including some famous and influential people throughout the nineteenth century, including Presidents Andrew Jackson and Zachary Taylor. President Abraham Lincoln, on the way to his inauguration, stayed at the hotel and gave two speeches there.<sup>14</sup>

The Monongahela House employed a large number of free African Americans and whites who were sympathetic to abolition and anti-slavery causes, as was the owner, John Crossan. The hotel, a known safe house, had employees who were notified when a slave came in whereupon, in some documented cases, they sent for transportation and as a carriage waited, they escorted a suddenly fugitive slave out into it, and away they went. Then, the runaway was disguised, maybe with a different haircut and clothing and soon was on his or her way north, sometimes all the way to Canada.<sup>15</sup> Into this situation, entered John Drennen, his wife and his teen-age slave.

In 1850, John Drennen took a trip with his wife, Kate, to whom he had been married for two years, and their fourteen-year-old slave Susan to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Drennen may have been going back to visit the place where he grew up. It took a month of travel on river and overland to arrive. Because trips took so long, people tended to stay for extended visits. The Drennens took Susan along with them mostly to attend to their clothes. Susan would wash and mend them if they needed it. After arriving in Pittsburgh in July, the Drennens checked into the

Monongahela House. One day in August, Drennen and his wife went to dinner, leaving Susan in the hotel room.<sup>16</sup>

John Drennen had become a successful businessman and man of affairs in Van Buren, Arkansas. Drennen owned land in Crawford County and a plantation in south-east Arkansas' Chicot County. In the 1850 census, he is reported as owning twenty-eight slaves; five in Crawford County valued at \$1,750 and twenty-three slaves in Chicot County valued at \$11,500. Typical slave owners in Arkansas at the time mostly came from well-established slave-owning families who came to the opening cotton lands of Arkansas from Old South states. Families bought land in Arkansas and sent family members, often younger sons, and slaves to start their plantations on this new cotton frontier. Drennen, however, did not fit this mold. John Drennen grew up in Elizabeth Township in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. After John Drennen left Pennsylvania in his early twenties, he settled in a number of locations before coming to the western Arkansas area where he and his business partner, David Thompson, helped establish the town of Van Buren in the 1830s. Drennen donated land for a town square in Van Buren on the condition that it would become the county seat in Crawford County and later the present courthouse was built on that property. Drennen dealt in many businesses. He owned a warehouse on the Arkansas River and tolls for storing goods. He was a trustee of the Real Estate bank, president of the Little Rock and Fort Smith Railroad, and kept records for the Arkansas Mining and Manufacturing Company. Drennen was appointed as a postmaster for Van Buren for multiple years. He was elected by the men as captain of the Arkansas Frontier Guards Company in Van Buren in 1846 and that company went on to serve in the Mexican War. President Zachary Taylor appointed John Drennen to be an Indian agent to the Choc-taws in 1849.<sup>17</sup>

After spending a month in the hotel, Susan must have become acquainted with free African Americans who worked there and who planted the idea of escaping in her head. One August night, the Drennens' dinner plans gave Susan an opportunity to escape into freedom. The Pennsylvania Personal Liberty Law of 1847 permitted slaves taken into Pennsylvania with their slave owner to be recognized as free. According to that law, Susan had already been free for a month. One source says that she simply walked out the back door while the Drennens ate their dinner. Whether the employees urged her to leave is unclear. However, it is known that she escaped from a place that employed free African Americans who were known for helping other slaves escape in a city that was known for its abolitionist and anti-slavery sympathies.<sup>18</sup>

The girl eluded Drennen in Pittsburgh. Once out in the streets, Susan was in an area where people were willing to help her stay concealed from Drennen.<sup>19</sup> After the Drennens

came back from dinner and saw that their slave was gone along with a trunk that Susan had grabbed by mistake, they were outraged. In their eyes, they had lost expensive property through no fault of their own. Mr. Crossan the hotel owner, responded to Drennen's ire by firing someone who he thought might have been involved in Susan's escape. But the owner of the Monongahela House was not oblivious to the fact that his hotel employed a large number of free African Americans who held abolitionist views, as he reportedly did, and who actively aided in slave escapes. Crossan may have fired one of the staff members to appease John Drennen. In an attempt to recover his human property, John Drennen offered a local police officer, a Mr. Hague, a reward if he found the slave girl and his missing trunk and then returned them to their rightful owner. Mr. Hague told Drennen that he might be able to recover the trunk that the girl took, but the girl was probably already far away and out of his reach. Mr. Hague was right. Although he got his trunk back intact, Drennen never saw the girl again. Back home in Van Buren, Drennen wrote a complaint in a newspaper about the Monongahela House and how he lost his slave there. The news spread to Pittsburgh and Crossan replied with his own editorial. He questioned why anyone with a slave would bring her to a place that was well-known for its abolitionist ideas and where slaves had escaped.<sup>20</sup>

Although the incident in Pittsburgh did not gain national attention, it fit into the broader context of fugitive slaves in the United States and how that issue helped lead to the American Civil War. The Drennen slave escape story gives insight on those who held opposite views on fugitive slaves. Susan escaped slavery but others failed in the attempt. Slave catchers were employed to find "ex-slaves" and bring them back to the South. Free African Americans living in the North who had never been slaves were captured and sold into slavery, as the recent Oscar-winning movie *Twelve Years a Slave* depicts. The year the Civil War ended and after hundreds of thousands of people had lost their lives in the war, the Thirteenth Amendment, ratified in December 1865, abolished slavery in the United States.



*Jacquelynn Rupp of Mountainburg will graduate from UAFS in May with a history degree and begin an internship at Lake Fort Smith. When not engaged in studies or work, Jacquelynn likes to play music.*

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- <sup>2</sup> Faragher et al., 462-467.
- <sup>3</sup> Faragher et al., 462-463.
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- <sup>5</sup> David W. Blight, ed., *Passages to Freedom* (Washington: Smithsonian Books, 2004), 88. Marion Gleason McDougall, *Fugitive Slaves (1619-1866)* (New York: Berman Publishers, 1967), 27-28. *Fugitive Slave Act 1850*, accessed February 11, 2014, Lillian Goldman Law Library. McDougall, 28-29; Morris, 130-134.
- <sup>6</sup> *Fugitive Slave Act 1850*.
- <sup>7</sup> Blight, 134. *Fugitive Slave Act 1850*.
- <sup>8</sup> McDougall, 66-67.
- <sup>9</sup> "The Union Meeting at Savannah," *Sunbury American and Shamokin Journal*, November 2, 1850, page number unknown, accessed October 30, 2014.
- <sup>10</sup> "The Fate and the Folly of Compromises," *Charleston Mercury*, May 25, 1857.
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- <sup>14</sup> L. C. Macpherson, "Monongahela House," *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine* 3, no. 4 (October 1920): 194-196, accessed February 1, 2015, <http://journals.psu.edu>.
- <sup>15</sup> Blight, 138-139; Switala, 88.
- <sup>16</sup> Switala, 88; "The Escape of the Drennen Slave Girl," *Free at Last? Slavery in Pittsburgh in the 18th and 19th Centuries*, University of Pittsburgh, last modified 2009, accessed February 1, 2015; *The North Star*, September 5, 1850.
- <sup>17</sup> Drennen-Scott House Historic Property Report (John Milner Associates, Inc, 2006).
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- <sup>19</sup> Blight, 138-139; "The Escape of the Drennen Slave Girl," *Free at Last? Slavery in Pittsburgh in the 18th and 19th Centuries*, University of Pittsburgh, last modified 2009, accessed February 1, 2015. *The North Star*, September 5, 1850.
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## 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.)
- ❖ 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.)

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# Good Whig Hunting

## *John Drennen and the Department of Indian Affairs*

**By Jerry Wing**

In the early nineteenth century, a political career often rose and fell with success or failure of one's political party. While those issuing patronage jobs might attempt to place qualified people into appointment positions, this consideration was second to fulfilling party promises made during the course of a political campaign. John Drennen's career with the Department of Indian Affairs is a prime example of this system.

John Drennen was a prominent businessman and politician. During the course of his life, he served as mayor of the city of Van Buren, Arkansas, co-chairman of the Arkansas constitutional convention, and ran a number of successful businesses. On a federal level, he concurrently served as agent to the Choctaw Nation, and as acting director of the Southern District of the Department of Indian Affairs. The rise and fall of this career with the Department of Indian Affairs is a picture of the politics of Drennen's time. Drennen, a member of the Whig Party, received his appointment during the presidential administration of fellow Whig, Zachary Taylor. Drennen was relieved of his post four years later upon the election of Franklin Pierce, a Democrat, with no explanation given of why he was removed from his post. In this ambiguity lies this author's thesis: Drennen's rise and fall with the Indian Affairs was a result of the "spoils system." John Drennen's career with the Department of Indian Affairs started because of his involvement with the Whig party, and his removal from his position was due to the Democrats regaining control of the government, and not to personal or ethical failing on his part. In evaluating this statement, Drennen must first be placed within the political and historical context of his time.

Drennen's appointment with the Department of Indian Affairs was made possible through the changes the United States political environment underwent during the early nineteenth century. In 1819, a banking "panic" caused financial hardships and Americans divided on how the government should best assist in counteracting these difficulties. Additionally, the subject of slavery became increasingly divisive as territories in the west, Missouri specifically, sought statehood. Abolitionist movements grew



**JOHN DRENNEN**

*(Photo courtesy of  
www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net)*

in the North as the cotton gin had revitalized southern dependence on slavery for economic prosperity. Finally, a strong opposition movement sprang up against the Masonic Order and the elitist policies it supposedly represented. In the midst of these conflicts, one man's ideas, ideas that John Drennen would oppose,

sparked the genesis of new political parties.<sup>1</sup>

By 1824, the first of the new parties coalesced around this man, Andrew Jackson. Jackson drew supporters from the National Republicans who desired a return to the party's Jeffersonian emphasis on support for the yeoman, and the balancing of power between state and federal government. Jackson despised the Second Bank of the United States and elite bankers who grew wealthy at the expense of the common farmers and laborers. While Jackson was able to deal with the issue of the bank within his own presidency, namely by vetoing the renewal of its twenty-year charter, his supporters, stalwarts of the rising Democratic Party, continued a policy of dismantling elitism wherever possible. One advantage that the Democratic Party possessed over its rivals, up to the election of 1856, was a clear, constant set of ideals. The political party that arose in opposition was less unified in its approach to the problems of that time.<sup>2</sup>

The Whig Party formed as a reaction to Andrew Jackson's ideas; it began as a loose coalition of politicians opposed to President Jackson's ideas and his questionable methods with which the president sometimes enacted those ideas. Henry Clay, a congressman from Kentucky, became the primary voice of the Whigs and gave the party its name. In a speech in Congress, Clay referred to himself

and the other members of President Jackson's opposition as "Whigs" after the "loyal opposition" to King George III's policies toward the independence movement in the American colonies. Originally intended as a jab against "King Andrew," the name stuck. As a whole, the Whigs supported greater federal involvement in the economy such as internal improvements, that is the national development of roads and infrastructure, high tariffs, and, of course, support for the Second Bank. Henry Clay's "American Plan" formed the basis for these lines of development. In other issues, however, the Whigs were far more divided. While the abolitionist movement found a voice within the Whig Party, many southern Whigs, John Drennen among them, were slave-owners, and by no means agreed with their northern brethren on slavery's future. Likewise, while the anti-Mason movement landed within the coalition of the Whig Party, several leading Whig leaders, such as Albert Pike, were, in fact, Masons. This lack of unity gave an advantage to the Democrats, and the Whigs would only rally to claim the presidency twice.

John Drennen's career with the Department of Indian Affairs coincided with one of these Whig presidencies, which followed the administration of Democrat James K. Polk, president from 1845 to 1849. Polk enjoyed a Democrat-led congress and senate for the entirety of his tenure. With this backing from Congress, Polk accomplished his agenda, which included settlement of the Oregon question by negotiation with Great Britain and a war with Mexico that acquired Texas, California, New Mexico, and Arizona. Domestically, Polk had lowered the tariff, and had created an independent treasury. Despite these political successes, Polk had promised his constituents that he would be a one-term president, and as the election of 1848 drew close, Polk showed no interest in backing out on that promise. As the Democrats scrambled to locate a replacement candidate, the Whigs, John Drennen among them, set their sights on someone whose rise to the public's attention was thanks, in no small part, to President Polk's foreign policy.<sup>3</sup>

Polk's successes in Mexico gave the Whigs the edge they needed to shake the Democrats' control. For the presidential election of 1848, the Whigs supported General Zachary Taylor, one of the two victorious commanding generals from the Mexican War. In Taylor, the Whigs did not have a politician; Taylor had never held public office prior to the election, nor did Taylor have a master agenda that resounded with the American people. Zachary Taylor was elected because he was, like Jackson before him, a military hero. Within the Whig party, some opposed Taylor's candidacy. At the convention, Taylor's opponents included Henry Clay (who was in his fourth attempt to become president) and General Winfield Scott, another

victorious general and hero of the Mexican War. Clay's supporters switched over to Taylor once it became clear that Clay simply did not have the popularity necessary to win the campaign. Taylor's success depended on how well his supporters campaigned for him. In western Arkansas, John Drennen became one of those supporters.<sup>4</sup>

John Drennen was born February 5, 1801, to Thomas and Isabella More Drennen and raised on a homestead in Elizabeth Township, Pennsylvania. On March 21, 1826, Drennen married Emily Deaderick Stuart. The couple moved to Columbus, Arkansas, in the early 1830s.<sup>5</sup> Partnering with his brother-in-law David Thompson, who was married to Emily's sister Lauretta, Drennen purchased acreage containing Phillips Landing, a small hamlet on the Arkansas River and began selling tracts to settlers. In the year of Arkansas statehood, 1836, Drennen and his family were residing in a house he built on the bluff above the town. Drennen opened a mercantile store in town and operated a wood-stand near a dock on the Arkansas River, which supplied steamboats with firewood to fuel their boilers. In addition to local enterprises, Drennen came to own a large plantation in Chicot County, Arkansas, where he grew cotton to sell in New Orleans. Drennen acquired eighty slaves to run the plantation and another fifteen for labor in his Van Buren operations. Drennen served as the president of the Real Estate Bank and assisted in real-estate sales and development across Arkansas. Suffice it to say that Drennen was a successful businessman who flourished in the developing state of Arkansas and as he developed his interests, he naturally gained political influence in both Crawford County and in Little Rock, the state capital.<sup>6</sup>

Throughout his life, John Drennen stayed active in local politics in Van Buren. He served as mayor of the city, as well as postmaster for a time. On a state level, Drennen served as co-chairman for the 1836 Arkansas constitutional convention, and then was elected to the first state legislature as a member of the Whig Party. Drennen reinforced his Whig affiliation through a close friendship with Albert Pike, the premier Whig politician in Arkansas. Pike was a frequent guest at Drennen's Van Buren home. In 1848, when Pike fought a duel with John Seldon Roane over insults arising from performances in the War with Mexico, Drennen served as Pike's second. It was this connection to Pike that set Drennen in line for a position in Taylor's new bureaucracy.<sup>7</sup>

During the election of 1848, Pike rallied the Whig base in Arkansas in an attempt to sweep the Democrats out of Little Rock and cast the state's electoral votes for Taylor. Unfortunately for Albert Pike and John Drennen, the Whigs were unsuccessful, and the Democrats retained control of the state government. Pike, not to be put down

by these political losses, took solace in the fact that his and the Whigs' efforts had made this election the closest in Arkansas' history, up to that point. Pike turned his attention from the election to the matter of the federal appointments in Arkansas, and Drennen seems to have been at the forefront of his plans. For, while elected positions within Arkansas were out of the Whigs' grasp, there were non-elected positions ripe for the taking.<sup>8</sup>

During this period of American history, it was common for a president to rotate federal offices with supporters from his own party. Andrew Jackson gave a new vigor to the practice. Over the course of his administration, Jackson installed 252 supporters into federal positions, which was more than all of the previous presidents combined. Jackson maintained that this practice was born to prevent corruption, many of Jackson's critics decried this wholesale rotation in office as a corruption unto itself, particularly after several newspaper editors which supported Jackson were appointed. One of Jackson's supporters, Senator William T. Marcy of New York, claimed that "to the victor belong the spoils of the enemy." From that point on, the "spoils system" became a hallmark of American politics, and Whigs and Democrats alike used it to further their agendas and award their supporters.<sup>9</sup>

When Albert Pike went to Washington, D.C., in 1849, he found that there were no offices to be filled for Arkansas Whigs, supporters in other states having precedence. While the Whig effort in Arkansas had been valiant, it was unsuccessful in turning the states' three electoral votes towards Taylor. Pike persisted, though, and Secretary of the Interior Department Thomas Ewing did agree to grant an Indian agency to one of Pike's nominees, John Drennen. In May 1849, Drennen was made agent over the Choctaw Nation and acting superintendent over the Southern District of the Department of Indian Affairs.<sup>10</sup> Arkansas Whigs were fortunate to receive even this one appointment. Neither Taylor in the first months of his presidency, nor Millard Fillmore, who succeeded Taylor upon his death, were quite as effective in removing Democrats from their positions and installing loyal Whigs as the leadership in the party, Henry Clay primary among them, desired. Because Taylor and Fillmore filled few positions with supporters, they limited the influence of the Whig Party in state and local politics. So, "what kind of job did Drennen receive from his benefactors in Washington?"<sup>11</sup>

On June 30, 1834, the United States Congress created the Department of Indian Affairs. An Office of Indian Affairs had existed within the War Department since the 1820s, but this arrangement placed the department under the new cabinet office of the Secretary of the Interior, and there it would administrate Native American



**DRENNEN-SCOTT HOUSE** as it looks today. The door opened to the office space John Drennen used while he was serving as a Choctaw Agent.

