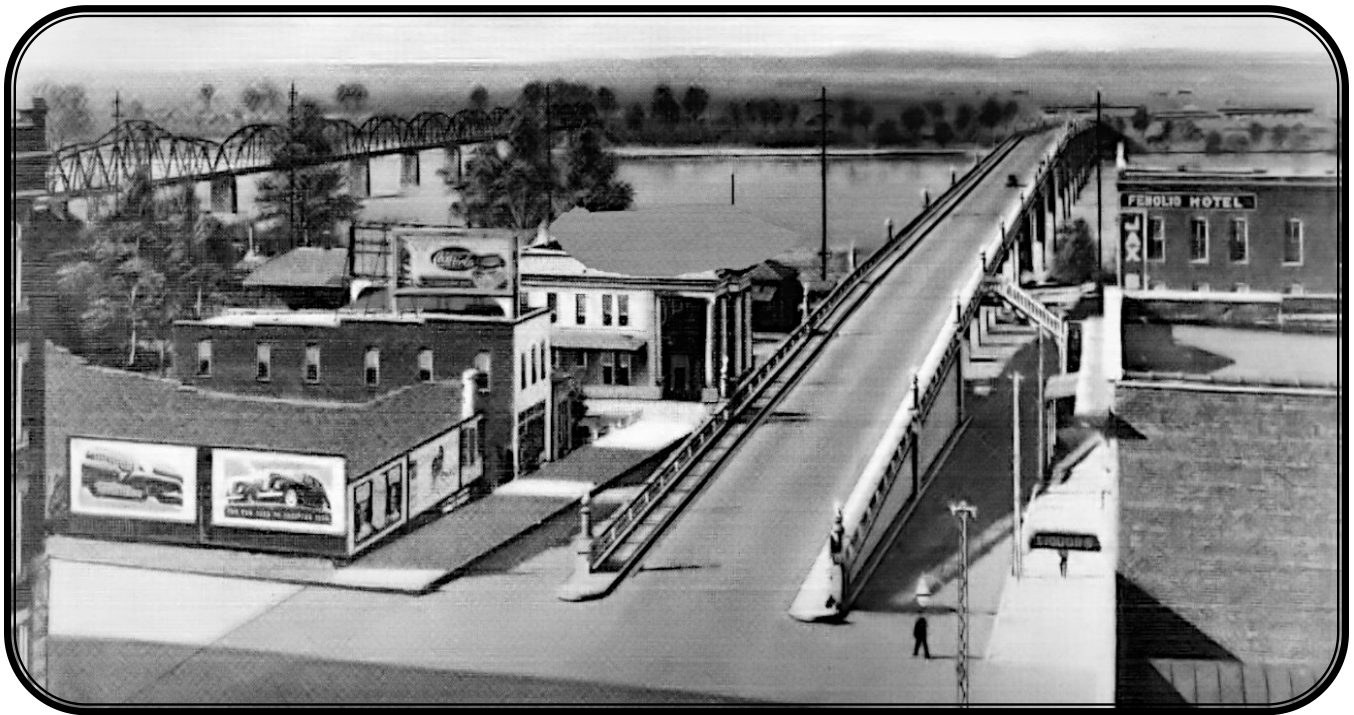


# The JOURNAL



## A 'Million Dollar' Bridge

*Garrison Avenue Free Bridge Opened to Traffic in 1922*



*Spotlight on the Little Theatre*



*Film Festival  
Cultivates Creativity*



*The Neighborhood  
Industry Built*

Vol. 46, No. 1, April 2022



**MISSION:** The mission of the Fort Smith Historical Society Inc., founded in 1977, is to publish the *Journal* of the FSHS and through the *Journal* and other activities to locate, identify, and collect historical materials; to publish primary source material and historical articles that pertain to the city of Fort Smith and the vicinity. Preservation of Fort Smith history is our primary mission, and we always welcome the loan of historical material, including photographs, letters, diaries, and memoirs, and will return them promptly.

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**QUESTIONS** pertaining to the Fort Smith Historical Society or the *Journal* may be addressed by email to:

**Mary Jeanne Black**, inquiry coordinator and researcher, [mblack3086@aol.com](mailto:mblack3086@aol.com).

Mary Jeanne edits the *Journal* department titled "Who Knew?" Contact her with your research and/or genealogical questions or topics.

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#### **SUBMITTING MANUSCRIPTS FOR POSSIBLE PUBLICATION IN THE JOURNAL**

A submitted article is peer-reviewed by members of the *Journal's* editorial board and approved before publication. The due dates for manuscript submissions are February 15 for the April issue and July 15 for the September issue. The story should be relevant to the city of Fort Smith and/or this area and significant to the history of the border region. Manuscripts must be based on historical documentation with notes, bibliography, or a list of sources. We recommend authors search through the literature on their subject. We encourage photographs, charts, or maps to accompany the article. These visual aids must be released by the owner, who is to be properly accredited, and appropriately captioned.

##### **Specifics**

1. Manuscripts of 3,000-7,000 words may be submitted to the Editorial Board of the *Journal* electronically using the email address of [billy.higgins@uafs.edu](mailto:billy.higgins@uafs.edu), editor, or [stoliv44@gmail.com](mailto:stoliv44@gmail.com), Sherry Toliver, President of the Society, or [mblack3086@aol.com](mailto:mblack3086@aol.com), Mary Jeanne Black, Inquiry Coordinator.
2. Title page should include article title and author name.
3. Manuscripts should be double-spaced in Times Roman 12-point font with one-inch margins. Pages should be numbered, preferably with author name in the top right corner.
4. Notes and bibliography should be cited according to the *Chicago Manual of Style* (Turabian). Book, journal, and newspaper titles should be italicized.
5. Photographs and maps should be submitted with manuscript in digital format of at least 300 dpi resolution and must be captioned with 1-5 sentences. Photographs and maps must be credited as to source.
6. An author photograph and short bio should be submitted at the end of the manuscript along with mailing address, phone number, and email address.

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Neither the Fort Smith Historical Society nor the editorial staff assumes any responsibility for statements, whether fact or opinion, made by contributors.

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Journal Editor &amp; Co-Founder, 1977-2004

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Annual .....\$30.00  
 Senior Citizens (62 and older) .....25.00  
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# The JOURNAL

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Main) Free Bridge on Garrison Avenue in Downtown Fort Smith.  
 (Lower left) Exterior of Fort Smith Little Theatre at former location on North O Street  
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 (Lower right) Casket factory in South Fort Smith

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 by the Fort Smith Historical Society, Inc.  
 c/o Fort Smith Public Library  
 3201 Rogers Avenue  
 Mailing address: P.O. Box 3676  
 Fort Smith, Arkansas 72913-3676

Printed at Midwest Type and Printing, Fort Smith, Arkansas

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# News & Opportunities

## Fort Smith Historical Society

**2022 Monthly Meetings**  
are held on the  
**Second Monday at 6 p.m.**  
**Fort Smith Museum of History.**

Check FSHS Facebook page  
for monthly meeting sites.

## Arkansas Historical Association

**81st Annual Conference**  
April 18- 21 (Virtual)  
**Outdoor Awards Banquet**  
Friday, April 22  
at Ferncliff Pavilion in Little Rock

Register through the Arkansas Historical Association  
website: [www.arkansashistoricalassociation.org](http://www.arkansashistoricalassociation.org)

\*\*\*

## Clayton House

514 North Sixth Street  
479-783-3000

[claytonhouse@claytonhouse.org](mailto:claytonhouse@claytonhouse.org)

### UPCOMING EVENTS

- ❖ April 9—Easter Egg Hunt
- ❖ April 29—Sippin' on 6th, 6:30 p.m. to 10 p.m.
- ❖ May 7—Mother's Day Tea
- ❖ July 21-23—Christmas in July

All events require reservations or pre-ordered tickets. Visit [claytonhouse.org](http://claytonhouse.org) or our Facebook page, or give us a call!

\*\*\*

## Friends of the Fort

More information at Facebook page or by emailing  
[friendsofthefort@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofthefort@gmail.com).

\*\*\*

## Fort Smith Museum of History

320 Rogers Avenue  
479-783-7841

For program times, descriptions, reservations, and current exhibits, please use the museum website: <http://www.fortsmithmuseum.org/newsletters>

### Museum Event Schedule

- ❖ Maude Allen Trial: Saturday, April 30 at 6 p.m.
- ❖ Centennial Celebration of the 1922 "Free Bridge" Saturday, May 14, Time and location TBD.
- ❖ Corn Hole Tournament, The Bakery District, Saturday, May 21.
- ❖ Summer reading program (and possible Scavenger Hunt): Each Wednesday in June
- ❖ Bass Reeves Trial: (Tentative) Friday, June 24 OR Saturday, June 25.
- ❖ Opening of First National Bank Exhibition: Tentative Date Thursday, July 14 or Saturday, July 16 .
- ❖ Christmas In July: July 21, 22, and 23 (Thursday, Friday, and Saturday)

Yarnell's Ice Cream, made in Arkansas since 1932, is featured in the Museum's old-fashioned soda fountain. Come in, and treat yourself!

\*\*\*

## Drennen-Scott Historical Site

### Visitor Center

221 North Third Street, Van Buren, Arkansas  
479-262-2750  
[drennen-scott@uafs.edu](mailto:drennen-scott@uafs.edu)

The Drennen-Scott House is closed for restoration and maintenance work with reopening planned for Spring 2022. Willhaf House restoration work scheduled to be finished, and a Grand Opening is being planned for Spring 2022.

Leonard Willhaf was a German immigrant, ran a bakery on Main Street in Van Buren, and was a veteran of the Mexican War of 1846-48. His home, built in 1851 was donated to UAFS and grants were acquired to restore and interpret the home as a museum.

For more information contact Tom Wing, Director



of the Drennen-Scott Historical Site by email at [drennen-scott@uafs.edu](mailto:drennen-scott@uafs.edu). Facebook: Drennen-Scott Historic Site.