*(Photo by author)*

issues, for the next century. The power structure ran from the president, to the secretary of the interior and the commissioner of the department, to the regional superintendents and individual tribal agents. The agents had direct contact with their tribes, and while they possessed some authority to troubleshoot issues that arose, most of the time these men served as representatives of directives from higher up. Agents monitored trade (specifically trade with white men) to ensure no prohibited items were being sold like whiskey and guns. Agents dealt with claims of territorial infringement by whites onto tribal lands. Additionally, agents cooperated with missionaries and federal efforts to establish schools in tribal lands. Regional superintendents oversaw agents within their districts, and provided the next link in the chain to Washington, D.C. The Department Commissioner had managerial control and reported to the Secretary of the Interior. While the president could institute some policy directives, the secretary of the interior and the commissioner held the primary policy-making power over Indian Territory.

In May 1849, the commissioner of Indian Affairs, William Medhill, sent a letter to Sam Rutherford, informing him that John Drennen would be taking over as Choctaw agent, effective immediately.<sup>12</sup> If this seemed like an odd post for Drennen, then the letter clarified the reason for his position. At this time, there was no sitting superintendent over the southern district of the Department of Indian Affairs. According to the structure of the district, whoever was Choctaw agent doubled as the acting superintendent over the southern district. In short, Drennen was now not just liaison to the Choctaw Nation; he had supervisory responsibility for agents to all five "Civilized Tribes" in Indian Territory.<sup>13</sup> Although Dren-

nen's friendship with Pike certainly helped, Drennen was not unqualified for the post for western Arkansas at that time. Drennen was familiar with the Choctaw Nation and with white traders interested in doing business in the Nation. Van Buren was a hub for shipping whiskey and other forbidden goods into Indian Territory, and Drennen's proximity made it easier for him to police illicit trade. In Drennen, Secretary Ewing found a perfect candidate. The Taylor administration was able to patronize their loyal supporters in Arkansas and be represented by a completely capable agent in John Drennen.<sup>14</sup>

Drennen began working at his post by July 2, 1849. During his time as Choctaw agent, he oversaw the routine issues of the tribe and a few special cases. Drennen created a census roll of the Choctaw people in Indian Territory. Drennen's superiors were quite pleased with his management of his post, and on May 25, 1851, Drennen was made full superintendent of the district "extending east from the Rocky Mountains, and north of Texas and New Mexico."<sup>15</sup>

After Drennen became full superintendent, he became deeply involved with Cherokee affairs. Drennen clashed with Cherokee Chief John Ross over policies Drennen implemented through the agent. The first of these scraps began when Drennen approved trading licenses for whites in Indian Territory. Chief Ross had protested the distribution of those licenses, claiming that these traders were taking over from Indian business owners and selling contraband spirits and other restricted items along with their legal trade goods. George Butler, the agent for the Cherokee, had ceased these licenses at Ross' request. Drennen, however, stayed true to his political party's economic ideals and countermanded Butler.<sup>16</sup>

As interesting as this dynamic is, it is not the issue of trade licenses that binds Drennen to the Cherokee story. During Drennen's term as superintendent, terms of the Treaty of New Echota were finalized after a lengthy court battle. The Cherokee had already been removed to Indian Territory, but the Cherokee had taken the federal government into court to secure full payment for improvements made on their home lands in Georgia. When the case was resolved, in favor of the Cherokee, Drennen was instructed to conduct a census of the Cherokee who had been removed. Cherokee who had voluntarily moved had already been counted, but there was no official, comprehensive roll of those who had been involuntarily removed, either before or after the trek. This roll solidified the exact numbers of Cherokees eligible for annuities outlined in the Treaty of New Echota. The Drennen Census Roll became a list of survivors of the "Trail of Tears" with columns for name, Cherokee district, and family group.<sup>17</sup> The Dawes Roll is the basis for citizenship within the Cherokee Na-

tion and is based on the Drennen Roll among others. The Drennen Roll is widely used by people researching their Cherokee ancestry and by academic researchers. The National Archives branch in Fort Worth, Texas, possesses a copy of the Drennen Roll on microfilm that is available to researchers. The Drennen Roll has not yet been digitized, as the Treaty of New Echota has been.<sup>18</sup>

With the census complete, Drennen traveled to New Orleans to receive the annuity payment money. He then selected Fort Gibson, the U.S. Army post located within Cherokee territory, to be the site for the dispersal of annuities. Drennen reasoned that the troops stationed there would prevent disruptions from occurring during the disbursement. While Chief Ross did not argue with Drennen's reasoning out of hand, having the disbursement occur at Fort Gibson was contrary to his goal of eliminating Fort Gibson. Ross had been engaged in an aggressive campaign to get this outpost out of his back yard, and Drennen gave renewed significance to the fort, via the dispersion. Furthermore, Fort Gibson was a hub for white traders who had received licenses to trade in Cherokee lands. Ross was concerned that these traders would receive the commerce and benefits that the large influx of cash would generate, instead of, say, Cherokee traders in Tahlequah. Despite each of these gentlemen's seemingly valid reasons for bickering over the location of the dispersion, it seems that they each had a private motive driving their discussion of the location.<sup>19</sup>

As it turns out, both men had financial interests in where the money was dispersed. Drennen's son-in-law owned the general store inside Fort Gibson and Drennen certainly recognized the windfall for his son-in-law if Fort Gibson was the location of the dispersal. Ross had an equal stake in this tug-of-war. In a letter to Washington urging for an alternate site, Ross expressed distress at the thought of honest Cherokee businessmen losing out on the chance to profit from the dispersal if at Gibson argued for it to take instead in Tahlequah or another Cherokee town. What Ross failed to mention in the letter was that he was one of the "honest" businessmen that he was concerned about. Ultimately, the authorities in Washington backed Drennen and the dispersal occurred at Fort Gibson as originally planned.<sup>20</sup>

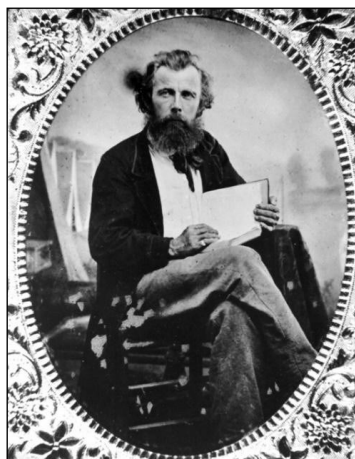
By 1853, Drennen's fortunes in the Department had run their course. With Taylor and Fillmore's presidencies accomplishing little, the Democrats rallied behind Franklin Pierce as their nominee against the Whig candidate, General Winfield Scott, the other victorious general in the Mexican War. The American people had tired of the Whigs and their ineffective administration, and Pierce won in a landslide. This shift in executive power guaranteed that a new rotation in office would occur this time with the

Democrats pulling the levers. Unfortunately for Drennen, a prominent Democrat leader in Arkansas, Thomas Drew, was in desperate need of such a patronage job. His eyes turned to the Department of Indian Affairs.

Thomas Drew was a unique character. Born in Wilson County, Tennessee, in 1802, Drew moved to Arkansas when he was fifteen and supported himself by peddling and sporadically teaching school. In 1827, Drew came to own a large farm in Randolph County, Arkansas, by marrying the daughter, Cinderella Bettis, of a prosperous landowner in the region. In addition to running this farm, Drew served in a variety of small political offices including judge of the Lawrence County Court and a position in the Arkansas constitutional convention. Drew's career peaked in 1844 when he was put forth by the Democratic Party as their candidate in the gubernatorial election. Drew won election to governor for two four-year terms. During his first term, Drew cooperated with Democrats in Arkansas, especially with the Conway-Johnson faction. Drew was responsible for putting together the contingent of Arkansas troops that went south to Mexico as part of Zachary Taylor's army. He sought greater development of Arkansas' infrastructure. While his endeavors met with only sporadic success, Drew was so popular that he was elected to a second term with no opposition. However, Drew resigned his governorship in 1849, due to extreme personal debt and an inability to cope with it on a governor's salary. Drew spent the next few years working his way out of that debt.<sup>21</sup>

Drew was apparently submitted to Democrat leaders in Washington as a candidate for a "spoils" position, which he was quickly granted. On May 24, Commissioner Luke Lea received a letter from Drew, informing him that Drew had reported to Van Buren, and that Drennen had turned over to Drew all of the necessary documents and items from the office. Effectively, Drennen's career with the Department ended thus with a bitter letter similar to the one that began it. While the fact of Drennen's firing is quite definite, there remains some question as to why since he had done a commendable job.

In the archives of Texas Tech University in Lubbock, Texas, there are three letters referring to "charges" being brought against Drennen. These references raise the question of why Drennen was actually removed. Is it possible, that rather than being a simple case of a "spoils" rotation in office, that Drennen was somehow inept or devious in his post? The Texas Tech letters do not lift the shroud as much as they could. While the authors of these three letters are known, two of the letters are nearly completely illegible, and the third is merely a confirmation of the receipt of information related to the charges, and does not mention what exactly that information is. As disappointing as this dead-end is, there is still viable evidence to be



**THOMAS DREW**

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gleaned from Drennen's history that lift the shroud on the circumstances of his removal.<sup>22</sup>

The first piece of evidence is Thomas Drew's fortuitous rise itself. The dates of Drew's rise match, nearly to the day, the same timeframe of Drennen's installment within the Department of Indian Affairs. Both men were placed within six months of an incoming president

and their respective parties gaining control of the executive branch. Given clear evidence supporting Drennen's rise being the result of Albert Pike's lobbying in Washington, it is safe to assume Drew's similar timeline is evidence of the same kind of process. There is another, shadier detail in Pike's lobbying for Drennen that offers additional insight into the removal.<sup>23</sup>

When Pike sought Whig patronage for Arkansans, Secretary Ewing stated that most of the Whigs would have to settle for state positions. This swap, however, could only take place provided the Whigs compiled evidence that the Democrats who needed replacing had "tampered with the election" in some way. In order for the Whigs to gain control of those positions, they had to accuse the incumbents of some form of wrongdoing, justified or not. Despite how heavy handed the "spoils system" often appears, it seems that there was some attempt to cover the blatant rotations with some form of justification. For this to apply to Drennen, his character must be considered. Was Drennen the sort of man whose opponents would have to trump-up accusations against to bring him low, or was Drennen involved in less-than-honest ventures?<sup>24</sup>

In the records the Department of Indian Affairs, there is no evidence whatsoever that Drennen was either inept in his post or immoral in his dealings. While there are rumors that Drennen occasionally overreached a tad into the affairs of the agents under his authority, these lapses can be easily dismissed as the vibrant zeal with which Drennen worked at all tasks he was given. Even though his interests may not have always aligned with those of the tribes he worked with (as with the case of his interactions with Cherokee Chief Ross), it is clear that they did align with his superiors in Washington, D.C. In his other business endeavors, Drennen shows himself to be intelligent and

thrifty, as well as scrupulous. The closest that Drennen came to questionable dealings would have to be his deep involvement with the Arkansas Real Estate Bank. During the 1840s the Real Estate Bank, responsible for much of the land speculation in Arkansas, was roundly criticized as being inept at best and corrupt at worst. In a fascinating irony, Drew was one of the leading critics of the Real Estate Bank (as were most Democrats in Arkansas), and its prosecution was one of his priorities as governor. However, Drennen was never criminally implicated, or indicted for association with the Real Estate Bank. Whatever losses occurred can then be dismissed as a financial indiscretion of a man seeking to make money. Drennen's ethical behavior in other aspects of his life indicated that informal charges against him (he was never formally charged) were nothing but the trumped up rhetoric for a Democrat administration to reward a Democrat with Drennen's post.

John Drennen was a man of opportunity. He was a successful businessman, and an involved citizen. Whenever a potential benefit was thrown his way, Drennen did not hesitate to pursue it. John Drennen's career with the Department of Indian Affairs was a result of his involvement with the Whig party. Furthermore, Drennen's removal from his position was due to the Democrats regaining control of the government and not to personal failing. In a world where appointments are dependent on the success of one's political party, it is no wonder that ability and accomplishment in task often falls to the wayside in favor of patronage.



*Jerry Wing is a graduating senior in history at University of Arkansas – Fort Smith. He plans to continue an academic career and will attend Southwest Seminary in Dallas, Texas, next year.*

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> David S. Reynolds, *Waking Giant: America in the Age of Jackson*. (New York City: Harper Collins Publisher. 2008), 29-30.

<sup>2</sup> Michael F. Holt, *The Political Crisis of the 1850's* (New York City: W.W. Norton and Company, 1978), 17-24.

<sup>3</sup> Walter R. Borneman, *Polk: The Man Who Transformed the Presidency and America* (New York: Random House 2008), 318.

<sup>4</sup> Borneman, 320-322, 330

<sup>5</sup> Columbus was a small town near modern day Lavaca, Arkansas. The town served briefly served as the seat of Crawford County, but was abandoned due to constant flooding from the Arkansas River.

<sup>6</sup> Walter Lee Brown, *A Life of Albert Pike* (Fayetteville: The

University of Arkansas Press, 1997), 119; Milner and Associates, "Drennen Scott Family History," Drennen-Scott House Historic Property Report. (John Milner & Associates, Inc., 2006), 1-6.

<sup>7</sup> Brown. 119, 240.

<sup>8</sup> Brown 244-46.

<sup>9</sup> Reynolds, 83-84.

<sup>10</sup> The Department of Indian Affairs has a complicated history, with several titles being used to refer to the same organization. (Department, Bureau, etc.) For the purposes of this paper, the term used shall be Department, due to the fact that this title appears in the earliest references to the organization, while Bureau tends to refer to the organization post-Civil War.

<sup>11</sup> Brown, 246.

<sup>12</sup> Interestingly enough, Rutherford's career with the Department of Indian Affairs was by no means over; by 1858, Rutherford was appointed agent over the Seminole tribe.

<sup>13</sup> Indian Territory is modern day Oklahoma.

<sup>14</sup> Brown, 246.

<sup>15</sup> W. Medill John Drennen Esq. of Arkansas has been appointed Acting Superintendent Indian Affairs and Choctaw Agent - and will hold yourself in readiness to turn over the office books and papers of a public nature when he calls May 30 1849. Bureau of Indian Affairs Collection. L. Lea Appointing John Drennen Superintendent of Indian Affairs March 25, 1851. Bureau of Indian Affairs Collection.

<sup>16</sup> William G. McLoughlin, *After the Trail of Tears: The Cherokees' Struggle for Sovereignty* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993), 98-99.

<sup>17</sup> Roberta Eastes, "Identifying Cherokee Ancestors," DNA Explain <http://www.dnaexplain.com/publications/pdfs/identifyingcherokeeancestors.pdf> (accessed April 14-17, 2014).

<sup>18</sup> Eastes, Roberta. "Identifying Cherokee Ancestors," DNA Explain <http://www.dnaexplain.com/publications/pdfs/identifyingcherokeeancestors.pdf> (accessed April 14-17, 2014); National Archives, "Researching Individual Native Americans at the National Archives at Atlanta," National Archives. <http://www.archives.gov/atlanta/finding-aids/native-americans.pdf> (accessed April 14-17, 2014); Cherokee Nation, "Citizenship," Cherokee Nation <http://www.cherokee.org/Services/TribalCitizenship/Citizenship.aspx> (accessed April 14-17, 2014).

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Wing, telephone interview by author, April 17, 2014; McLoughlin, 100-101

<sup>20</sup> McLoughlin, 100; Thomas Wing, telephone interview by author, April 17, 2014.

<sup>21</sup> Bobby Roberts, "Thomas Stevenson Drew (1802-1879)" *Arkansas Encyclopedia of History and Culture*. Online 2012. <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=100> (Accessed 3-2-15)



- <sup>22</sup> Thomas S. Drew on that Col. John Drennen late Superintendent of Indian Affairs at this place turned over to him as his successor. May 24, 1853. Bureau of Indian Affairs Collection. Thomas Drew In relation to the charges against Col. Drennen, August 27, 1853, Bureau of Indian Affairs Collection.; Charles E. Mix Acknowledging receipt of report on charges professed against late Superintendent Drennen, October 12, 1853 Bureau of Indian Affairs Collection.; Thomas S. Drew Has received letter in regard to an investigation by Col. Drennen, August 26, 1853. Bureau of Indian Affairs Collection.
- <sup>23</sup> "State Governors 1836-1852." Arkansas.gov. Little Rock, 2011. <http://www.sos.arkansas.gov/educational/students/Pages/1836-1852.aspx> (Accessed 12-7-14) Brown, 246.

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# The Adventurous Benjamin Bonneville

## Part II

By Matt Myers

*Part I of "The Adventurous Benjamin Bonneville," which appeared in the September 2014 Journal, was an account of Benjamin Louis Eulalie de Bonneville's early life up to his overdue return from an expedition to the West. Part II focuses on the later part of his life, beginning with his struggle for reinstatement in the United States Army. The final paragraphs from Part I have been included to give a sense of what Bonneville was facing upon his arrival in the East.*

**N**o one had heard from Captain Benjamin Bonneville until his return from his three-year adventure to the Rocky Mountains. Instead of returning when he was supposed to, Captain Bonneville was two years late. He wrote one letter regarding his progress on his expedition, but it is not known whether the letter made it to Washington or not. Some officers believed Bonneville had deserted or died during the trip. Others did not seem to care what the reason was, but wanted him dropped from the army rolls regardless. Action was taken on May 31, 1834, when on the recommendation of Maj. Gen. Alexander Macomb, President Andrew Jackson ordered Bonneville's name removed from the rolls. Bonneville did not learn of this until his return.<sup>1</sup>

On August 22, 1834, Captain Bonneville arrived at Independence, Missouri, and he was shocked to learn that he was no longer a member of the United States Army and promptly set off for Washington. His purpose was to make "an effort to obtain restoration to his former rank in the army."<sup>2</sup>

On the way, Bonneville spent some time at the home of John Jacob Astor. Astor was an associate of Alfred Seton, one of Bonneville's key financial supporters for his westward expedition. Astor, who became America's first millionaire from his extensive fur trading businesses in the West, became interested in Benjamin Bonneville's expedition and was entertained by the stories contained in his detailed journal as was a renowned guest of Astor who happened to be there at that exact time, Washington Irving, who was there finalizing plans to edit and publish



**SKETCH OF BENJAMIN BONNEVILLE DONE IN 1878**  
(From The New York Daily Graphic)

a story of an Astor expedition.<sup>3</sup> Bonneville fascinated

Washington Irving with his fresh stories of his extended expedition in the Rocky Mountains. Irving later wrote about his first encounter with the explorer, saying:

There was something in the whole appearance of the captain that prepossessed me in his favor. He was of the middle size, well made and well set; and a military frock of foreign cut, that had seen service, gave him a look of compactness. His countenance was frank, open, and engaging; well browned by the sun, and had

ness. His countenance was frank, open, and engaging; well browned by the sun, and had something of a French expression. He had a pleasant black eye, a high forehead, and, while he kept his hat on, the look of a man in the jocund prime of his days; but the moment his head was uncovered, a bald crown gained him credit for a few more years than he was really entitled to. Being extremely curious, at the time, about everything connected with the Far West, I addressed numerous questions to him. They drew from him a number of extremely striking details, which were given with mingled modesty and frankness; and in a gentleness of manner, and a soft tone of voice, contrasting singularly with the wild and often startling nature of his themes. It was difficult to conceive the mild, quiet-looking personage before you, the actual hero of the stirring scenes related.<sup>4</sup>

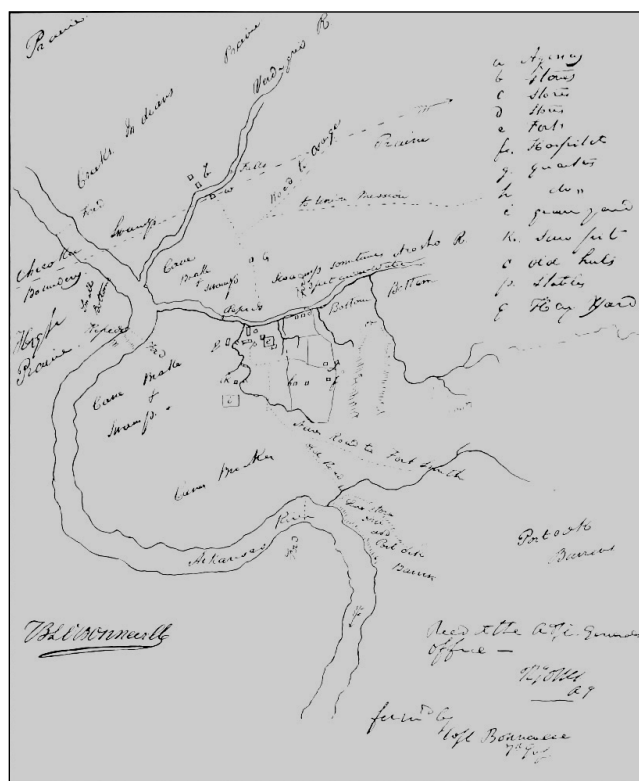


**THE COVER OF  
WASHINGTON  
IRVING'S  
THE ADVENTURES  
OF CAPTAIN  
BONNEVILLE**

The author enjoyed the accounts of Bonneville and showed interest in publishing them, but both men had other matters at hand. Irving needed to finish his work with Astor's notes (which resulted in the book *Astoria* published in early 1836). Bonneville wanted to get to Washington City to question why he had been dropped from the army rolls and figure out how to be reinstated.

Captain Bonneville reached the capital city in October 1835.<sup>5</sup> The first big problem that revealed itself was that the one report that he sent during his expedition could not be found. At least one person, Samuel Cooper, remembered that the man whom Bonneville entrusted to deliver his letter had arrived in 1833, but there was no sign of either the man or the letter.<sup>6</sup> This meant that there was virtually no proof that the explorer had been performing the duties assigned to him when granted furlough. Regardless of this disappointment, Bonneville continued to push forward and petitioned for reinstatement in the United States Army at his former rank of captain. After word spread of his request, a second problem presented itself.

When the news reached Fort Gibson that Bonneville was in Washington with the intention of reclaiming his rank, some officers were furious. They felt that it would be unfair to give Bonneville his old rank back after his being gone longer than his granted leave allowed. The officers, including Matthew Arbuckle, objected to his reinstatement,



**MAP OF THREE FORKS AND FORT GIBSON** sketched by Benjamin Bonneville in 1838. This was the same year that Bonneville was chosen to select the new site of the second Fort Smith.

(From *Pioneer Days in the Early Southwest*)

ment, arguing that the sole purpose of the expedition was commercial. Soon after learning about the plea to deny his reinstatement on those grounds, an outraged Bonneville responded to it. His letter stated, "That I started as a trader and acted as such, is what I never attempted to conceal. Genl Scott, Eustes and even Genl Macomb assisted me to become one . . . it was deemed more proper for me to go as such, and without expense to the Government, furnish them with such information as they believed useful."<sup>7</sup>

Bonneville's struggle for reinstatement was not in vain. While waiting for a decision, he revised his journal and finished the maps he made while on the expedition. These notes proved to be useful for Bonneville for two reasons. The first had to do with his reinstatement. After finishing them, he left a copy in Washington where it eventually reached the office of President Andrew Jackson. Jackson believed the findings were important enough that he sent the application for reinstatement to the U. S. Senate. On April 22, 1836, the senate approved and reinstated Bonneville in the army at the rank of captain.<sup>8</sup>

The second reason Captain Bonneville's notes were important involved the contact with Washington Irving. Bonneville called on Irving and the two discussed plans to

publish his work. In September 1836, Bonneville sold his journals and maps to Irving.<sup>9</sup> Irving edited the explorer's work and published it, first in newspapers then as a whole book.<sup>10</sup>

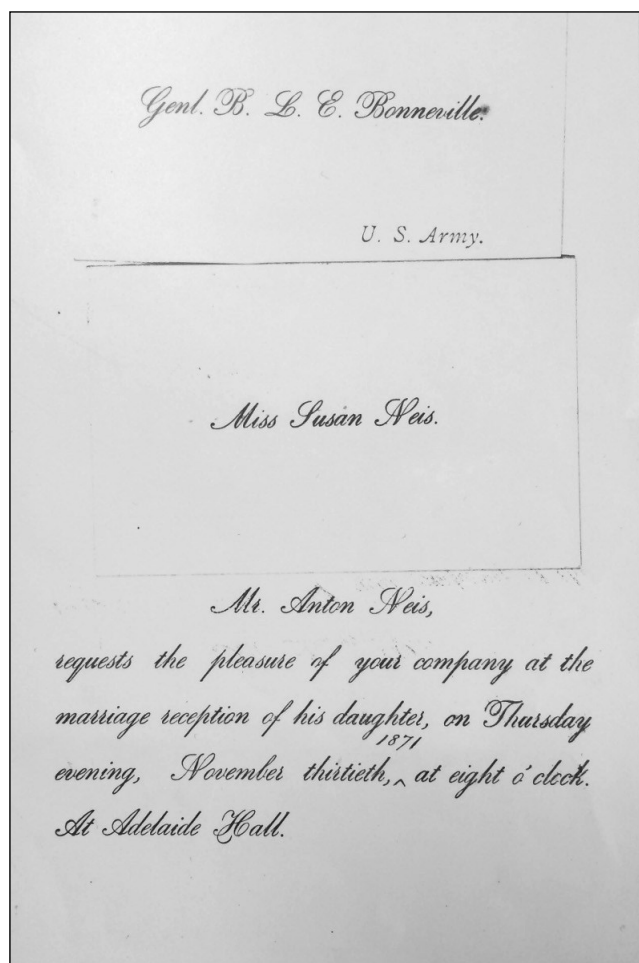
Bonneville dedicated almost the entire remainder of his life to his military career. He remained in the United States Army until his age demanded that he retire.

In 1838, Bonneville investigated possible sites for the second Fort Smith. After its establishment, which was not at the location that he recommended, he was assigned to duty at the fort. Soon after, Bonneville received orders to lead a company of forty men to Florida to assist Zachary Taylor in the Second Seminole War.<sup>11</sup> Bonneville proved to be a great asset to Taylor. The future president praised the officer's ability to understand Indian warfare and plan accordingly because of his experience gained while in the West.<sup>12</sup>

For a brief period after the war, Bonneville was stationed at Carlisle Barracks in Pennsylvania. During this time he married Ann C. Lewis. The wedding was a joyous event in Captain Bonneville's hectic life, but his career called him away from the blissful domesticated life shortly thereafter.<sup>13</sup>

Bonneville next participated in the Mexican-American War. In 1846, after assignment in Fort Smith again, Bonneville received orders to take command of a detachment of troops and march to San Antonio.<sup>14</sup> By this time, Bonneville had been promoted to major. On the campaign to take Mexico City, Major Bonneville was alongside important historical figures such as Robert E. Lee and Winfield Scott. According to one author, Major Bonneville was wounded in battle and carried to safety by Lee, saying "he would give \$10,000 for that wound."<sup>15</sup> After the war, Bonneville advocated a new travel route to California. He proposed "Fort Smith as a point of departure, and the valley of the Canadian [river] as the path."<sup>16</sup>

Bonneville resisted retirement from the army. Military service was his life and he resisted giving it up. His obituary confirmed that Bonneville used every device to stay in: "When his hair whitened he cut it off and replaced it with a wig of more youthful color. It was his ambition to remain in active service as long as he lived."<sup>17</sup> Active duty did end for Bonneville though in 1861, but even then the old soldier found a way to continue his service as a recruiter for the Union army in St. Louis during the Civil War. That was his final duty as an officer, but because of his lifetime of service he was promoted to brevet brigadier general.<sup>18</sup> At that time, Bonneville was the oldest person on the U. S. Army retirement list. In 1862, Ann Lewis Bonneville died, most likely of yellow fever, in St. Louis. Tragi-



**INVITATION TO THE WEDDING** of Benjamin Bonneville and Sue Neis.

(Courtesy of the Pebley Center)

cally, the Bonneville's daughter Mary had died eleven days before of the same disease.

In 1871, Benjamin Bonneville married Susan Neis of Fort Smith. Bonneville was seventy-eight years old and his bride was twenty-two. Guests overflowed the church at the wedding ceremony, and many attended a reception held at Adelaide Hall, which went on "till '4 o'clock in the morning' when the last dance was announced to the regret of all."<sup>19</sup>

General Bonneville died on June 12, 1878, at the age of eighty-two, but his death still shocked those who knew him. Bonneville had achieved somewhat of a celebrity status because of Washington Irving's book. Obituaries for him were published nationwide.<sup>20</sup> Bonneville had seen and taken part in the growth of a nation. One newspaper summed his life up nicely, stating, "General Bonneville lived to see the country he had explored when [it was] a trackless wilderness, divided into prosperous States, and [watched] the young republic of seventeen States, when he began his public



**THE BONNEVILLE HOUSE TODAY.**

service, grow into thirty-eight, reaching from ocean to ocean.”<sup>21</sup>

Benjamin Louis Eulalie de Bonneville was a significant figure in American history. His long, eventful life included an extensive military career, wars and campaigns, exploration of the Rocky Mountains, and friendships with Washington Irving, John Jacob Astor, and the Marquis de Lafayette. His service and explorations on the frontier of the United States helped usher in settlement of the West and is an example of the American spirit. His decision to come back to Fort Smith, one of the first places he was assigned army duty after West Point, given his travels all over the country is intriguing. His peers regarded him highly and his name is found on landscapes in the West: Bonneville Dam on the Columbia River; Bonneville County in Idaho; and the Bonneville Salt Flats in Utah. A crater on Mars and a U. S. Liberty ship launched during World War II were named in his honor. Benjamin Bonneville deserved this wide recognition. After his death in Fort Smith and according to his wishes, Benjamin Bonneville’s remains were taken by railroad to St. Louis to be buried at Bellefontaine Cemetery near the graves of his first wife and his daughter. For the rest of her life, Susan Neis Bonneville lived in the house that her husband built for her and which bears their name at 318 North Seventh Street in the Belle Grove Historic District of Fort Smith.



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*issue of the Journal.*

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Grant Foreman, *Pioneer Days in the Earlier Southwest* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 248.



**HOUSE BOUGHT BY BONNEVILLE’S second wife, Sue Neis, after his death. The house is located at 318 North Seventh Street in Fort Smith.**

*(Photo from Reflections of Fort Smith)*

- <sup>2</sup> *Evening Post* (New York, NY), October 14, 1835. Matt Myers, “The Adventurous Benjamin Bonneville,” *The Journal of the Fort Smith Historical Society* 38, 2 (September 2014), 43.
- <sup>3</sup> Edith Haroldson Lovell, *Benjamin Bonneville: Soldier of the American Frontier* (Utah: Horizon Publishers, 1992), 90.
- <sup>4</sup> Washington Irving, *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville* (New York: G.P. Putnam and Son, 1868), 23.
- <sup>5</sup> *Evening Post* (New York, NY), October 14, 1835.
- <sup>6</sup> Lovell, 91.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* 93.
- <sup>8</sup> J. S. Daily, “Notes on General Bonneville,” manuscript collection, Pebley Center, Fort Smith, Arkansas, 133.
- <sup>9</sup> *New Hampshire Gazette* (Portsmouth, New Hampshire), September 6, 1836.
- <sup>10</sup> *Spectator* (New York, NY). June 26, 1837; *Albany Argus* (Albany, NY), August 29, 1837; *Phoenix Civilian* (Cumberland, Maryland); September 16, 1837; Irving, *The Adventures of Captain Bonneville*.
- <sup>11</sup> *Arkansas Gazette* (Little Rock, Arkansas), January 16, 1839.
- <sup>12</sup> *Daily*, 134.
- <sup>13</sup> Lovell, 119-121.
- <sup>14</sup> *Times-Picayune* (New Orleans, Louisiana), July 30, 1846.
- <sup>15</sup> *Daily*, 134.
- <sup>16</sup> *Newark Daily Advertiser* (Newark, New Jersey), December 27, 1848.
- <sup>17</sup> *Repository* (Canton, Ohio), June 21, 1878.
- <sup>18</sup> *Boston Journal* (Boston, Massachusetts), June 13, 1878.
- <sup>19</sup> *Fort Smith New Era* (Fort Smith, Arkansas), December 1871.
- <sup>20</sup> *Worcester Daily Spy* (Worcester, Massachusetts), June 14, 1878; *Oregonian* (Portland), June 19, 1878.
- <sup>21</sup> *New Orleans Times* (New Orleans, Louisiana), June 15, 1878.

# Fort Smith and the 'Great War'

*Part II, January 1-December 31, 1915*

## By Jerry Akins

*The Southwest American*, New Year's Day, January 1, 1915, front page: "DAWN OF NEW YEAR WITH FIVE MONTHS OF FIGHTING BEHIND IT PROMISES NO IMMEDIATE VICTORY"

But war was not foremost in the minds of the Fort Smith Board of Commissioners. A part of their minutes for January 4, 1915, read:

### **Special Meeting of the Board of Commissioners**

January 4, 1915 Board met at 3 o'clock p.m.

Mayor Read stated that the purpose of the call meeting was to consider an ordinance for passage regulating Saloons and their location... : An Ordinance Entitled an Ordinance Regulating Tippling Houses, Dram Shops and dealers in wines and intoxicating Liquors in quantities or otherwise than as a Tippling House or Dram Shop.

With the war far away and prohibition unrest near at hand, the commissioners, with their usual expedience, passed the ordinance and adjourned that meeting and reconvened later in the day. With a few amendments, they passed the ordinance on the second reading and immediately called for a suspension of the rules and, on a third reading, passed it with the amendments.<sup>1</sup>

In state edicts, the Arkansas Child Labor Law went into effect January 1, 1915; a law that in the proposed application:

❖ Section 1 would allow no child under fourteen years old to be employed or permitted to work in any remunerative occupation except during school vacation, when children may be employed by their parent or guardian in an occupation owned or controlled by them.

❖ Section 2 would permit no child under sixteen years old to work in any dangerous occupation or which is injurious to the health and morals of such child.

❖ Section 5: No child shall be employed more than

six days or forty-eight hours in any one week, or before six o'clock in the morning or after seven o'clock in the evening.

❖ Section 6: No boy or girl under eighteen years old shall be employed or permitted to work more than six days or fifty-four hours in any one week, or more than ten hours in one day, or before six o'clock in the morning or after ten o'clock in the night.<sup>2</sup>

In the District of Columbia, then as now, there was disagreement over an immigration bill, except that they had a bill to disagree about.

### **IMMIGRATION BILL PASSES SENATE WITH MUCH DEBATED LITERACY TEST IN SPITE PRESIDENT'S OBJECTION**

The immigration bill, containing the restrictive literacy test for admission of aliens which has been the obstacle in immigration reform legislation for the greater part of two national administrations, passed the senate today by a vote of 50-7. Although the senate amended the house bill in several particulars, the literacy test was unaltered, save for an additional exemption to Belgian [farmers] subjects, which was adopted today.

Among the senate amendments which house leaders have said probably would be accepted is one to exclude from the United States all persons of the African race or of [N]egro blood. Another strengthens the phraseology of the exclusion of polygamists.<sup>3</sup>

However, President Woodrow Wilson, after setting aside three hours on January 22 for a hearing of the advocates of the Immigration Bill, vetoed it. The Democrats of the House of Representatives, on February 4, could not muster the two-thirds majority to override the veto of the bill passed by the Senate in January. President Wilson's, and the Republican's, objection to the bill was the literacy test, and their belief that immigration did not have a bad effect on wages in this country.<sup>4</sup>

In the January 6 meeting of the Fort Smith City Commissioners commissioner Hays stated that he was

very anxious to turn on some of the street lights which were not burning now. The mayor cautioned against hasty action in assuming any additional expense as overdrafts at the banks amount to more than \$25,000 and were growing larger monthly, and the city's agreement with the banks was made with the understanding that the city's expense would be kept to a minimum during the life of the agreement.