\*\*\*

## **Sons of Union Veterans**

John Talkington Chapter of the Sons of Union Veterans. Anyone with Union Army ancestors from the Civil War period or who has an interest in joining can contact Tom Wing at 479-262-2750 or [VanBurenSUV@gmail.com](mailto:VanBurenSUV@gmail.com).

The local chapter is named for John Talkington, an ancestor of Angela Walton-Raji. A slave of Isaac Talkington in Crawford County, John Talkington fled to Fort Scott, Kansas, in 1863 and joined the 2nd Kansas Colored Infantry which engaged Confederate forces at the 1864 Battle of Jenkins Ferry in lower Arkansas (referenced and re-enacted scenes seen in the Academy Award-winning movie, *Lincoln*). Talkington was wounded in the combat. He later died in Fort Smith and is buried in Fairview Cemetery, Van Buren.

\*\*\*

## **Fort Smith Regional Art Museum (RAM)**

1601 Rogers Avenue – Fort Smith  
479.784.2787  
[info@fsram.org](mailto:info@fsram.org)

Lectures, workshops, education programs, and events all year long. Contact RAM for full schedule of activities, exhibits, and children-centered art classes.

### **RAM Annual Invitational *Metamorphosis***

February 4-May 22, 2022

Closing reception Friday, May 20, 5-7 p.m.

The annual invitational is a national competitive exhibition that has been hosted by the Fort Smith Regional Art Museum since its inception in 1948. The purpose of this exhibition is to encourage and recognize professional artists. In addition, this exhibition aligns with the museum's mission to foster art appreciation in the community. All works will be for sale. All proceeds will benefit RAM's exhibits, educational programming and the participating artists.

The theme of this year's open invitational is *Metamorphosis*.

For our annual invitational this year, amid chaos, isolation, and shifting perspectives, the Fort Smith Regional Art Museum desires to focus on renewal and new beginnings. When the word "metamorphosis" is

used, concepts of renewal, rebirth, and change often come to mind. These definitions carry heavy symbolic weight as many individuals and communities have gone through significant changes over the past two years. This year's invitational invites artists in all genres to submit work evocative of renewal, rebirth, beginnings, endings, and individualistic approaches to what "metamorphosis" means to them.

First-, second- and third-place prizes were awarded at the judge's discretion. Museum Purchase Award will be selected by RAM's Executive Director & Permanent Collection Committee. Since a reception will not be held until May, the winners will be announced on social media Friday, March 11.

The People's Choice Award will be based on votes collected throughout the exhibition and will be announced on social media when the exhibit closes.

### ***Chuck Davis—The Wheel***

March 2-June 5, 2022

Opening reception Friday, March 18, 5-7 p.m.

"The Wheel" is the name of a project in progress, honoring and observing lands once described as Indian Territory. Cultural narratives inform this project, situated in places of forced relocation—and especially areas near the terminus of the Trail of Tears. As a platform for respect and acknowledgement, "The Wheel" tells its story in portraits, places, and in moments where relocation is relayed by a combination of oral tradition, historical record, and immersion.

As a principle for this body of work, I believe that the land we share is a great gift of the creator. Land can be surveyed and owned, but its gift cannot be bought.

For those who share this point of view, it becomes important to restore our relationship with the soil – to meditate on the meaning of land stewardship and acknowledgement. Bestowing respect upon all people, the project engages participants of indigenous and native lineage, and seeks conversation about living in harmony with the cultural and physical landscape around us.

—Chuck Davis

Davis placed first in the RAM Annual Invitational last year, winning a cash prize and solo exhibit.

### **Selections from the Permanent Collection *The Eva Rubinstein Portfolio***

Gift of Neikrug Photographica, New York, NY.

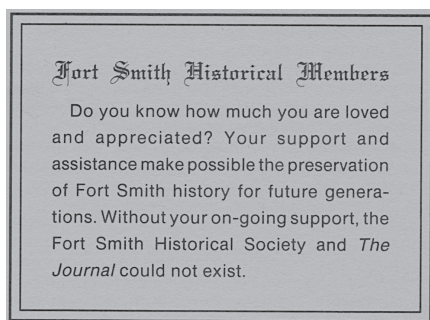
March 2-June 5, 2022

Eva Rubinstein is a Polish-American photographer whose artistic works present portraits, nudes, and interiors, often taken in Europe as well as the United States.

**Early life:** Rubinstein was born in Buenos Aires where her mother, the ballerina Nela Mlynarska, was accompanying her father, pianist Arthur Rubinstein, on a concert tour of South America. She was raised in Paris where she began to train as a ballet dancer at the age of five. In 1939, at the beginning of World War II, the family moved to the United States where Eva Rubinstein received American citizenship in 1946. She attended Scripps College in Claremont, California, and studied drama at the University of California, Los Angeles. From 1953, she worked as a dancer and actress in New York, appearing in the original production of "The Diary of Anne Frank." In 1956, she married William Sloane Coffin and gave birth to three children, Amy, Alexander, and David. The marriage ended in divorce in 1968.