In an October 1914 meeting, the commissioners had decided to turn off 100 of the 319 street lights because of the city's financial condition. On December 17, 1915, the Light and Traction Company said they would turn on all the lights, at no charge from December 19 through December 25, which they did, for the Christmas season.

In other business in that meeting, a committee from the Carnegie Library composed of Messrs. J. Hill, Ralph Meacham, Allen Kennedy, and Mrs. Thomas H. Barnes presented the librarian's report. They asked that in addition to the yearly appropriation of \$2,500 that the commission refund them for taxes and insurance and thereafter pay those expenses in addition to the annual stipend of \$2,500.<sup>5</sup>

So far, people in Fort Smith were affected almost not at all by the war across the ocean, other than newspaper reports and the fact that farmers had been getting better prices for their commodities. And it appears that the United States was mainly an observer of the overseas activities. The national attitude was isolationist. But Associated Press dispatches reprinted in the local newspaper read:

Philadelphia, Jan 2. Local representatives of the department of justice tonight took into custody, Morris Dietch, said to be an attorney of New York, on a charge growing out of alleged issuing of false passports in New York.

New York, Jan. 2. An alleged conspiracy to furnish German army officers and reservists with American passports fraudulently obtained to enable them to return to Germany from this country without danger of molestation by French or English authorities was brought to light today by the department of justice.<sup>6</sup>

German military men were stranded in this country because, as the article says, they were in "danger of molestation by French or English authorities." Events such as this would eventually lead to a revival of The Alien Enemies Act that was established during John Adams presidency, and was still in force at the turn of

the twenty-first century.<sup>7</sup> The United States had declared its neutrality at the beginning of the European hostilities, but it would have to struggle to maintain that neutrality.

Meanwhile, the Wet-Dry War went on in Fort Smith. "BIG DROUTH ENDS TODAY WHEN SALOONS OPEN AGAIN" was the title of the article in the January 5, 1915, edition of *The Southwest American* that for some reason was stuck in the lower corner of the last page. Judge Hester's ruling had been announced in seventy-two point type in the upper left corner of the January 3 edition. In that article, it stated, "Carloads of wet goods were on track ready for 'opening up,' and twenty-five saloon keepers had made out their applications, bonds and checks with which to pay the county and state license." And like any war the battles went on with the sides alternately gaining and losing.

On February 6, 1915, the Arkansas General Assembly passed the Newberry Act that banned the manufacture and sale of alcohol in the state.<sup>8</sup> That law would make Arkansas dry on January 1, 1916. The Going Act, passed in 1913, was supposed to enact local option in the state on January 1, 1914. Now the question arose, "Does the Newberry Act repeal the Going Act?" It's not quite clear why a law that was to go into effect on January 1, 1916, would repeal a law passed in 1913 and that went into effect January 1, 1914, but it did. But the Fort Smith City Commissioners, like governments all over the country, had a solution. They just hauled the keepers of saloons and tippling houses into the mayor's court monthly and fined them an amount sufficient to at least equal the license fee.<sup>9</sup> That method went on through July until Judge Paul Little declared that all saloons must close August 1, irrespective of the Newberry Act that imposed statewide prohibition on January 1, 1916. The saloon keepers did keep up a battle in court into August to no avail.

In Sebastian and Scott counties, the United Mine Workers strike that had brought the U. S. Cavalry here in November 1914 was resolved in an unusual manner. The United Mine Workers bought the Bache-Denman coal interests. The front page of the January 19 edition of *The Southwest American* announced that the UMW had made the first \$50,000 payment on a total \$200,000 purchase price of the bankrupt Bache-Denman mining properties. Representatives of both the union and the mine owners were in Fort Smith that day to negotiate the settlement for the receivership. "They show that such negotiations means wiping the Hartford Valley troubles off the slate; with immediate resumption of mining and employment of the hundreds of miners who have lain idle for nearly a year." The case had been ar-



gued in the U. S. District Court for the Western District of Arkansas for weeks before arriving at this solution.<sup>10</sup> However, a month later *The Southwest American* announced that the deal was off and the \$50,000 check had been returned to the UMW. The reason for the failure of negotiations was that “the Bache-Denman interests could not deliver the properties they agreed to deliver when the deal was first started.” The court battles would continue and there was the possibility another strike.<sup>11</sup>

In the column next to the United Mine Workers article was an AP dispatch, dateline Washington, January 18. “WHITE HOUSE BABY ARRIVED SUNDAY.” President Wilson’s daughter, Mrs. Francis B. Sayre, had given birth in the White House to a son.<sup>12</sup>

In January 1915, the Fort Smith Plan Pig and Poultry Club took to the streets to solicit every businessman and merchant to join “the already large membership of the club.” Each member would agree to adopt and finance a boy or girl or both for a pig or a pen of poultry for membership in the government pig and poultry work. This idea was similar to what Booker T. Washington proposed for 700,000 “colored families” without pigs in a letter to Editor: The Herald published October 22, 1914. But the idea must have already been in the U. S. Department of Agriculture mill at that time, because USDA Bulletin No. 132, a forty-two page document dated January 21, 1915, put forward that idea and more.<sup>13</sup>

The U. S. Department of Agriculture had become concerned with the efficiency of food production. The volume of food production was not increasing as fast as the population increase.<sup>14</sup> Programs were established to teach animal husbandry, crop efficiency, and food preservation. These boys and girls clubs were intended to get everyone involved and to get businesses to finance the operation.<sup>15</sup> These programs expanded throughout 1915 to include every aspect of food production and preservation and what would later be called farm-to-market-roads. These USDA programs were the beginning of the 4-H Clubs and Agricultural Extension Offices that we know today. Apparently the Fort Smith Plan Pig and Poultry Club idea of membership or sponsorship by businesses of youth animal husbandry was an original concept within the new program of the USDA. Soon there was news of the Fort Smith Plan being adopted in Alabama and other states.<sup>16</sup>

By February 1, 1915, the city commissioners were again concerned with turning on street lights. Commissioner Singleton moved that no more street lights be turned on. The motion was lost for want of a second.

Next it was moved that 100 be turned on, and finally it was agreed that fifty lights be turned on. On February 3, among other business, Commissioner Kuper questioned a bill from Crabtree Livery for four dollars for taking the bloodhounds to Long, Oklahoma. Mayor Reed explained that when John A. Johnson of Sallisaw, Oklahoma, brought the bloodhounds to Fort Smith, he did not charge anything for them, but it was understood that whenever he wanted them, they would be sent to him without cost to him.<sup>17</sup> Their concerns and responsibilities were different in those days.

In Mexico, the civil war that had started in 1914 went on. General Carranza had been executed at the end of January. But in Brownsville, Texas, troubles more related to the Mexican/American War of 1846-48 arose when Basilio Ramos Jr. was arrested on charges of seditious conspiracy. Warrants were issued for eight others said to be scattered along the Mexican border between Brownsville and Arizona. “United States officers said that Ramos was one of a band of men who had pledged themselves to “kill every white male over sixteen years old, free enslaved Mexicans and Negroes and protect all women and children.” Their plot also called for the death of every U. S. soldier along the border from the Gulf of Mexico to Arizona.<sup>18</sup>

These and other such incidents by people of Ramos’s persuasion and border banditos brought about a number of skirmishes between Mexicans and U. S. Army troops along the Texas/Mexico border. Fort Smith residents and other Americans were probably more interested in the happenings here on U. S. soil than in battles occurring in Europe an ocean away.

Maybe, except that there were Americans aboard the ships being torpedoed by German submarines. Foreign ships, some carrying “contraband,” some not, were flying the American flag to avoid being stopped by German U-boats. The United States had no rules prohibiting the use of the flag by foreign vessels. An Associated Press release stated: “LONDON, (11:20 P. M.) Feb. 6—The British steamer *Lusitania* of the Cunard line, which from New York, January 30, and arrived in Liverpool this afternoon, flew the American flag while crossing the Irish seas.”<sup>19</sup> The *Lusitania* met its fate four months later, May 7, 1915, off the coast of Ireland.<sup>20</sup> This sinking brought about a series of diplomatic letters between the United States and Germany, and the tone and wording of those letters ultimately led to the resignation of Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan. Bryan believed that the government’s policy toward Germany would lead to war.<sup>21</sup>

Two and a half months after the sinking of the *Lusi-*

*tania*, on July 22, 1915, President Woodrow Wilson and Secretary Lansing sent a new note to Germany warning that “the repetition of a disaster such as that visited upon the *Lusitania* or any violation of American rights on the high seas resulting in the loss of American lives will be regarded as ‘unfriendly.’” Two days later, the secretary of state sent another note to the minister of foreign affairs detailing the United States’ dissatisfaction with the German Imperial Government’s note of July 8, 1915.<sup>22</sup> These notes came after the sinking of the Dominion freighter *Armenia* carrying mules from Newport News, Virginia, to England “and nearly a score of American muleteers aboard were reported lost.”<sup>23</sup> From newspaper reports, it appears that all that transpired over these attacks and the attack on the American steamer *Nebraskan* was the exchange of diplomatic “notes.” But the tone changed when the British liner *Arabic* was torpedoed August 19 without loss of American lives. That was followed by more than two months of contentious negotiations until, “Wilson’s Policy Brings Peace with Honor.”<sup>24</sup> And those exchanges went on and on with one country accusing and warning and the other denying. All the while the newspapers, and apparently the populace, supported the president’s policy of neutrality.

Although *The Southwest American* gave its readers a steady front page diet of the wars in Europe, Mexico, and the conflicts along the Mexican-U. S. border, there was no indication of public sentiment on these matters in Fort Smith.

Meanwhile Fort Smith had come into the automobile age. City commission meeting minutes mention speeders and joy riders. What speed defined a speeder is never mentioned; it was in the eye of the beholder, I suppose. But, the automotive trend that seemed to sweep the country in 1915 was jitneys. According to *The Southwest American* edition of February 8, 1915, “The shadow of the jitney bus cast by the setting sun from the Pacific coast across the whole continent has materialized into thriving jitney systems in forty American cities.”

Jitneys in Fort Smith did not “materialize into a thriving business.” They did alleviate a problem during the negotiations between the Light and Traction Company and the Bridge Commission over use of the free bridge, but that’s a story in itself. The jitneys caused problems for the City Commission, and they, more so, for the jitney operators association. Jitneys were regulated to not more than two passengers more than the manufacturer’s rating for a vehicle and were not allowed to stop in intersections. Those two ordinances were not hindrances, but the bonding fee made the busi-

ness unprofitable. The first draft of the bonding ordinance called for a \$5,000 bond, but after a couple of amendments, the bond was set at \$3,000. Complications of the ordinance caused the city attorney to warn the commissioners it conflicted with the state and federal constitutions; however, that was resolved and the ordinance passed.<sup>25</sup> That \$3,000 bond was at a time when the state legislature had just passed a minimum wage law for women of \$1 a day for inexperienced women and \$1.25 a day for women with two or more months’ experience.<sup>26</sup>

The Traction Co./Bridge Commission problem mentioned in the previous paragraph was a result of a contract disagreement. The citizens of Fort Smith and Crawford County had paid for the building of a bridge across the Arkansas River between Fort Smith and Van Buren that opened for service November 12, 1912. In 1914, arguments challenged the Bridge Commission’s franchise to the Light & Traction Company, and on December 26, 1914, the Traction Company ceased service across the bridge. Negotiations and litigation went on the entire year of 1915 over the use of the bridge, fares that would be charged to passengers, and what portion of fares would be paid to the commission. In the interim, jitneys conveyed people who lived on one side of the river and worked on the other and anyone else who desired to ride rather than walk. Finally after much acrimony, contract proposals and rejections by both sides, banker Iser H. Nakdimen headed litigation that forced the company to meet the terms of the commission. Service was resumed December 29, 1915.<sup>27</sup>

In March, while the city commissioners labored to deal with shooting galleries, pool halls, and dog licenses, the newly formed boat club had another idea. Theirs was “the final abolition of the worst eye sore in the city of Fort Smith, Coke Hill, and the building of a park on the site of this historic scene of misdemeanors of the colored population, and the building of an attractive club house at the junction of the Poteau and Arkansas rivers . . .” Volunteers had been working on a project of clearing away the shacks belonging to the African Americans on Coke Hill and making a park site. At the time of the article, they had procured the cooperation of all of the property owners but two and expected to make arrangements with them soon.<sup>28</sup> The Fort Smith Central Trades and Labor Council endorsed the idea of, “the movement which was instituted by the Fort Smith Boat Club for wiping out this city’s malodorous Coke Hill and making it a beautiful river front park.”<sup>29</sup> The negotiations for the land were moving slowly due to the fact that one of the land owners lived in California. The owners were not the occupants of the land, and appar-

ently no one had consulted the Coke Hill residents, for they were still there for many years afterward, but the park was not.

One of those “misdemeanors of the colored population” had just become a federal felony. On March 1, 1915, the Harrison Narcotics Tax Act went into effect regulating cocaine, morphine, opium, and a long list of other narcotics. It was described as: “the drastic federal law intended to wipe out the menace of the drug habit . . .” One member of the police department was quoted as saying, “It is well understood that, bad as are the morals of Coke Hill, the one thing which has made the locality a plague spot more than any other is the little understood prevalence of the ‘coke’ habit among the denizens. Every attempt so far has resulted in failure to punish those, who for the money they could get out of it, were ready to supply the drug to the negroes—and some whites—of the hill and similar sections of the city.”<sup>30</sup> Subsequent to passage of the Narcotics Act, articles ran in the newspapers telling of hospitals and other institutions being filled with “dope fiends” who had been cut off from their usual sources.

*The Southwest American*, Tuesday morning, March 30, 1915: “The first charge of selling cocaine that has been docketed in the city since the new Harrison anti-drug act went into effect on March 1, was filed in Fisher’s court yesterday afternoon, when Carrie Cravens and Savannah Gatewood, Negro women, were arrested and placed in jail, on the charge of violating the state statute that prohibits the sale of cocaine.... Two Negro women told the officers they would swear that they secured cocaine from the two defendants, and the charges were accordingly filed.”

Newspapers always noted the race of the subjects of their sentences if they were other than white. Papers of the early twentieth century displayed overt racism, as evidenced in the foregoing paragraphs, which was not evident in the papers of the late nineteenth century. But the international racial happening of those early years was about to take place.

Jack Johnson had beaten Jim Jeffries on July 4, 1910, to become the first black world heavyweight boxing champion. Johnson was flamboyant and taunted his opponents, and seemed unbeatable. The predominant race had been looking for “The Great White Hope” ever since Johnson had started demolishing white opponents in 1907. In March 1915, it was announced that 6-foot-6-inch, 235 pound Jess Willard would fight 6-foot-2 inch, 214 pound Jack Johnson on April 4 in Havana, Cuba.<sup>31</sup>

Willard knocked Johnson out in the twenty-sixth round in Havana on April 4, 1915, Easter Sunday, the same day that *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* opened at the Sebas-

tian Theatre in Fort Smith. On April 13, the same theater advertised motion pictures showing Jess Willard, “the big white champion.” On April 15, *The Fort Smith Herald* commended Congress for enacting a law prohibiting the importation of “prize fight movies” and for making it impossible for Jack Johnson to fight on American soil. Now, they said, “President Wilson can perform another national duty by enforcing another federal law and preventing the importation into this country of the Willard-Johnson fight movies and their exhibition to the public.” The next week *The Herald* ran a front page editorial titled, “MOVIES MUST BE CENSORED.” It pointed out particularly the Willard-Johnson fight, but also said, “debauchery, drunken carousals, riots and murders, must be tabooed.”<sup>32</sup> Censorship of movies would come up later in the year.

*Times Record*, February 4, 2015: “The 308 mile Arkansas portion of the M-KARNS is also set to receive nearly \$32 million for operation and maintenance this year . . .”

*The Southwest American*, April 10, 1915: “RIVER IMPROVEMENT IS ARKANSAS GETS QUARTER MILLION. Nearly a quarter of a million dollars was authorized by the last session of congress for river improvement work in the state of Arkansas . . .”

*The Southwest American*, Saturday, April 10, 1915, ran a weather article:

#### DELUGE OF RAIN SWEEPS CITY

The heaviest rain storm for more than a year swept the city Friday afternoon, the total rainfall being over two inches. For a short time it approached the dimension of a cloudburst, nearly half an inch of water falling in eight minutes. The streets were deluged and basements in the business section inundated. The rain came without much wind.

At the corner of Towson and Garrison avenues there was a regular old-time flood which the sewers were not large enough to control. For more than half a block the water rose over the curb and several inches deep on the floors of all the business houses on the south side of the avenue.

Along the alley between Garrison and Rogers avenues the flood ran into basements of business houses, and in some of them the first floor rear was also deluged. - - - The larger portion of the catch basins of the sewer system were choked with street mud and refuse which had washed into them . . .<sup>33</sup>

September 17, 2014—KFSM TV: “A woman was rescued from her vehicle after the streets flooded Wednesday night following a rainstorm. Several vehicles in downtown Fort Smith had to be abandoned after flood waters covered the car’s tires. One woman who left her vehicle had to be lifted up and escorted across the water . . . .”<sup>34</sup>

Regular Meeting of the Board of Commissioners, June 16, 1915:

Petition: For relief of condition on Towson Avenue, Commissioner Hays stated the county had the matter under advisement. [“We the property owners and businessmen on Towson avenue feeling aggrieved at the deplorable condition of the aforesaid Towson avenue . . . .”] He said the county had asked his department for an estimate of the cost of concreting Towson Ave. and also he was studying the problem with a view of trying to turn some of the water back to south “G” Street.

Fort Smith Board of Directors, Regular Meeting, January 20, 2015, Agenda Summary:

Consent Agenda, Item B. Resolution authorizing the acquisition of real property interests for the Town Branch Drainage Improvements, Phase III, Project No. 11-06-B

The Town Branch Drainage area is part of the same area mentioned in the petition to the City Commission 100 years earlier.