**Photography:** In 1967, Rubinstein became seriously interested in photography, benefitting from workshops with Lisette Model and Diane Arbus. In addition to her work as a photojournalist, she has taken more intimate photographs of people, including nudes, and of (often empty) interiors. In an interview with Frank Horvat, she explained she had always shown great respect for the people she photographed, never wishing to intrude. She has also led workshops at the School of Visual Arts in Manhattan (1972) and at Manhattanville College, among many other venues in the US and Europe.

\*\*\*



Reprinted from the tenth year of the Journal, 1987. We feel same about our dear members in this, our 45th year. We hope that you do as well. Our FSHS membership now runs from January 1, 2022, to January 1, 2023.

Please renew. Your support and membership for the Journal of the Fort Smith Historical Society is deeply appreciated.

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# Gifts

The Fort Smith Historical Society received important financial gifts recently from citizens in the community. We are deeply honored and humbly appreciative to be supported by these generous donors:

Jim Birch, Christine Cook, Danielle Dixon, Ducote and Susan Haynes, Jarrett D. Millard, James D. Walcott  
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Billy Roberts  
In honor of **Carolyn Pollan**

Bob Worley  
In honor of **Billy Higgins**

Anonymous donor honoring  
**Authors Jim Kreuz and John Lehn**  
for their *Treasures of Fort Smith*

## Thank You to Both Donors and Honorees

**Jerry and Wincie Hendricks** were dedicated members and officers of the Fort Smith Historical Society devoting much of their time and energy as authors, editors, dispatchers, and mailout organizers for each issue. In addition, Wincie served a long period as secretary of membership and Jerry as chair of the nominating committee. Jerry's career at Weldon, Williams, and Lick and his son's subsequent career with one of Fort Smith's leading businesses led him,

he said, into a deep interest in documenting the business history of the city. Jerry Hendricks' article on Richard C. Kerens is keenly written and adds enormously to the scholarship on Fort Smith after the Civil War and to Arkansas' history. We thank his family and friends for their generosity to the Society to honor the Hendricks.

**Carolyn Pollan** was a start-up member of the Fort Smith Historical Society and served on the editorial board of *Journal* for the first thirty-five years of its publication. Always interested in the study and preservation of documented history, Pollan was elected from Sebastian County to the Arkansas General Assembly in 1975 and served in that body for twenty-four years, sponsoring social measures that improved lives in Arkansas society and especially in the field of juvenile care and education. Pollan is a member of the Arkansas Women's Hall of Fame. She died in 2021 and is buried beside her husband, George Pollan, in Oak Cemetery.

**Bob Worley** has been the subject of three articles over the past decade in the *Journal*. He played a principal role in creating through his arguments before the Interstate Commerce Commission equity railroad and barge rates for Fort Smith shippers, primarily concerning Fort Smith's number one industry at the time, the twenty-six furniture companies located in the city that employed thousands of workers. He is a member of the Fort Smith Historical Society, the Museum of Fort Smith History and a founder of the Hardwood Tree Museum.

At an FSHS monthly meeting in the Museum of Fort Smith History, Society President Sherry Toliver (front row center) received a check from Jim Kreuz and John Lehn (front row, right), funds coming from proceeds of sales of their



excellent photography and description book of 150 nineteenth and early twentieth century homes of Fort Smith, titled *Treasures of Fort Smith* (2020). Wayne Bledsoe, a co-author, shown in the back row, joined Kreuz and Lehn again in their recent book, *Stained Glass, Chalk Boards, and Cash Registers of Fort Smith*, on sale now at bookstores such as Bookish in the Bakery District.

# A Woman's Touch

*Fashion, Commerce, and Community in Fort Smith —1816-1899*

By Sue Robinson

Life in early settlements such as Belle Point on the Arkansas River where it met the Poteau River in 1816 did not lend itself to concerns about the latest fashions on the European continent. Men traveled primarily in pull-over tops and pants made of animal hides, with deer skin the most popular material for construction. Women were scarce, and those scattered around the small settlement were mostly laborers who covered themselves in coarse muslin tops, skirts, aprons, long-billed bonnets, and a man's coat when the cold winds of winter roared down the river and into the small encampment.

The Army uniforms worn by the Rifle Regiment building the new fort at the junction of the two rivers were colorful and striking in comparison to the functional animal hides worn by French traders using the area as a rendezvous. Bright green jackets with yellow fringe trim and tall, slim hats made in the fashion of a stove pipe stood out sharply in their rough surroundings.

Still, fashion did manage to reach this far-flung settlement. Traders from Louisiana came up the river with boats carrying cloth and household items. John Billingsley left written records of the 1816 community describing French traders in large canoes carrying domestic fabrics, calico, checked patterns, bits of earthenware, and flatware. The calico sold for fifty cents per unit, with the less popular checks going for forty cents. Billingsley made several purchases from the traders, including the first teacup he owned in his lifetime, and he paid for his selections with beaver, otter, and bear skins, along with bear oil and beeswax.