The Sunday morning May 9 edition of *The Southwest American* announced:

#### **MADE IN FORT SMITH EXPOSITION OPENS MONDAY FOR ENTIRE WEEK SPLENDID EXHIBITS AND PROGRAM**

The exposition of Fort Smith manufactured goods will open in the Boston store and Wolf-Pollock’s Monday morning and will continue throughout the week with splendid exhibitions in attractive booths, orchestra music, addresses by experts of statewide fame and delightful programs given under the auspices of the federation of Women’s clubs.

Fort Smith’s food product manufacturers were involved in the exposition, but it was also a forum for the USDA programs mentioned earlier, pig and poultry clubs, canning clubs, and diversified farming. The

USDA had been successful in moving Arkansas from single crop, cotton, to diversified farming and breaking the hold of landlords and jobbers over tenant farmers. A part of the week’s program was devoted to the diversified agriculture theme. On Tuesday night, the high school put on a short play titled, “The Big Bully, or a Crop Scrapfest,” illustrating diversified farming and living at home.<sup>35</sup>

#### **ARIZONA, UNCLE SAM’S LATEST DREADNAUGHT IS LAUNCHED TODAY**

Washington, June 18. Another \$15,000,000 battle ship will be launched for the American Navy today when the super-dreadnaught *Arizona* slides into the water at the New York navy yard. She is sister ship to the *Pennsylvania*, recently launched at Newport News, and in size and armament one of the largest and most powerful craft built for any navy.<sup>36</sup>

August 2, 1915, was Ford Day in Fort Smith in celebration of a fifty dollar rebate that Ford Manufacturing Company was giving to every buyer of a Ford car bought since the previous August 1. It was thought that, “all the cars from the surrounding country will be here.” Henry Ford’s fifty dollar rebate was equal to a week’s wages for many people in 1915.

The festivities started with a grand parade that took the visitors through not only the business district, but also the residential area, then on to Electric Park. The events included the usual candidates for political office, “an old fashioned dinner,” and moving pictures of the Ford factory, and free vaudeville in the auditorium.

It looked like every business in town tried to get into the act with advertising. Even John Fink Jeweler advertised, “EQUIP YOUR FORD with a THERMOS BOTTLE.” At Electric Park, Yantis-Harper displayed its Knight and Firestone tires and tubes and offered free tire change to any Ford owner. Service boys were on hand to look after the tire troubles of visiting car owners, and free air and water were available.<sup>37</sup>

About the time Fort Smith was celebrating the Ford automobile, the city commissioners were concerning themselves with the condition of the Arkansas River banks. And like today, they deigned to petition their congressmen for help. In a special meeting on August 5, 1915, “Commissioner Bruce introduced a resolution asking our Representatives and Senators of this state to use their best efforts to secure government aid in keeping open the navigation on the Arkansas River, and prevent the cutting of its banks at Braden’s Bend.” A similar resolution was passed in the February 3 meeting of

the commissioners when the mayor was instructed to write to all senators and congressmen of Arkansas and Oklahoma regarding the action of the Arkansas River cutting its banks into the Poteau River.<sup>38</sup>

In late May and early June 1915, there had been flooding along the Missouri, Mississippi, and Arkansas rivers. On Sunday night, May 30, "unknown persons" dynamited a levee, causing two gaps about ten miles below Van Buren. "When the river reached an unusual high mark last March a large portion of the bank at the lower bend of the river caved in, weakening a section of the levee." The gaps were cut to allow flooded land to drain. There was a levee board, but there appears to have been dissention among the crew about where to strengthen weak points and where to bypass, and the "unknown persons" cast their votes on the issue.

There was also a problem with the city water supply at the pump house. The newspaper reported that there was ample supply of water in the standpipe hill reservoirs and the clear water well at the pump house. The Poteau River had flooded and a washout of the pump house switch (railroad switch) made it impossible to get coal to the pump engine boilers.<sup>39</sup> The pumps that were working could not pump water seepage from the outside river pressure below a five-foot level in the pump pit. When the floodwater receded, "malicious mischief" was discovered. It was found that a valve had been opened, probably intentionally, that allowed river water directly into the pit.<sup>40</sup>

By October there were some disgruntled water users. *The Southwest American* ran a three-column editorial addressing the subject.

**DANGER AHEAD**  
**For City Water Department and the**  
**Improvement District Financing**  
**A Dispassionate Discussion of**  
**Some Facts the Public Should Know**

There is a relation so intimate between the present embarrassed condition of the Fort Smith water improvement district and city water departments, and the past history of handling and expending the income of the district and the water plant, that an investigation of the conditions and their causes leads directly to the uncovering of methods of spending department funds not all in keeping with either the conservation of those funds or of the principles of the commission government.

The writer ends by telling the "reader who is one of the stockholders of the city of Fort Smith" to procure and read the last ten months of quarterly reports of the commis-

sion.<sup>41</sup>

October 16, 1915:

**LID CLAMPED ON NEGROES SKATING RINK**

The lid is clamped down tight on the Negro skating rink which was recently opened in the old Bollinger Overalls factory corner of North Fourth and A streets. The license was revoked Monday and the chief of police instructed to see that the lid isn't tipped. The city license fee was ordered returned to the parties who secured it. - - - -

According to statements of the mayor and various members of the commission, two young white men had applied for a license representing that it was for the purpose of conducting a white rink, and the license was granted. The petitioners did not complain of the noise in the rink, saying that they would have had no objection to the operation of a white rink in the neighborhood, but that making it a center of congregation for colored people drew all the undesirable Negroes to the neighborhood, only a small portion of whom went inside, crowds congregating along the street and alleys, using profane and indecent language until near midnight every night and frightening the women in the neighborhood from the street after dark.<sup>42</sup>

The day before this article ran in the paper, a group of citizens had appeared before the city commissioners with a petition saying, in part: "The undersigned property owners in the neighborhood of the corner of north A and Fourth Streets protest against a Negro skating rink being permitted to operate in what is known as the old Overall Factory building on the corner of north A and fourth Street." The petition goes on to state basically the assertions given in the newspaper. Dr. Clark Wood, owner of the building was there to speak against the petition.

An Associated Press dispatch from London on November 12, 1915:

It is officially announced that Winston Spencer Churchill, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, has resigned from the cabinet and will join the Army in France . . .

He said he could not accept a position of general responsibility for a war policy without any effective share in its guidance and control and did not feel able in times like these to remain in well paid inactivity.

Motion pictures were a major source of entertainment

in 1915, and Fort Smith was not left out in that medium. The Tuesday, August 17, edition of *The Southwest American* proclaimed: "FORT SMITH MOVIE SUCCESS IN EVERY ARTISTIC FEATURE."

In July, W. P. Wilson, of Little Rock, arrived in Fort Smith, and announced his intention to produce "a moving picture of Fort Smith, written by a Fort Smith author, produced by Fort Smith people...." In the days following the announcement, the news reporter used all his journalistic skills to describe the movie's premise and to promote Fort Smith's image. "Fort Smith traditions and Fort Smith industries, cleverly interwoven into a connected, interesting story that will at once tell of her advantages to home-seekers, the capitalist and the searcher for a fit place to rear a family and live amidst culture and refinement." The plot appears to have been the standard plot of the day with the heroine in distress, the villain and the hero. *The High Road to Fortune* was run in the Joie theater and the little play house on August 16, 1915, and was regarded, "Both artistically and as a picture story the play is far above the average run of movie stories."<sup>43</sup>

Movies in 1915 were not only a major source of entertainment, one was a major source of contention and conflict. The film was D. W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*, first viewed on February 8, 1915. On November 21, 1915, the newspapers announced that *Birth of a Nation* would appear in Fort Smith as the New Theatre in December. The November 29 Board of Commissioners minutes state: "Petition from the Committee of Colored People asking the Commission to not allow the Picture to be shown at the New Theater entitled *Birth of a Nation*. The Commission heard the picture explained by Mr. C. A. Lick, who promised to run the picture for the inspection of the Commission and said he would cut out any objectional [sic] feature that they would recommend no further action was taken."

*Birth of a Nation* was a four-hour epic of extreme racial bias. If "objectional features" were removed, not much of the film would be left. Although President Woodrow Wilson viewed it in the White House and is supposed to have called it "history written in lightning," it is anything but historical. It was banned in some cities and censored in others.

At a time when Charlie Chaplin and Mary Pickford movies cost five and ten cents for admission, *Birth of a Nation* prices ran from fifty cents to two dollars.

On December 17, the Board of Commissioners, having viewed the picture, reported back: "Be it resolved by the Board of Commissioners that *The Birth of a Nation* as an educational picture, we feel it has few equals if any and should be seen by every person young and old, White and Black, who is interested in any way in the historical events connected with the country especially the Civil War." The

## NEW THEATRE

THREE NIGHTS  
STARTING  
THURSDAY

# December 16

MATINEES  
FRIDAY  
SATURDAY

CURTAIN AT 3 AND 8:15

**PRICES** NIGHTS—Lower Floor \$1.00, \$1.50 and \$2.00; Balcony, 50c, 75c and \$1.00; Gallery, reserved 50c; unreserved, 25c.  
MATINEES—Lower Floor, 50c and \$1.00; Balcony 50c; Gallery 25c.

Seat Sale Opens Monday, Dec. 13 at Caldwell's Drug Store and Bostick's Van Buren, at 8 o'clock.

**The World's Mightiest Spectacle**

D. W. GRIFFITH'S

THE  
BIRTH  
OF A  
NATION

Founded on  
"THE CLANSMAN"  
BY THOMAS DIXON

Grand Operatic Score Interpreted  
By Symphony Orchestra of 30

The South Truly Portrayed

18,000 PEOPLE

SHERMAN'S  
MARCH TO  
THE SEA  
BATTLE OF  
PETERSBURG

LEE AND  
GRANT AT  
POMATTOX

THE GREAT  
AMERICAN  
PLAY AT LAST

3,000 HORSES

WILD RIDES  
OF THE  
KU KLUX KLAN

ASSASSINATION  
OF LINCOLN

AGONY OF  
RECONSTRUCTION

THE PART  
THE WOMEN  
PLAYED

700 Times  
In New York  
and  
Still Running

One comes from this film saying: "I have done the South a cruel injustice; they are all dead, these crafty-tried people, but I feel now that I know them as they were; not as they ought to have been or might have been, but as they were; as I should probably have been in their place. I have seen them in their homes, in their pride and their glory, and I have seen what they went back to. I understand them better." — Rupert Hughes, the Novelist.

500 Times  
In Chicago  
and  
Still Running

THE GREATEST ART CONQUEST IN THE HISTORY OF CIVILIZATION

resolution goes on for another long paragraph praising the values of the picture, ending with the words, "one of the greatest photo plays of the age."<sup>44</sup>

Ignoring the content of the film and looking at only the cinematography, it was one of the accomplishments of the age. It defined film making from then on. Film critics then and now begrudgingly give D. W. Griffith credit, along with their denunciation of a movie that glorifies the Ku Klux Klan, for techniques totally new and lasting. With this piece of bigotry, he established modern movie making.

But, more pleasant things happened in December 1915. The president of the United States got married: "Washington, D. C., Dec. 18, President Wilson and Mrs. Edith Bolling Galt were married at eight-thirty o'clock tonight and left afterward on their honeymoon at Hot Springs, Virginia." Wilson's first wife, also named Edith, had died on August 6, 1914; afterward, the president endured bouts of depression while dealing with the beginnings of World War I. He recovered in January 1915, and in February, he met Edith Galt. They wed the following December.<sup>45</sup>

On December 15, 1915, the Department of Agriculture announced, "The nation's harvest this year surpassed any before recorded. - - - The unusual situation of extraordinary production and high prices never before so pronounced is credited principally to the European War."<sup>46</sup> Ironically the war had, in part, sent this country

into depression at the beginning, due to the reduced demand for cotton and other products, and the difficulty of shipping goods.

War news of December 1915 reported on the British withdrawal from the Gallipoli Peninsula, in western Turkey. On April 25, 1915, British and Australian troops had rowed ashore onto a narrow beach enclosed by steep bluffs, bristling with seasoned, well-supplied Turkish defenders. On W Beach alone, out of the 1,029 men who landed, only 410 survived. Today at Gallipoli, there are graves of 28,000 of the British and Australian troops, many of whom died of their wounds before they could be removed from the peninsula.<sup>47</sup> That invasion of Turkey, a power allied with Germany, stands as one of the greatest debacles in British military history.

To end the year, on December 31, 1915, *The Southwest American* had an item on page five titled: "STATE PRIZE FOR POULTRY CLUB WINNER."

The USDA had, the previous year, encouraged all kinds of innovative ideas in agriculture, which may have contributed to the record crops mentioned before. The Fort Smith Plan of pig and poultry clubs seems to have been a model for other states. E. N. Hopkins, secretary of the Arkansas Pig and Poultry Club plan had asked for a prize to go to the state winner in the Girls Poultry club work in 1915. The M. M. Johnson Co., manufacturers of "Old Trusty" incubators contributed "an Old Trusty 100-120 size freight paid" to the winner.<sup>48</sup>

New Year's Eve was most likely an exuberant celebration. It was the last day for legal alcohol in Arkansas.



*Jerry Akins is a perennial contributor to The Journal and is the author of Hangin' Times in Fort Smith (Little Rock: Butler Center Books, 2012).*

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Special Meeting of The Board of Commissioners, January 4, 1915, City Hall, Fort Smith, Arkansas
- <sup>2</sup> *Southwest American*, January 1, 1915, p 8, col. 1
- <sup>3</sup> *Southwest American*, January 3, 1915, p1 col. 1
- <sup>4</sup> *Southwest American*, February 5, 1915 p1, col. 1
- <sup>5</sup> Minutes of Fort Smith City Commissioners, January 6, 1915
- <sup>6</sup> *Southwest American*, January 3, 1915, p8 col. 1
- <sup>7</sup> earlyamerica.com, The Alien Enemies Act, wording as it was passed by Congress
- <sup>8</sup> *Encyclopedia of Arkansas—Prohibition*, p3, pp 2
- <sup>9</sup> *Fort Smith Herald*, February 18, 1915 p1, col. 5, 6
- <sup>10</sup> *Southwest American*, January 10, 1915, p1 col. 1
- <sup>11</sup> *Southwest American*, February 11, 1915, p1 col.3, 4
- <sup>12</sup> President Woodrow Wilson's wife, Edith Axson Wilson,

died August 6, 1914. Wilson's daughter and son-in-law moved into the White House after his wife's death. Grover Cleveland, who entered the White House a bachelor, married Francis Folsum, who had two babies in the White House. Ref: [www.whitehouse.gov/about/first-ladies/](http://www.whitehouse.gov/about/first-ladies/)

- <sup>13</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture Bulletin No. 132, January 21, 1915, "Correlating Agriculture with the Public School Subjects in the Southern States."
- <sup>14</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture Bulletin, No. 132
- <sup>15</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture Yearbook for 1913, p 25-28
- <sup>16</sup> *Southwest American*, February 14, 1915, p 6, col. 6
- <sup>17</sup> Minutes of Fort Smith City Commissioners meeting of February 1 and February 3, 1915
- <sup>18</sup> *Southwest American*, February 5, 1915, p 9 col. 1
- <sup>19</sup> *Southwest American*, February 7, 1915, p 1, col. 1
- <sup>20</sup> [www.rmslusitania.info](http://www.rmslusitania.info), The Lusitania Resource
- <sup>21</sup> *Southwest American*, June 9, 1915, p 1, Headline
- <sup>22</sup> *Southwest American*, July 22 and July 24, 1915, p 1
- <sup>23</sup> *Southwest American*, July 1, 1915, p1, col. 6,7
- <sup>24</sup> *Southwest American*, October 6, 1915, p1
- <sup>25</sup> Minutes of the Fort Smith City Commissioners meetings of May 19, May 21, June 2 and June 7, 1915,
- <sup>26</sup> *Southwest American*, March 21, 1915, p 6, col. 3
- <sup>27</sup> *Fort Smith Light & Traction Company*, by Charles E. Winters, "The Streetcars of Fort Smith," *The Journal of The Fort Smith Historical Society*, Vol. 3, No. 2
- <sup>28</sup> *SW American*, March 11, 1915, p 10, col. 1
- <sup>29</sup> *SW American*, March 26, 1915, p4, col. 1
- <sup>30</sup> *SW American*, February 28, 1915, p 10, col. 1
- <sup>31</sup> [Biography.com/people/jack-johnson](http://Biography.com/people/jack-johnson)
- <sup>32</sup> *Fort Smith Herald*, April 13 and April 22, 1915, p1
- <sup>33</sup> *Southwest American*, April 10, 1915, p 10, col. 2
- <sup>34</sup> KFSM-TV September 17, 2014 at 8:54 pm, Shain Bergan, [5newsonline.com](http://5newsonline.com)
- <sup>35</sup> *Southwest American*, May 9, 1915, p 12, col. 1
- <sup>36</sup> *Southwest American*, June 19, 1915, p 1
- <sup>37</sup> *Southwest American*, August 1, 1915, p 5, col. 1
- <sup>38</sup> Regular Meeting of the Fort Smith Board of Commissioners, February 3, 1915
- <sup>39</sup> *Southwest American*, June 1, 1915, p 8, col. 3
- <sup>40</sup> *Southwest American*, June 8, 1915, p8, col. 1
- <sup>41</sup> *Southwest American*, October 31, 1915, p2, col. 3, 4, 5
- <sup>42</sup> *Southwest American*, November 16, 1915, p 5, col. 4
- <sup>43</sup> *Southwest American*, July 27, July 30, August 3 and August 17, 1915
- <sup>44</sup> Minutes of the Fort Smith Board of Commissioners, Special meeting, December 17, 1915
- <sup>45</sup> Associated Press dispatch, *Southwest American*, December 19, 1915, p 1
- <sup>46</sup> *Southwest American*, December 16, 1915, p1
- <sup>47</sup> *Smithsonian*, February 2015, Vol. 45, No. 10, 44
- <sup>48</sup> *Southwest American*, December 31, 1915, p 5, col. 3



# Aviation in Fort Smith

## *A Brief Historical Overview*



A DELTA PLANE AT THE FORT SMITH REGIONAL AIRPORT.