In the early days of American exploration, it was common for a man to construct his own, simple collarless shirts from checked material, or from a calico displaying a small print. It was also possible for him to take his cloth to a local woman, perhaps one who made her way to the area with the Army, and hire her services as a seamstress. In warmer months, such shirts were worn jacketless with pants made of heavy materials or wool, held up by suspenders and kept shut with button fronts.

While much of the English-speaking world spent its evenings engrossed in Mary Shelley's telling of her *Frankenstein* story, the women near Fort Smith had little

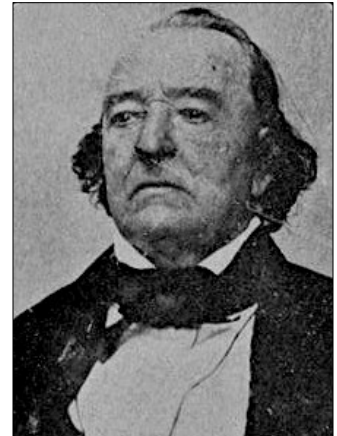
more than the simple chores of survival to occupy their minds and time. The high-waisted, straight skirts of the Regency style were popular with fashion-conscious ladies. However, Fort Smith women made do with the more practical heavy skirts, men's shirts, and wide-brimmed hats and bonnets to keep the summer sun and winter winds off their faces.

The small Army base was built to keep peace between warring Native Americans removed years earlier to the territory across the Arkansas River. The Army's presence was an almost immediate poultice to the problem. There was soon interaction between the base and the Indian Nations. Trade began in Fort Smith.

In 1821, the steamboat *Robert Thompson* arrived at the location now known as the foot of Garrison Avenue. Traveling from Pittsburgh, the ship came loaded with household goods, commodities necessary for establishing a permanent settlement, and items suitable to offer the Indian Nations across the river. Formalized trade with an eye to future commerce began in earnest.

In 1821, John Rogers arrived in Fort Smith. Raised in the backwoods near Pittsburgh, Rogers was familiar with the lifestyle of trappers and traders before becoming a quartermaster in the United States Army. Rogers was stationed in New Orleans when he first heard of the small military outpost called Fort Smith growing atop the established trade location known as Belle Point.

Colonel John Nicks was already serving as post sutler with control of goods and trades when John Rogers arrived at Fort Smith. Eventually, Nicks and Rogers opened a civilian merchandising establishment and operated it outside their military duties, drawing patrons from miles around. Rogers kept the business open under the name "Nicks and Rogers" for years after



JOHN ROGERS

Nicks moved with the Army to Fort Towson.

Rogers took a beautiful, young woman named Mary as his wife in New Orleans, and she joined him in Fort Smith in 1827. The woman was considered a rare beauty and the epitome of grace in a settlement showing more in common with a woodland military base than a respite of civility in the brute wilderness. Rogers adored his wife and exhibited his dedication with jewels and fine, expensive fashions. For her part, Mary introduced the women in and around Fort Smith to genteel living and cultural pursuits.

Mary hoped to recreate her southern lifestyle in Fort Smith. Her home was filled with furniture of the French style and cuisine unknown in the area. Mary ran her household with servants, including seamstresses who both created and maintained her wardrobe. While the regency style dress with its waist just below the bust, gentle scooped neckline and puff sleeves was waning in popularity when Mary arrived in Fort Smith, she may have kept at least some of those gowns in appreciation for their ease of wear and maintenance. At the same time, she would be watching the waistline on gowns in fashion publications moving further down toward the natural waist, the necklines rising to a straight, rather severe, angle across the breastbone, and sleeves, while still showing a little puff, moving further down the arm. The young bride owned bonnets; both simple ones decorated with flowers for day wear, and highly styled silk ones for evening wear.

Mary Rogers was the perfect model to display fashion trends to the increasing number of female Fort Smith residents. No doubt her stylish appearance brought shoppers into her husband's mercantile, where they could purchase materials similar to the ones she wore for the creation of their own gowns. Mary never lost interest in fashion. It was reported that, while most women would boast of owning half a dozen good dresses, there were thirty-five silk gowns in Mary's wardrobe at the time of her death.

John Rogers, not unlike his wife, turned himself out in genteel wear. His coats were long, black and made of wool. His white collars were stiffened and tall—and a modest version of a top hat sat upon his head. The Fort Smith Museum of History possesses one of Rogers' hats, as well as a bonnet belonging to his wife.

The first post office opened in Fort Smith in 1826. With paddle-wheelers traversing the river and overland mail available, goods poured into the small hamlet. The mercantile business boomed in Fort Smith, and its supply of goods established it as a center of commerce. The community built around the Army base known as Fort Smith was thriving when Arkansas officially



**MARY ROGERS**

became a state in the Union in 1837.

By the early 1840s, the town's retailers overflowed local newspapers with ads. The *Fort Smith Herald* carried daily advertisements featuring sale prices for hats, bonnets, boots, cloth, and housewares. W.H. and M. Mayers invited shoppers to visit their establishment on Commercial Row and purchase a bottle of Comanche Hair Oil, guaranteed to return dull, graying hair to a raven, luxurious sheen.

The calicos and checks brought to the area in canoes by French traders were joined by Irish linen, black silk, calfskin boots for men and boys, and pieces of cloth "suitable for weddings." Exotic items such as otter fur trim for a lady's hat, tablecloths, and whale bone were easily accessible in the little settlement on the Arkansas River.

Whale bone was essential to the fashionable nineteenth century woman in Fort Smith. Pliable and abundant, what was called "whale bone" is actually baleen, which hangs in plates from a whale's upper jaw. Strong and flexible, it is made of the same substance as fingernails, keratin. It can be easily cut into narrow strips used by fashion designers. These whale bones, once shaped, formed an outline of a woman's body. This created a better fitting of a bodice which hugged a woman's shape tighter each fashion season. Baleen boning was used in corsets and, during the height of the



wide circle gowns of the Victorian era, it shaped the hooped skirts associated with a Southern Belle.

No doubt many a boned bodice graced the dinner table at the home of Mary Gatlin in the late 1840s Fort Smith. Mrs. Gatlin, the wife of Captain R.C. Gatlin, described the Army post where the Arkansas River met the Poteau as “pleasant.” As one of the settlement’s leading hostesses, Mary Gatlin boasted of the many ladies and gentlemen of the higher ranks in life occupying the outpost, which saw numerous marriages between soldiers and girls from local towns.

By 1850, Fort Smith controlled the principal amount of trade inside the Indian Territory. New homes sprang up around downtown Fort Smith. New businesses opened their doors along Commercial Row near the river and on Garrison Avenue. What is now known as North Third Street was considered the town’s showcase district. Homeowners along the road were often called upon to host receptions for the most prestigious family weddings.

Writing in 1854, Reverend Jim Edmondson described Fort Smith’s population as “a mixture of Indians, Negros, mixed bloods, and four-to-five hundred white citizens.” The reverend reported that tailors were busy repairing military uniforms and dress suits—and that social events were frequent among Army officers and the wealthier, local families. Overall, Reverend Edmondson found Fort Smith to be “a particularly pleasant place in which to live.”

Great celebrations accompanied the Butterfield Trail overland mail route arriving in Fort Smith on September 18, 1859. Citizens poured onto Garrison Avenue for a parade followed by a circus. Wealthier residents donned their finest clothes for a formal ball held in the evening. No doubt the Birnie and Meyer Mercantile sold several men’s hats in their downtown location for those attending the parade. Perhaps shoppers also stopped by the Rutherford and Company location to browse their advertised cheap and “hard times” clothing for men and boys. It was customary to turn out in the best you owned for large public events. Working families and those without substantial means would seek out and welcome shops advertising clothing and sales designed for those living on a tight budget.

It was common for women from working class families in the late 1850s to purchase cloth and make clothing for their families, as best they could. Sewing machines were available. While women often designed their own patterns from fashion books arriving by mail, Butterwick distributed printed patterns widely distributed by 1860. While most women sewed for themselves and their children, they continued to

purchase their husband’s clothes either from a mercantile, or from a local seamstress or tailor. For the adventurous, or extremely talented wife, it was possible to purchase patterns for their husband’s suits, as well as the latest styles for family swimming costumes.

Women living without servants to help with housework often spent their daytime hours in simple dresses known as “wrappers,” changing into a more acceptable dress or suit before dinner, or if they left the house. A woman’s dress fell into one of three basic categories: a house dress, a day dress, or an evening gown. Babies were kept in long gowns until they crawled. Boys wore short frocks similar to their sister’s dresses until they were near three years old, at which time they were placed in short pants called knickers. A young man’s eighth birthday was celebrated with his first pair of long, button-front pants.

For those who could afford them, black taffeta, black velvet, and pheasant feathers on a lady’s hat were the rage in 1860 Fort Smith. Families living on modest incomes greeted the new decade with bright blue poplin and orange or black striped cottons.

Queen Victoria held firm control of the world’s fashions from her English throne, and American women adopted the British slouch-shouldered gowns with tight bodice and wide, circle skirts. Hoop skirts were the predominate feature in women’s wear. From the simple, single hoop of a young lady’s slip to the shockingly full skirts of the four-hoop slip, a woman’s status was evidenced by the width of her skirt. Along with being absurdly full, the skirts in 1860 were longer than those premiered in previous seasons. An article by a fashion editor in Boston was reprinted in a local newspaper, noting that the latest design in skirts featured “four layers of flounce and one layer of dust” from rubbing on boardwalks and roadways. Skirts were often trimmed in contrasting fabric that could be replaced after becoming frayed and dirty.