*(Photo by Amrit Kannan)*

### By Amrit Kannan

**R**elaxing on one of the many cozy couches in the terminal building and waiting for a flight that seems to be endlessly delayed, the average passenger at the Fort Smith Regional Airport might not ponder the extensive history of powered flight that exists literally beneath his or her feet. The waiting passenger, sighing of frustration, might not consider that despite his extensive delay, he is assured that he will reach his destination safely, and in one piece.

That assurance is certainly not something that J. C. “Bud” Mars had on a windy spring day on May 21, 1910, as he nervously approached his Curtiss Skylark in what was heavily advertised around the state as the first flight of a flying machine in Arkansas, something that had only been a mythical tale to the spectators assembling that morning at the Fort Smith Electrical Park, now known as Kay Rodgers Park.<sup>1</sup> Mars had taken the plane for a test flight the day before, officially the first flight in Arkansas, but this was not known to the audience gathered at the grounds. The rich and poor gathered at the park, hours before the event, the rich driving their gleaming automobiles to the site. The poor, including children from local orphanages, were admitted to the park without charge courtesy of the Fort Smith Light and Traction Company,



AMRIT KANNAN at the Fort Smith Regional Airport.

*(Photo courtesy of the Times Record)*

sponsor of the whole event.

As the crowd anxiously watched, Mars walked to the parked aircraft and forcibly turned the propellers as four large men held down the plane to prevent it from drifting in the wind. Once the blades were turning, he climbed on the contraption—made of wood and canvas—as it chugged to life. Mrs. Mars, standing next to the aircraft, broke a bottle of wine directly on the engine, saying, “I christen the Skylark, may she fly long and high!” Mars then took off and did circles above the grounds, stunning the audience. The heavy winds made his job especially

**Table 1:** Enplanements at Fort Smith Regional Airport<sup>10</sup>

|      |         |      |         |      |        |      |        |
|------|---------|------|---------|------|--------|------|--------|
| 1990 | 109,632 | 1996 | 93,521  | 2002 | 81,826 | 2008 | 89,517 |
| 1991 | 102,611 | 1997 | 96,200  | 2003 | 88,976 | 2009 | 78,910 |
| 1992 | 113,148 | 1998 | 103,929 | 2004 | 89,681 | 2010 | 83,902 |
| 1993 | 110,459 | 1999 | 103,324 | 2005 | 99,255 | 2011 | 84,136 |
| 1994 | 105,000 | 2000 | 99,885  | 2006 | 95,272 | 2012 | 86,751 |
| 1995 | 91,586  | 2001 | 95,461  | 2007 | 95,096 | 2013 | 82,742 |

tricky, with one spectator noting that the plane constantly “porpoise,” meaning that it soared, then plummeted, in a continuous fashion. All in all, Mars did two flights that day, going as high as seventy-five feet in the thirty-five mph winds.<sup>2</sup>

Mars’ spectacle that day paved the way for Fort Smith to be a leader in Arkansas aviation. Not only did the first flight in Arkansas occur in Fort Smith, but the second airmail delivery in the country happened here. On November 11, 1911, a Curtiss biplane carried a handful of envelopes across the city, landing near downtown. Every envelope it carried was marked with a commemorative stamp, advertising a small, emerging business in town known as the First National Bank of Fort Smith. (The bank went on to attain iconic status, with 143 years of operation in the city).<sup>3</sup>

Born a few years after the flights described above, fighter pilots from Fort Smith, Pierce Winningham McKennon and Warren G. McLellan, earned legendary reputations in World War II. McKennon, born in Clarks-ville, was raised in Fort Smith after his dentist father moved here. Between 1943 and 1945, he flew 204 combat missions, logging 560 operational hours, and was highly decorated. He was the top scoring ace from Arkansas with twelve aerial victories and nine ground victories.<sup>4</sup> Warren G. McLellan was a navy torpedo pilot in the war who was shot down, survived, and flew commercial aircraft for many decades after. McLellan was born in August 1921 in Fort Smith.<sup>5</sup> Entering the war effort shortly after his twentieth birthday, McLellan was deployed as a fighter pilot by the US Navy on the USS Lexington in the Pacific theater. In 1944, as he was returning his TBM Avenger torpedo plane to the Lexington, a Japanese Zero riddled the Avenger with bullets. McLellan nursed his plane along, limping toward the carrier, but his squadron mates, flying next to him, advised that he ditch his aircraft in the water instead of risking an engine fire or failure. After floating in shark-infested waters near Palau for hours, feeling slimy objects sliding against him underwater, McLellan was rescued by search aircraft the next morning.<sup>6</sup> Shortly after the war, McLellan became a pilot for American Airlines.<sup>7</sup> After



**CENTRAL AIRLINES DC-3** at gate ready for passengers, Fort Smith Municipal Airport.

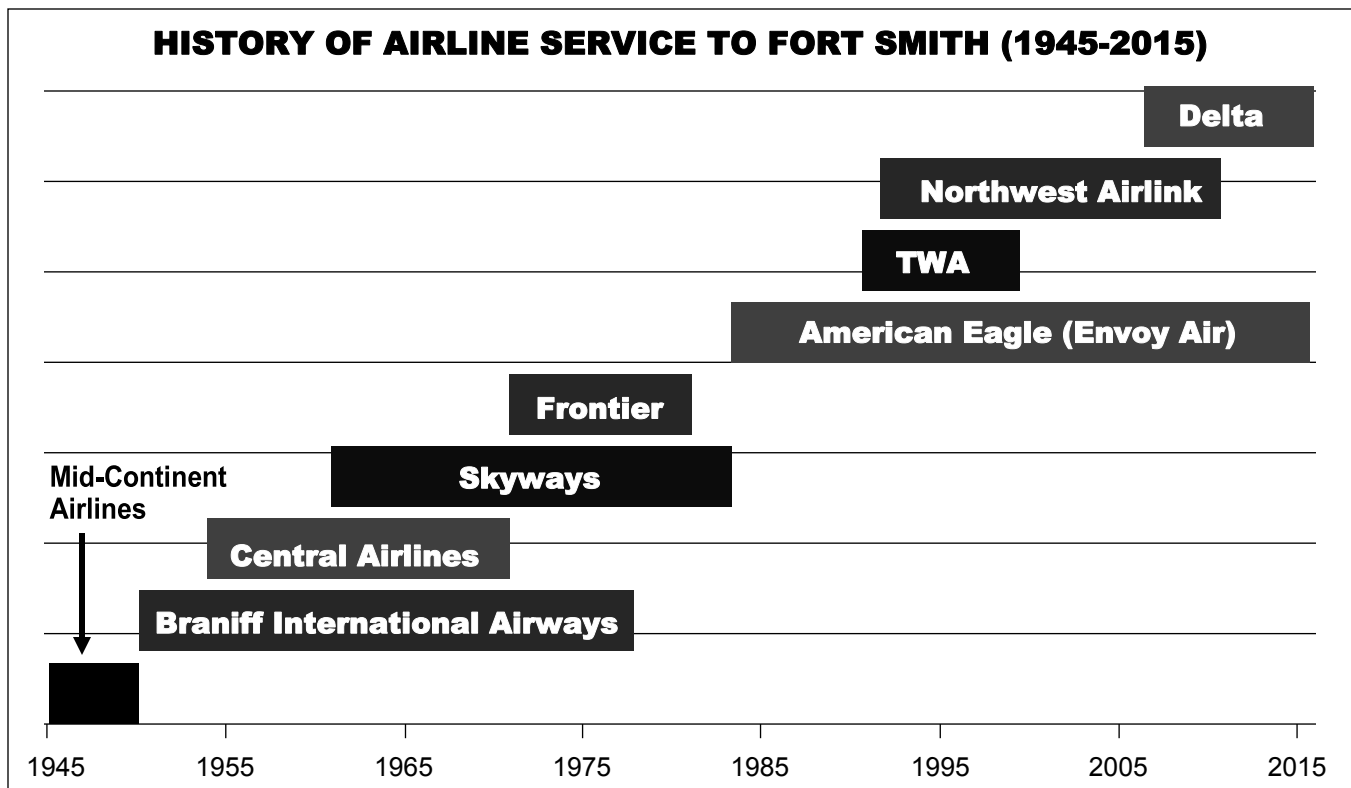
spending a year there, he switched to Central Airlines for twelve years, flying commercial aircraft into his home town airport. Then, in 1965, he moved to Frontier Airlines and flew Boeing 737 jetliners around the country, including frequent flights to Fort Smith. He retired in 1981, after forty-two years and over 24,000 hours of flying. He and his wife spent the rest of their years in his city of birth. “We chose to return to Fort Smith because it’s a great place to live,” he said.<sup>8</sup>

In 1936, the first seeds of the idea of an airport in Fort Smith were sown when an Airport Advisory Commission was established and the city board acquired 320 acres with bond money. Since then the airport has grown remarkably, acting as a vital transportation conduit for the River Valley. It has come a long way since two 3,500-foot-long sod runways in 1939 to the 8,000-foot asphalt runway today. Enplanements (Table 1) ranged from 78,910 to 113,148 in the 18 years since 1990, and have averaged 87,952 in the

**Table 2:** Airlines, destinations, and aircraft used for service to Fort Smith at the beginning of the past seven decades, 1950-2010

|             | <b>Airlines</b>  | <b>Destinations</b> (Nonstop and one-stop, and no plane change) | <b>Aircraft</b> used on service to FSM                                 |
|-------------|--|---|--|
| <b>1950</b> | Braniff  | Tulsa, Muskogee, Little Rock, Memphis                           | Douglas DC-3 and DC-4  |
| <b>1960</b> | Braniff, Central, Skyways  | 1950s destinations + Hot Springs, Fayetteville, Paris (TX)      | 1950s aircraft + Convairs and Swearingen Metroliners                   |
| <b>1970</b> | Braniff, Central, Frontier, Skyways                                      | 1960s destinations + Dallas and Joplin                          | 1960s aircraft minus DC-3s and DC-4s, + BAC-111 and Boeing 727 tri-jet |
| <b>1980</b> | Frontier, Skyways  | Tulsa, Oklahoma City, Denver, Fayetteville, Dallas/Fort Worth   | Boeing 727, 737-200, Swearingen, Metroliner                            |
| <b>1990</b> | American Eagle, Northwest Airlin, Trans World Airlines, Delta Connection | Dallas/Fort Worth, St. Louis, Memphis, Atlanta                  | Saab 340, Jetstream 31, Canadair CRJ                                   |
| <b>2000</b> | Same as 1990s minus Delta Connection                                     | Same as 1990s minus Atlanta                                     | Saab 340, Jetstream 31, Embreair 140                                   |
| <b>2010</b> | American Eagle, Delta Connection   | Dallas/Fort Worth, Atlanta                                      | Embreair 145, CRJ-200  |

**Figure 1:** Temporal pattern of airline service to Fort Smith



five years between 2008 and 2013.<sup>9</sup>

Nine different major airlines have served Fort Smith historically (Table 2; Fig. 1). Fort Smith saw its first commercial service shortly after V-J Day, August 15, 1945. Mid-Continent Airlines began service with 10-passenger Lockheed Electras, the same type of aircraft in which Amelia Earhart vanished while flying in 1937, as well as the Douglas DC-3, which was the workhorse in commercial as well as military aviation for that time. Later that year, Mid Continent was absorbed by an airline giant of the time, Braniff, which would fly to Fort Smith with a slightly more advanced and quad-propeller airliner, the Douglas DC-4. Braniff continued to be a leader in developing commercial service to Fort Smith for decades, and loyally served here until 1977, shortly before its bankruptcy.

In 1954, Central Airlines commenced service to Fort Smith. Using the aforementioned DC-3s and similar Convair turboprops, Central established Fort Smith as a hub flying direct to many cities. Service began with a grand ceremony at the tiny old terminal, with both the CEO of Central and the Fort Smith mayor standing in front of a gleaming DC-3 holding up signs saying "Meet Me in St. Louis." Central continued to serve Fort Smith until absorbed into another airline giant, Frontier, in 1968.<sup>11</sup>

The year 1965 marked a drastic change for commercial service in Fort Smith. That year, Braniff set aside their old propeller aircraft and began jet service into Fort Smith, with one-stop, no plane-change flights to ten cities around the country. The airline flew its brightly-colored orange BAC-111 jets, as well as new Boeing 727s into the airport, which brought about a major change in terms of scheduling, reliability, and passenger comfort. Frontier soon followed in 1968 with Boeing 727 service, taking over Central's old routes.

From 1968 onwards, airlines slowly started to pull out of Fort Smith, or face bankruptcy. Their fate was sealed by the Airline Deregulation Act of 1978 which encouraged many new airlines to form, therefore cutting prices and increasing competition. Braniff's old fleet could not keep up with the new, cost-effective aircraft that were introduced, and they folded operations in 1982. Frontier survived the Deregulation Act, but had to cut routes that were not gaining profits, with Fort Smith being one of them. With Frontier lost, Fort Smith had no major commercial service. Skyways operated a few, small propeller flights to Fayetteville, Little Rock, and Dallas.

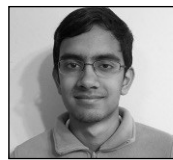
The Airline Deregulation Act drastically changed the nature of commercial aviation around the country. Major airlines removed large jet service from smaller markets and created regional airlines to serve local airports instead. Many cities felt the effects that Fort Smith did.

The new era for commercial aviation in Fort Smith ar-

rived shortly after Braniff and Frontier closed shop, with American Eagle commencing service in the early 1980s. Although not nearly as glamorous as the old airlines, Eagle flew a reliable, hand-me-down aircraft from Frontier, the Convair 580. They only served one destination, but commercial service was a welcome sight in Fort Smith after losing almost everything in the years before. American Eagle continues to serve Fort Smith to this day, operating Embreair ERJ-145 regional jets to Dallas-Ft. Worth.

In the 1990s, Northwest Airlines became the second airline to fly to Fort Smith in the new era. Flying the small, new, turboprop Saab 340, Fort Smith was connected to Memphis for the first time since the Frontier Airlines days. In 2010, Northwest was absorbed by Delta, which then switched the Memphis route to Atlanta. Delta operates a thrice-daily service to Atlanta on a Canadair CRJ-200, similar to American's Embreair.

Fort Smith has been a pioneer historically in many ways, including aviation. Its progress has been slow but steady and measurable. With this strong history behind it, Fort Smith Regional Airport is primed to lead the River Valley region well into the 21st century with better service and connections to the nation and beyond.



*Amrit Kannan is a sophomore at Fort Smith Southside and an accomplished aviation photographer whose work has been published extensively in [airliners.net](http://airliners.net). He aspires to become a medical doctor and fly his own plane.*

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> *Fort Smith Times Record*, May 22, 1910.
- <sup>2</sup> <http://www.fortsmithmuseum.com/event/the-fort-flight-budmars-and-citys-aviation-history>
- <sup>3</sup> <http://www.fnbfs.com/aboutus/history.asp>
- <sup>4</sup> Dave Wallis, "The Washed Out Ace: Pierce McKennon," in *Eight Nine Romeo Poppa: The Story of Arkansas Aviation* (Pine Bluff, Arkansas: Delta Echo Press, 2000), 160-61.
- <sup>5</sup> <http://www.cannon-lexington.com/Personal%20Stories/Warren%20McLellan.html>
- <sup>6</sup> <http://www.rb-29.net/html/81lexingtonstys/05.02mclellan.htm>
- <sup>7</sup> Fort Smith Air Museum
- <sup>8</sup> Fort Smith Air Museum
- <sup>9</sup> [http://fortsmithairport.com/history/ixhttp://www.faa.gov/airports/planning\\_capacity/passenger\\_allcargo\\_stats/passenger/media/cy10\\_primary\\_enplanements.pdf](http://fortsmithairport.com/history/ixhttp://www.faa.gov/airports/planning_capacity/passenger_allcargo_stats/passenger/media/cy10_primary_enplanements.pdf)
- <sup>10</sup> Data from 1990 to 2009 were taken from: <http://www.city-data.com/airports/Fort-Smith-Regional-Airport-Fort-Smith-Arkansas.html#Y2008>
- <sup>11</sup> Fort Smith Air Museum

# WHO KNEW?

Inquiries to Mary Jeanne Black, the Fort Smith Historical Society corresponding secretary, and her responses are a regular feature of the *Journal*.

\*\*\*

## Question:

To Whom It May Concern:

I have happened upon a stock certificate issued by Fort Smith Cereal Company in 1927. It's worth then was 25 shares at \$10 a share. Do you have any information on Fort Smith Cereal and history? Am assuming stock has no value outside of historical significance. Where can I look for additional info?

(A) From FSHS—I am forwarding your question to a list of Fort Smith Historical Society members who have agreed to answer inquiries. I was not aware that there was a Fort Smith Cereal Company before your query. I could not find anything about the Fort Smith Cereal Company in past issues of The Journal of the Fort Smith Historical Society.

I searched the Fort Smith City Directories for years listed with these results:

- ❖ 1911—No such business listed.
- ❖ 1925—Fort Smith Cereal Company, Charles Bird-sall, manager, 2601 North Sixth.
- ❖ 1928—Fort Smith Cereal Company, J. A. Shibley, manager, 2601 North Sixth.
- ❖ 1930—No such business listed.
- ❖ 1936—Powers Brothers Service Station, Moultrie A and Arla R Powers, 2601 North Sixth St.
- ❖ 1938—No such business listed.
- ❖ 1930—Fort Smith, Sebastian County, Arkansas Census. I did find a Shibley, Evelyn-Foreman Bakery.

Our nation's stock market crash of 1929 made it difficult for many businesses to keep their doors open. If a small company, not yet well established, tried for success, their chances of prevailing would be even slimmer. Looking through old Fort Smith City Directories helped to narrow down the length the business was open or at least open at that location.

A) I have never heard of this company.  
Service Station was located, 2601 North Sixth Street,

Fort Smith. In 1938, no such business listed. I do not remember an old building standing at this address when I was growing up and remember people with the Shibley last name. My 1936 Fort Smith City Directory lists 2601 North Sixth Street as Powers Brothers Service Station, so the cereal factory was gone . . . and assuming that a 1936 directory contains info gathered in 1935, the cereal factory was gone by 1935. I do not have a 1934 directory.

—J.W.

We found the history of Fort Smith Cereal Company by looking in old Fort Smith, Arkansas, City Directories. The directories were gathered from the collection of Joe Was-son, Fort Smith Public Library, Main Branch, 3201 Rogers Avenue, Genealogy Department (1811-Current), Fort Smith, AR 72903

\*\*\*

## Question:

Hello, My name is LaNita McKinney and I am a member of the Marion Chapter NSDAR in Fayetteville. We are currently working on a project trying to locate information on our past regents. Myrtie Adeline Brown Ford was born 8 December 1876 in Ohio and died 17 December 1949 in San Bernardino CA.

Find a Grave lists her as being buried in Forest Park Cemetery with her husband Frank Forest Ford. I have not found an obituary and was wondering if there might have been one in a local paper there for her burial.

I appreciate all the help you can give.

Thank you!

LaNita McKinney

Marion Chapter NSDAR

A) I am more than happy to be of help.

Sincerely,

Mary Jeanne Black

Inquiry Coordinator and Researcher

Fort Smith Historical Society

A) I found it! The data below is the information from the funeral home. Attached is the obituary in the Fort Smith, Sebastian, Arkansas paper. The obituary only appeared once in the paper.

**Adeline (Mertie) Brown Ford**

December 8, 1876-December 17, 1949

From the Putman Funeral Home, Fort Smith, Arkansas, Record for Adeline B Ford:

**Place of Death:** Redlands, California

**Burial:** Fort Smith, Sebastian County, Arkansas

**Funeral Home:** Putman Funeral Home, Fort Smith, Arkansas

**Date of Burial:** December 22, 1949

**Age at Death:** 73 years

Adeline (Mertie) Brown Ford (Mrs.) was born December 8, 1876, and died December 17, 1949, in Redlands, Cal. at 73 years of age. Burial arrangements were made by Putman Funeral Home of Fort Smith, Arkansas. The cause of death was hypertensive cardiovascular disease.

The burial took place on December 22, 1949, in Forest Park Cemetery, 5001 Midland Boulevard, Fort Smith, Arkansas 72904 (Telephone (479) 783-5762, current info, if you need to contact the cemetery office.)

The Putman Funeral Home record states: Charge to Forrest Ford: Box 13, Amarillo, Texas.

Pallbearers: Degen Boyd, Doug O. Smith, John Andrews, Paul McCartury, Brady Pryor, Ralph Crigler, Tom Cutting, George Packard and Bert Clendening.

There is a copy of the newspaper obituary attached to the email. The paper did not print the list of pallbearers. Family members often served as the pallbearers of the decedent. Wondering if there was a more complete write-up in another issue of the paper, I checked in the newspapers before and after the obituary found and there was no other obituary published for Adeline Brown Ford.

The funeral home records were found and able to offer new paths to follow.

Sincerely,

Mary Jeanne Black

Inquiry Coordinator and Researcher  
Fort Smith Historical Society

**To Mary Jeanne:**

THANK YOU, THANK YOU! This is wonderful! I can now mark her name off our list of obits left to locate. If we do need other information, we have possible contacts to follow up with. Thanks again!

LaNita McKinney  
Marion Chapter NSDAR

The Funeral Home who handles the arrangements for

# Deaths

**Mary Wright**  
Funeral service for Mrs. Mary A. Wright, 86-year old former resident of Fort Smith who died Tuesday at Harrisonville, Mo., was held at 3 p. m., Wednesday in the Fentress mortuary chapel with Rev. Owen Cain officiating. Burial was in Forest Park cemetery.  
Pallbearers included Bert Tobin, Will Davis, Roy Estes and Roy Knox.

**Mrs. Adeline Ford**  
Funeral service for Mrs. Adeline B. Ford, former Fort Smith resident who died Saturday at her home in Redlands, Calif., will be held at 10:30 a. m., Thursday at the Putman Funeral home with Dr. J. W. Hickman officiating. Burial will be in Forest Park cemetery.

the decedent's interment routinely sends the obituary to the local newspaper for publication. If the Funeral Home records are available to the public, there could be valuable information recovered. Space limitations, in this case, pallbearers names, where made available, but edited out. No relatives were listed in the obituary; a person with the same last name was listed as being responsible for the funeral home bill. It is well worth the trip or email to check out funeral home records.

The library genealogy department houses Funeral Home Records. They are great, "go to" tools when you need to find out more about the decedent. Fort Smith Public Library- Main Branch- Genealogy Department- 3201 Rogers Avenue, Fort

Smith, AR 72903

Agent, Sallisaw, Oklahoma 1938-1985

Bell-O'Donohoe/Fentress-Hunt - Fort Smith 1911-1915

Birnie Funeral Home, Fort Smith Jan. 14 1882 - Sept. 14, 1904

Edwards Funeral Home, Fort Smith 1933 - 1979

Fentress Funeral Home, Fort Smith Sept. 10, 1909 - Jan. 4, 1979

Ocker Funeral Home, Crawford County 1918 - 1971

Our Funeral Home, Fort Smith 1958 - 1980

Putman Funeral Home, Fort Smith 1901-1977

Rowell-Parrish Funeral Home, Fort Smith, 1967 - 1982

\*\*\*

**Question:**

Dear Folks:

We have been told that you published the attached. Can you help with its source, and possibly share the context in which it was published?

The story as we know it is set forth below.

Thanks and best regards,

Rick Frederick

Archivist and Webmaster

Caswell County Historical Association  
Yanceyville, North Carolina

A) Dear Mr. Frederick,

(Mr. Frederick was referring to this article: "Abstract from the Docket of Justice of the Peace Samuel E. Edmondson." Transcribed and abstracted by Amelia Martin and Janice Eddleman, pgs. 7-29). *The Journal of the Fort*

Contents 1

General information on Justice of the Peace Samuel E. Edmondson 7

❖ Samuel Edmondson was born ? Move from Georgia in 1832 to Crawford Court House, Arkansas.

❖ Mr. Edmondson moved to Van Buren when the court moved there.

❖ Samuel moved from Van Buren, AR to Fort Smith in 1840 and built his home on the corner of Fourth and "B" Streets.

❖ Mr. Samuel Edmondson first became Justice of the Peace about 1840 when the former Justice relocated out of the district. Mr. Edmondson served in this capacity and as a, "practitioner at law in Fort Smith for over the next thirty years," earning him the nickname of, "Old Ginger." (Note the letter written by H. L. HOLLEMAN, Fort Smith)

❖ Samuel E. Edmondson's second wife was Ann Manning Edmondson, listing three of his sons: Rev. James Edmondson, a Missionary Baptist preacher; T W Edmondson, a partner in Woods, Edmondson and Britt Star Grocery House; Col. Samuel M Edmondson, Sebastian County Justice of the Peace.

❖ The elder Samuel Edmondson died of cholera on October 4, 1866.

❖ Samuel Edmondson's grave marker is in Calvary Cemetery, Fort Smith, Row 3 Sec 3.

❖ Jan 27, 1851 Samuel was elected as one of the commissioners to select the county seat.

General information on Justice of the Peace Samuel E. Edmondson 8

❖ Photo of Ann Manning Edmondson's Grave Marker in Calvary Cemetery Sec. 3.

❖ Commissioners met in Jenny Lind May ,1851 and decided on forty acres of land given by Mr. Rueben Coker and named it Greenwood.

❖ Samuel served Sebastian County in the Arkansas House of Representatives in the 10th (1854-1855) and 11th (1856-1857) General Assemblies.

❖ Edmondson did have legal problems. According to Goodspeed "On the 19th of February 1848, Jesse Merritt, a pardoned convict, was killed at Fort Smith by Samuel Edmondson. Some difficulty existed between the two parties, and in the morning they met and quarreled, and about 3 o'clock P.M. Merritt walked into Edmondson's office to see Esquire Hudspeth, and after getting through with his business, and being in the act of leaving, Edmondson fired at him from the outside through the back door. Of the office, the ball entered his left breast, and came out under his right shoulder blade. Merritt fell upon the floor, uttered one short groan, and was dead. Edmonson fled, and went to the residence of Maj. Elias Rector, about two miles

from town, where he sent for the sheriff.

He was afterward tried for the murder and acquitted."

The following information was abstracted from Samuel Edmondson's Justice of the Peace Docket dated in the front of the book 1860- 1861. However, the entries are dated from, September 8, 1859 to June 28, 1861. It should be noted that the role of the early justices of the peace was considerably different from that of today. They heard some civil and criminal cases then as well as the more modern role of performing marriages and acting as a county legislature. It is also important to realize that a justice docket is not the court minutes; it is rather like today's diary or calendar.

The Docket was loaned, for copying, to Fort Smith Historical Society by Mr. George A. Toney of Little Rock, Arkansas. It is a ledger book, with several different hand-writings and formats, which contain marriages and cases covering nonpayment of debts, stray animals, violent crimes, including one case of child abuse and cases of runaway slaves. Most cases appear to have been heard without the assistance of an attorney. With a few exceptions herein noted, Justice of the Peace Edmondson signed all of the entries. Costs and fees are listed at the end of each case document with the fees for the Justice of the Peace ranging from fifty cents to three dollars and fifty cents and the witnesses getting about fifty cents.

(A question mark indicates that there was a question about what was written directly before the mark).

Docket of S E Edmondson

Justice of the Peace

Upper Township

Inside Front Cover

John Vinson

William Reeves

Mrs. Price (?)

John Martion

Abstract from the Docket of Justice of the Peace Samuel E. Edmondson

Elijah Jacobs

Lear Burg

Caswell County

North Carolina

Martha Jacobs

Married Benjamin Jacobs

Post office as above

\_\_\_\_\_ Bradsher Sen (?) (Illegible)

Lear Burg

Caswell County

N. C.

Henry Kuper had the child of Jacobs and wife and Miss



Ermann kept it. The child is now in the hands of Mr. Coleman about one mile and a half from here. Mr. Kuper and Miss Ermann kept the child something over or about one year.

(Notice there is no date on this case.)

#### The Title Page

The name Edmondson is spelled, "Edmodsons" on the docket. The Docket is, "DOCKET 1861 & 1860." That seems inaccurate since the Second Title Page is 1859 & 60. James A. Davis' name is spelled, "Davies" and "Davie."

#### INDEX

The note from the editor indicates that the index was incomplete and inaccurate. The names are all listed in the general Journal Index. Therefore, the editor is "omitting this index saving valuable space for other items."

#### Second Title Page

Samuel Edmondson Justice of

The Peace 1859 & 60

September

*The editor indicates that all early entries are signed by*

*Samuel Edmondson and have the heading:*

"The State of Arkansas

County of Sebastian

Township of Upper, (Sebastian).

In Justice's Court of Said Township"

Abstract from the Docket of Justice of the Peace

Samuel E. Edmondson 9

Cases 1 to7

Abstract from the Docket of Justice of the Peace

Samuel E. Edmondson 10

Continuation of Case 7 to Case 20

Abstract from the Docket of Justice of the Peace

Samuel E. Edmondson 11

Continuation of Case 20 to Case 30

Abstract from the Docket of Justice of the Peace

Samuel E. Edmondson 12

Continuation of Case 30 to Case 40

Abstract from the Docket of Justice of the Peace

Samuel E. Edmondson 13

Continuation of Case 40 to Case 47

Abstract from the Docket of Justice of the Peace

Samuel E. Edmondson 14

Continuation of Case 47 to Case 53

Abstract from the Docket of Justice of the Peace

Samuel E. Edmondson 15

Continuation of Case 53 to Case 63

Abstract from the Docket of Justice of the Peace

Samuel E. Edmondson 16 thru 29

Continuation of Case 63 to Case 180

#### Endnotes 29

1 History of Northwest Arkansas

(Goodspeed : Nashville, Tennessee, 1889), 1145.

2 R. H. Mohler, Fort Smith, Arkansas, Souvenir of the Queen City of the Southwest. (NP: Fort Smith, 1829), np.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 History of Northwest Arkansas Op cit.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

8W.J. Weaver, "Early Days in Fort Smith," Fort Smith Elevator, Dec. 25, 1896.

9 Mohler, op. cit.

10 Weaver, op. cit.

11 The Goodspeed History of Sebastian County, Arkansas (Woodward & Stinson Printing Co.: Columbia, Tennessee; 1977), P. 698.

12 Ibid. 3; Ibid. p. 709.

14 Ibid, p. 725

A) Rick,

1860 Census

The City of Fort Smith, County of Sebastian, State of Arkansas, Page No. 215, 5th Day of September 1860, S. Caldwell, Ass't. Marshal. Post Office, Fort Smith. Census family #1525, Dwelling house #1571.

NAME: Elias Jacobs, (Elijah)

AGE IN 1860: 1

BIRTH YEAR: about 1859

BIRTHPLACE: Arkansas

HOME IN 1860: Fort Smith, Sebastian, Arkansas

GENDER: Male

POST OFFICE: Fort Smith

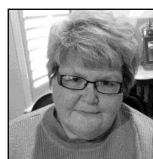
Q) Dear Mary Jeanne:

This is great. You are very generous to share. I will forward to those interested in this story and add the information to the online Caswell County Family Tree.

Best regards, Rick

Amelia Martin and Janice Eddleman transcribed and abstracted pages 7 thru 29 of the Docket of the Justice of the Peace, Samuel E. Edmondson. The 1860 Census was used to find Elijah Jacobs in the 1860 census.

\*\*\*



Sometimes we hit walls. Then, one day it just clicks and we find just that clue that we needed. Thanks to all who went before and pointed us in the right direction. — Mary Jeanne Black

# 1915 NEWSPAPERS

## SOUTHWEST TIMES RECORD

July-December 1915

By Crystal Jenkins

Abstracted from microfilm  
at the Fort Smith Public Library



January 5, 1915

### Big Drouth Ends Today When Saloons Open Again

The drouth which has existed in this city for five months will end this afternoon, and tonight the open door of the legalized saloon will swing to the thirsty again. How many saloons there will be will not be known until County Judge Hester today determines whether the "good moral character" clause of the state liquor license law to which the city commission will appeal, shall be enforced. It is, however, certain that other applications will be made in addition to those now on file.

On rendering his decision in favor of license Saturday night Judge Hester declined to consider any applications until Tuesday. He left for his home at Greenwood immediately and did not return to this city Monday; but is expected to open county court this morning for considering license applications.

Up to Monday night there had been no applications for license filed in addition to the twenty-five filed Saturday night, the names of which appeared in the Southwest America Sunday morning. Neither had any of the applicants affixed the required revenue stamp to their bonds. With the application and bonds there had been delivered checks but these were not turned over as payment to the county but paid to the sheriff subject to the charge of the applicants.

It was apparent that the applicants parting with their license money played safe in case the anthis should seek to enjoin the county judge on the ground of having lost his jurisdiction through having granted an appeal to the circuit court.

However, in answer to an inquiry of the *Southwest American* Monday one of the attorneys for the anti-saloon league replied: "No we are not going to take any other step in the premises than the appeal. While that is pending the license advocates can make all the city record they have time to accomplish."

\*\*\*

January 7, 1915

### Prayers for Street Lights

The city commission since the replenishment of the cash box, by receipt of saloon licenses, is deluged with petitions for replacement of street lights in dark places. The hold up of Wednesday night was where one street light had been cut off. Half a dozen petitions have received including one which was read at the Wednesday meeting.

\*\*\*

February 3, 1915

### Captain Wiley W. Early

Captain Wiley W. Early died at a local hospital Tuesday morning at 1:30 o'clock. The funeral services will be held this morning at 10 o'clock from the family residence at 901 South Eighteenth Street. Rev. Wilcox of the Episcopal Church will officiate. The body will be laid to rest in the Confederate lot in Oak Cemetery. All Confederate soldiers of the city will attend the funeral in a body.

The pallbearers will be D. F. Singleton, L. M. Alford, Elmo Carruthers, Henry Kuper, Jr., Charles Boyd and W.F. Braden. Captain Early was born in Virginia sixty-eight years ago. He enlisted in the Confederate Army in Missouri, and at the end of the war removed to Fort Smith.

He has been one of Fort Smith's most substantial and best-loved citizens for many years and a large host of

friends grieve his death. Of his immediate family, Captain Early leaves only an invalid wife.

\*\*\*

## **February 23, 1915**

### **Ship Horses To Europe**

A car load of ponies and horses was shipped Monday by the Pony Express to a firm in Dallas, which is buying them for the warring nations of Europe.

\*\*\*

## **March 6, 1915**

### **Fort Smith Again Leads For the State Progressiveness**

That Fort Smith is wide awake, not only for boosting the city but the state as well, was evident Friday, when there was general discussion of the report that Governor Hays might veto the legislative act securing the government funds named in the Smith-Lever bill. A number of citizens sent telegrams of protest, and over fifty leading businessmen, financiers and other representative citizens joined in a telegram to the governor urging him to sign the bill.

Friday afternoon there came a telegram from E. J. Bodman, chairman of the state profitable farming campaign, announcing that the governor had signed the bill and that the appropriation was safe which would secure Arkansas \$43,000 of government money for the promotion of the producing interests of the state.

Mr. Bodman specially wired congratulations and thanks for the part of Fort Smith has taken in the fight to secure that fund.

\*\*\*

## **March 21, 1915**

### **Former Fort Smith Captain Is Named National Umpire**

Shades of the long ago are recalled by the announcement that President Farrell had appointed Bob Pender an umpire in the New York State league. Pender was the captain of the first team that Fort Smith had in organized ball.

That was in the days when John J. McClosky, who has acquired fame in establishing the game in parts of

the country where it had never been cultivated before, was breaking into the game.

\*\*\*

## **April 3, 1915**

### **March Birth Rate Grows**

Again on Friday there were two more reports filed with the city clerk of children born during the month of March. Had there been no publicity it is possible that the official birth statistics for March might have passed into history records of Fort Smith vital statistics as having only nineteen births. Up to Friday night that record had been corrected up to thirty-four births.