Almost as a reaction to the longer skirts, women’s shoes presented with heels. Until 1860, women’s shoes were basically flat slippers or short boots, but suddenly the gaiter heel appeared on the fashion scene. No more than two inches tall, the heels tapered to a narrow point, but that was enough to bring the ire of men who felt it their responsibility to guard against unacceptable fashion trends. In a January 1860 issue of the Fort Smith publication *The Thirty-first Parallel*, a male writer protested the narrow heel saying it would turn ankles. He complained, “Unless the gentlemen’s heels show equal activity, the ladies will stand head and shoulders above the opposite sex.”

In the early 1860s, all local news gave way to

reports of the Civil War. Fort Smith, as most southern towns, split support for the Union and Confederate governments. The army fort was forfeited to the southern forces early in the hostilities and Fort Smith found itself facing one of the worse periods of American history without the support of the troops who had been their guardians since the town's inception.

The war brought hardship to Fort Smith and gave several of its wealthiest families cause to seek refuge out of state. Those who remained suffered lengthy periods of hunger, fear, and disillusionment, but they also rallied and showed great compassion and determination. Many local women volunteered to serve as nurses for wounded soldiers while others repaired their tattered uniforms. Mrs. Joe Bassett earned the appreciation of soldiers stationed in Fort Smith by serving dinner for them in her home.

When the fighting ended, refugees by the hundreds poured into town. Local women again stepped up. They organized support groups and did what they could to put Fort Smith back on its feet and back on track to becoming one of the wealthiest, most sophisticated towns in the state.

During the bitter days of the Civil War, the death of Queen Victoria's husband, Prince Albert, in London, went almost unnoticed in far-flung hamlets such as Fort Smith. When the news did move to a point of interest in the town, one of the first things it changed was the tradition of mourning wear for women suffering the death of a loved one. There was an abundance of widows during the war. New rituals of mourning attire were observed to certain levels in almost every corner of the nation.

While mourning rituals also governed men suffering the loss of a female family member, the bulk of the regulations laid on women. It was customary for a widow to cover herself in varying levels of black clothing for a period of two years after the death of her husband. Full black dress was expected for the first year of mourning, during which time a widow remained at home. The widow would put aside all ornamentation on her person or gowns and cover her face with a weeping veil.

A woman in full mourning was cut off from society and the possible comfort it might offer. However, if she had small children and no means to support the family, she would be allowed to marry. However, she was expected to return to full mourning the day after her wedding. There are numerous reports of women taking a second husband while still wearing the black weaves of mourning for her first mate. Second mourning lasted a period of nine months. The widow was allowed to lift

the veil to display her face and wear simple jewelry. Amber pins were popular for this period of mourning, as was jewelry featuring the likeness of the recently deceased. A young widow would likely seek a hair stylist to help make her best

appearance as she emerged from the full veil. Half mourning

covered the final three months of the accepted mourning period. Dull colors such as gray and dark purple were allowed on women. Young girls, who also fell under the dictates of mourning rituals, moved into white dresses. For their part, men were expected to wear dark suits and black gloves while in mourning. If the deceased was a wife dear to the gentleman, he might add a black arm band to his wardrobe.

Mourning attire was the almost exclusive responsibility of local seamstresses. While it was possible to purchase ready-to-wear widow's weaves, those with means would most certainly approach a seamstress for a personally fitted wardrobe. Gowns were saved and passed along to family members, and some middle-class women made their own mourning gowns, storing them out of sight until needed. Such strict rules governing a woman's appearance and behavior at the most hurtful time in her life began to fade by the end of the nineteenth century.

At the end of the Civil War, women pulled out the skirts, the hoops, the pantaloons, and the bonnets and again took to the boardwalks along Garrison Avenue. In wake of the war and the Emancipation Proclamation, African-American women joined other Fort Smith ladies in hoop skirts of their own as they enjoyed early afternoon downtown strolls.

But the return to popularity of the hoop skirts was short lived. For years, physicians urged women to start walking to improve their health. This was not easily accomplished while wearing at least two slips and a cage of whalebone that forced four yards of skirt fabric out to almost ridiculous widths. Perhaps it was the scarcity of cloth throughout the war that changed the opinion of women regarding the types of skirts they wanted in their lives. Or maybe it was just the need to move on to something different. No matter what caused the change, the result was a fashion known as "the natural form."



**WIDOW STAGE 2** on display at the Fort Smith Museum of History.

Suddenly women's skirts came in two pieces. The underskirt was narrow and straight, while the overskirt gathered into a flounce on the woman's hips, and top skirts were adorned with laces and ruffles. Two-piece outfits replaced the shirt waisted dresses of the 1860s. Shoulder seams moved up to their natural position, and whalebone-shaped bodices called tunics sometimes extended well beyond the natural waist. The bodice necklines were scooped in the front, but high on the back of the jackets. And most outfits came with two bodices: one for day wear, and a fancier, lower cut version for evening attire.

A dress form known as the "polonaise" took America by storm in the early 1870s. With its bodice cut away from the top skirt in front and hanging far enough in the back to form a train, the polonaise could be as formal or simple as its seamstress desired. Made in the fashion of an eighteenth century dress style, the underside of a polonaise jacket featured ribbons to allow the wearer to pull the jacket into decorative folds or leave it long to drag the ground behind her.