\*\*\*

## **April 11, 1915**

### **Friday's Rain Caused Washouts Of Railroads And Much Damage**

The torrential rains that fell in this city and vicinity Friday evening caused washouts on both the Frisco and Iron Mountain lines Friday night. On the Iron Mountain line near Flat Rock, a mile and half south of Van Buren, about ten feet of track was rendered unsafe by the washout of the ballast, and train number 105, due out of Van Buren at 12:15 was delayed about forty-five minutes while the track was being repaired. On the Frisco lines between Van Buren and Chester, Ark., washouts of the ballast in the tracks at several points delayed traffic over the line for several hours. Number six, which leaves here north-bound at 6:45 was detoured over the Iron Mountain tracks to Claremore, where it rejoined the main Frisco line. Number three, south-bound, due here at 10:45 was delayed by the washouts until 8:30 o'clock Saturday morning. The Poteau river was cleared entirely of all the sediment that has settled in its bed for the past several months. A great rush of water came down the river immediately following the heavy rainfall and it is still rising, with prospects of overflowing its banks into the bottoms.

The Arkansas river has risen in the past twenty-four hours up to 7 o'clock last night, four and eight-tenths feet, according to the official weather bureau report. The stage at 7 o'clock was ten and six-tenths feet.

Much damage was done by the heavy rains. A number of stores on Garrison Avenue were overflowed from the alleys and Towson avenue, Tenth Street and Eleventh Street were perfect rivers during the rain and for

some time afterward. On Tenth Street in some places the water attained a depth of three feet, doing considerable damage to poultry and in some cases overflowing the floors of residences.

It was the heaviest rainfall in many months.

\*\*\*

## **April 16, 1915**

### **Brazilian Pastor Spoke To Students**

The high school assembly enjoyed an address from Pastor F. F. Soren of Brazil, at the high school auditorium Thursday morning. Mr. Soren made a very interesting talk on the country, and the people of Brazil and told of the many opportunities awaiting the citizens of America who would undertake to seek their fortunes in that country.

Mr. Soren is well acquainted with Brazil and asserts that the bond of friendship between the two nations is at its height. The talk was both instructive and interesting and much appreciated by the students.

\*\*\*

## **April 18, 1915**

### **Child Labor Law Does Not Apply To Berry And Fruit Gathering**

J.C. Clary, labor commissioner, says that he will hold the child labor law does not apply to children employed in gathering fruits and berries. There are several thousand that are so employed, and especially in the strawberry season it would be impossible to secure enough other help to save the crop. The disposition will be to apply the child labor law and the minimum wage law in such a way that it will not work a hardship on any employer or employee.

There has been much anxiety in many quarters for fear that the rigid enforcement of the law would create a radical change in conditions, that would be detrimental to the best interests of those concerned. This is the very condition, however, that Commissioner Clary will endeavor, to avoid.

\*\*\*

## **April 24, 1915**

### **Grocers Must Answer For Sunday Sales**

It was currently reported on the streets and in semi-official circles Friday that the coming week will see a

number of arrests among the grocers of the city on charges of violating the Sunday closing laws.

Some two months ago the grocers of the city agreed among themselves that they would discontinue the practice of opening their stores on Sunday. This action came about, it is said, as the result of complaints made by citizens of the violation of the Christian Sabbath by selling goods on that day. It is said that some of them have failed to keep the agreement, and that prosecution will follow in the state courts.

\*\*\*

## **May 9, 1915**

### **Had Relatives on Lusitania**

Mrs. R. H. Todd, 402 May Avenue, has special reason for anxiety to see the lists of passengers who were saved on the ill-fated Lusitania that was sunk by submarines Friday. Two of her cousins were passengers on that ship. Mrs. Todd is secretary in the office of the United States Marshal in this city.

\*\*\*

## **May 18, 1915**

### **Flowers To Jails And Hospitals**

The annual memorial service Sunday of the Federation of Labor was attended by an audience which filled Labor Temple.

The program was fully carried out in accordance with previous public announcement; and its presentation was most impressive.

The most beautiful feature of the event was the disposal of the abundance of flowers which featured the temple decorations. After the close of the program, large quantities were sent to each of the hospitals. In addition a wagon load of flowers was taken to the county jail by delegation of more than 100 people. There each inmate, federal or county, was given a generous bouquet of flowers. There are fifty or sixty of the prisoners, and they were overjoyed with the thoughtful remembrance.

On the third floor of the jail the prisoners were assembled and after the distribution of the flowers, Miss Osborne, evangelist, offered an earnest prayer. Fred Holt, in behalf of all the prisoners in the jail, expressed heartfelt thanks to the visitors for the flowers and for the thought which had prompted their giving.

\*\*\*

June 9, 1915

**Fort Smith Factory Makes  
Remarkable One Week Record**

The R. C. Staples Chemical company is rapidly getting into a position where it will carry the Fort Smith label all over the United States, and in return will bring a stream of money from all parts of the United States to Fort Smith.

Even now they are reaching in this way half a dozen southwest states. Here is one week's evidence of the growth of their business in volume: They have installed machines of sufficient capacity to label eighty thousand cans of baking powder per day. This new machine is the largest and most modern south of Chicago.

During the week they have booked orders for two hundred forty thousand pounds of package soda. In addition, they have also booked 429 cases of sixteen-ounce Pure Best baking powder this week; to be distributed in Kansas, Oklahoma, Arkansas and Louisiana.

\*\*\*

June 19, 1915

**Crops On The Moon**

It really doesn't make any difference to us whether the moon is inhabited, but it is always interesting to have other people's opinion upon the subject. Not that any one man's opinion is any better than any other man's opinion upon such subjects, but because it is interesting to know how men reason even about the heavenly bodies.

So here comes Professor Pickering, of Harvard astronomical observatory, and declares that the moon is inhabited and that the inhabitants are largely engaged in agricultural pursuits.

He says he is convinced that the dark spots which we see upon the moon is vegetation, or "fields" as he calls them, and he says the crops grow and ripen and foliage dies down just as it does here on earth. That is why fields appear darker at one season of the year than at another.

All of which are interesting. But it doesn't prove that potatoes planted in the "dark of the moon" do any better than when planted in the "light of the moon." And the crops raised upon the moon are not going to figure in the price of foodstuffs during the present war here on earth.



**Abby Burnett, *Gone to the Grave: Burial Customs of the Arkansas Ozarks, 1850-1950*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2014. Pp. ix, 327. Preface, acknowledgements, conclusions, notes, bibliography, index, \$65.**

**D**eath is a topic typically avoided in polite company. As an extremely important part of every culture, the act of dying and the care and disposal of the body often follow well established guidelines. But as demographic patterns shift and the years pass, these guidelines are often forgotten or performed without any understanding. This new book explains in rich detail the culture surrounding death in a particular geographic location, the Arkansas Ozarks.

Abby Burnett's *Gone to the Grave: Burial Customs of the Arkansas Ozarks* is a meticulously researched and well written work that tells the reader everything that they ever wondered about death in the Ozarks, as well as some things that they perhaps wished they did not want to know. Spanning an entire century, Burnett traces the emergence, adaptation, and sometimes abandonment of certain practices. The book covers in order the entire process from sickness, to death, preparing for burial, interment, and the continued care for cemeteries. Burnett opens with an examination of the typical and not-so-typical causes of death in the area before discussing the practice of sitting up with the sick and dying. Other chapters cover the work associated with preparing the body for burial, including sitting up with the deceased overnight.

The coffins and caskets used to inter the dead, as well as the transportation used to move both the body and the funeral attendees to the service are covered. Other chapters examine the use of headstones and other markers, as well as the establishment of cemeteries. Activities in cemeteries after burials, including Decoration Day, are also covered. Other topics such as the burial of people executed or killed in war and the way women and babies lost in childbirth were laid to rest close out the work, along with a chapter on early undertaking. Included in almost every chapter is a section that covers the related burial practices for African Americans residing in the Ozarks.

The numerous images that Burnett includes in the work add many welcome examples of different burial customs and practices in the Ozarks. The photos are a mixture of both historical images and some taken by the author. Also included are several maps that help the reader located what areas Burnett covers in the work. The notes are a combination of in-text citations and endnotes that help the reader immediately identify the time period and location of any examples in the narrative without having to flip to the rear of the book. While a few small mistakes appear within the text, they by no means detract from the overall quality of the book.

An extremely well researched and interesting book to read, any student of Arkansas history would be well served to pick up a copy of Abby Burnett's new work. The history and traditions that she uncovered in her research will now be available to future generations of not only historians but the relatives of people buried in the Ozarks.

—Reviewed by David Sesser, Assistant Librarian and Technical Services Coordinator, Henderson State University.

\*\*\*

**Genevieve Grant Sadler, *Muzzled Oxen: Reaping Cotton and Sowing Hope in 1920s Arkansas*. Little Rock: Butler Center Books, 2014. Pp. 358. Foreword, 17 photographs, \$23.95.**

If you are an Arkansan who grew up on or lived on a farm, then you will have a hard time laying this book aside once you start reading it. If you are an Arkansan who never lived on nor went near a farm, then you may have an equally difficult time in laying it down. That is because Genevieve Sadler was an excellent writer whose descriptions of her surroundings, meaning landscapes, work place, people, animals, pests, critters, tent revivals, old cars, cooking, and traveling, among other subjects are beautifully and even poetically written.

The narrative starts with a family migration in the opposite direction taken by the Joads and many Arkies a decade later. In 1920, Genevieve, her husband Wayne, and their two six-year-old boys headed for Arkansas in a Model T. Wayne Sadler's aunt had sold a small farm near Fort Smith to purchase acreage close to Dardanelle, which she then offered to Wayne if he would move back and work it. And so he did, encouraged by a transplanted grandma who scoffed at reports of malaria or poor schools or lack of opportunities in Arkansas, and told instead of the unsurpassed flavor of its Elberta peaches, strawberries, and apples, and that "no water was sweeter or purer, and no

friends were truer or kinder." The narrative ends when Genevieve returned to California after the Great Flood of 1927 had ruined chances for success on their farm on the Petit Jean River.

In those seven years, Brick, Genevieve's nickname because of her red hair, and Wayne, who gave her the nickname, set up a household and ran a productive farm that depended on cotton as the cash crop.

Wayne and Brick had a strong beginning point with land, capital, and education, Wayne worked hard and had an entrepreneurial spirit, always taking on more, and doing well with his irons in the fire. The family could afford to travel a bit, to the Ozarks, to Little Rock, and once to stay with a cousin on a plantation near Selma, Alabama. Of cotton in Alabama, Brick wrote that it, "grew only about three feet high, with very scattered bolls. Our proud descriptions of the cotton that grew in the Arkansas River bottoms, so high that a Ford car could pass along the roads through the black lands and be hidden from view, were not believed." The economic well-being of an Arkansas farmer, however no matter how tall the cotton, revolved around, in those days, the price of cotton. That factor even the best farmers could not control.

Canadian-born Genevieve's excitement—reading about her first visit to Mount Nebo gives a good example—and her knowledge of nature is stamped on these pages. The joys, trials, and tribulations that occurred to her, her family, and friends, supplied the content and setting for letters that the erudite Brick sent in a constant stream back to her mother in California. Recounting her 1920s life in Arkansas, Brick is honest even when things do not go as well as they might. Those hundreds of letters survived, and Genevieve in later years put them together into a narrative manuscript.

The lore thus transmitted will help readers gain understanding of and appreciation for the Arkansas countryside, the habitat it provided, and its people with their hidden glories, pervasive optimism, and down-to-earth (literally) life styles. Brick belittles no one, although she is a polished woman from the West Coast, rather she seems filled with wonder and curiosity, great qualities of any good writer.

While living in Arkansas, Wayne and Brick had a third son, Gareth W. Sadler, who brought the manuscript to the Butler Center for Arkansas Studies in 2012. Genevieve Sadler's combination of literary skill and primary source detail makes this book a true treasure. Butler Center Books is to be commended for recognizing its high value and publishing it.

—Reviewed by Billy D. Higgins, Associate Professor of History, University of Arkansas-Fort Smith.

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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.  
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# Visit Our Website

[www.fortsmithhistory.org](http://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 twenty 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 the 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, and 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 for 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, Arkansas, cemeteries**—A rich genealogical resource for Van Buren and Crawford County.

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



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**DRENNEN-SCOTT**  
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The Drennen-Scott Historic Site, owned by the University of Arkansas - Fort Smith, opened in May 2011 after a six-year, \$5.2 million restoration. The home was built by Van Buren founder and entrepreneur John Drennen, beginning in 1838. The initial grant came from the Arkansas Natural and Cultural Resources Council to purchase the home and 26 acres of property. The restoration included saving more than 1,000 original items, including about 100 pieces of furniture.



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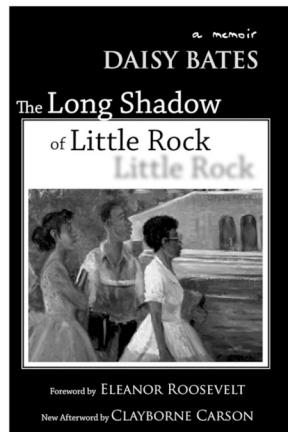
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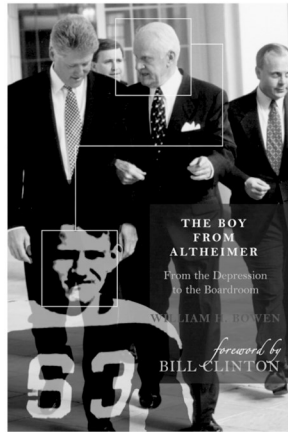
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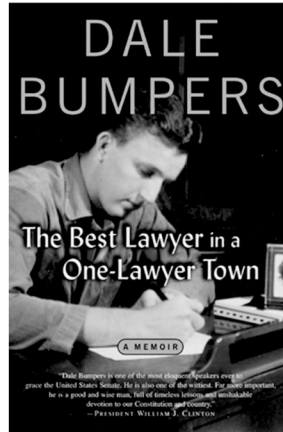
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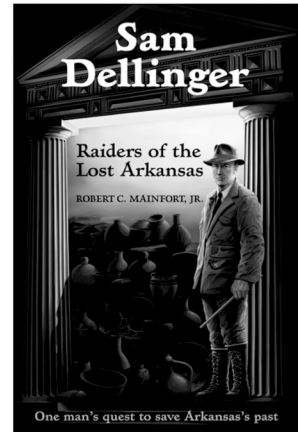
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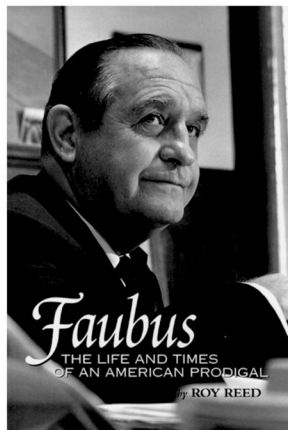
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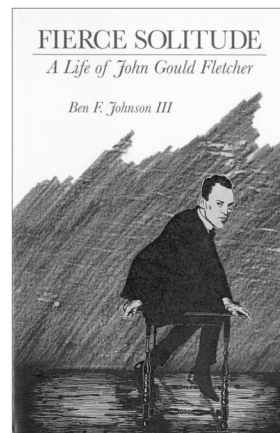
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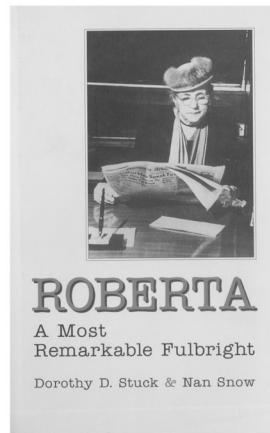
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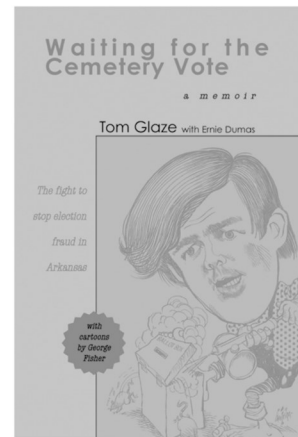
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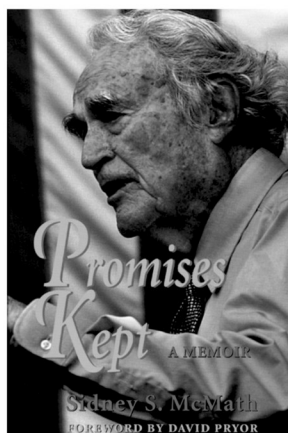
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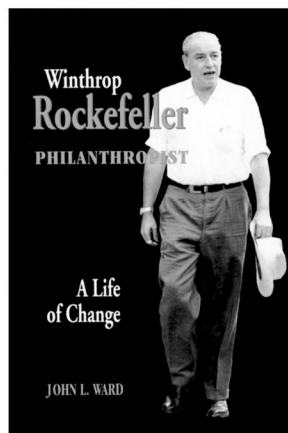
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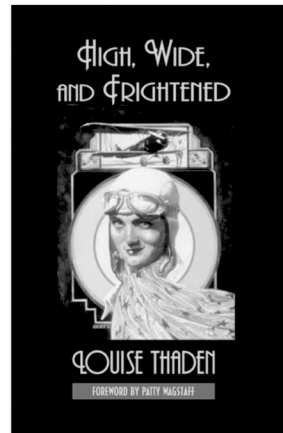
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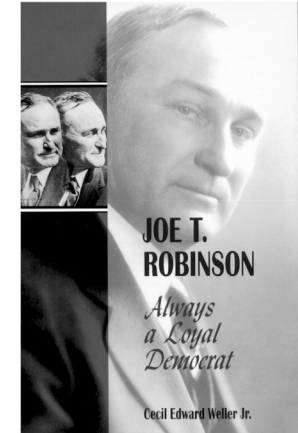
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