The attention to the rear of a woman's dress and the pulling of fabric into a shape below her waist led to the creation of bustles. The bustle silhouette of the early 1870s was a small extension of the skirt's rear that was often elaborately decorated with ruffles, pleats and gathers. Bustles required a special slip called a crinoline to hold their shape. Rows of ruffles covered whalebone or steel half-hoop cages that were tied to a woman's waist and placed at the back of the skirt to support the shape of the bustle. Early bustle dresses featured narrow underskirts sometimes cut in the shape of a bell. Most were tight along the hips and occasionally harder to maneuver in than the hoop-skirts women recently cast aside.

Synthetic dyes were in common use by the 1870s. Many of these new fashions were made in bright blues, purples, pinks and shades of yellow. Muted colors and subdued prints were outdated. Even simple cotton wardrobes were made with vibrant, eye-catching shades. Women enjoyed mixing their colors and patterns in order to show variety in their wardrobe.

To maintain the crispness of these new fashions, the Kingsford's Oswego Company recommended their Silver Gloss Starch, which they promised would deliver a beautiful finish to linen. Most Fort Smith retail establishments sold starches by the middle of the 1870s, along with dyes suitable for home use.

Men in the 1870s were giving up the long, black coats well known in earlier generations. In their place came jackets cut closer to the waistline, void of shaping to the body's form, and often worn open. Brown



**JUDGE ISAAC C. PARKER, CIRCA 1871.**

*(Courtesy of Fort Smith Museum of History)*

became an acceptable color for a man's coat, and the "boxy" cut of the jacket gave it a name, the box coat. Ties narrowed into a style little different from what is known today. Suspenders continued their important function of holding pants in place that yet lacked zippers or belts.

To help the city's gentlemen maintain their appearance, the O.K. Barbershop opened at Sixth and Garrison in 1876. W.H. Henderson, the proprietor, boasted five years' experience and promised a cool breeze would visit his building during hot, summer months. Henderson was one of several barbers, tailors and seamstresses offering in-home service for women and children.

Hats and gloves continued to be requirements of a well-dressed citizen, both male and female. Gone were the bonnets for women. In their place were delicate, shaped hats of woven materials, wool or felt. Feathers, silk flowers, and ribbons were customary decorations. It was considered improper for a man or woman to be seen in public without a hat. Even children wore miniature versions of their parent's headwear. Boys generally wore flat brimmed hats in simple shades of black or brown, while their sisters donned wider hats made of straws or felt.

When federal Judge Isaac C. Parker arrived in Fort Smith in 1871, he sported the stylish chin whiskers popular with upper-crust citizens in Saint Louis. Having recently left the U.S. House of Representatives before being pulled from the Missouri bench by President Ulysses S. Grant and sent to Fort Smith, Parker and his



**THE BOSTON STORE, CIRCA 1890.**  
*(Courtesy of Fort Smith Museum of History)*

wife, Mary, were not known to follow fashion trends. Outside his facial hair, the soon-to-be famous judge did little to call attention to his person. In fact, local attorneys referred to Parker as a shabby dresser.

Shabby or not, Parker was a stickler for courtroom etiquette. While it was expected for a gentleman to wear a hat outside and remove it upon entering a building, it was demanded by Parker in his courtroom. Any man reluctant to remove his hat in Parker's court found himself assisted in the chore by a U.S. Deputy Marshal.

Parker, along with his wife, exerted tremendous influence on the town of Fort Smith, but not on fashion trends. For fashion, there was Susan Neis. Not since Mary Rogers did any woman capture the attention of Fort Smith society like Susan Neis. Born to a wealthy family and highly educated, the young Susan stepped into the public eye when she gave her hand in marriage to national hero and explorer, Brigadier General Benjamin Bonneville, on a November evening in 1871.

Miss Neis imported white velvet from Spain for her wedding gown. In the style of the day, the frock featured an underskirt with an ornate overskirt trimmed in white silk piping and fringe. Seamstresses created an

epic gown so inspiring it was found worthy of discussion in a 1936 edition of the *Southwest Times Record* newspaper on the anniversary of the wedding. The lovely bride, in a veil secured by a circle of orange blossoms and the General in full dress Army uniform made a memorable couple. Following their wedding at Saint Patrick's Catholic Church at the head of Garrison Avenue, they were accompanied by a coronet band to their reception at Adelaide Hall. One guest declared upon their arrival, "never before did Fort Smith on a similar occasion witness such a grand sight as when the party entered the hall."

Susan Bonneville's wedding gown remains the standard by which all Fort Smith early bustle period dresses are judged, although the allure of the small bustle itself faded within a few years of the ceremony. Puffed overskirts and machine applied ruffles and trim gave way to "the princess style" gown. Bustle pillows and cages were cast away for the new style, which featured tucks and darts keeping a bodice tight against its wearer. Bodices would extend past the natural waist, where they met skirts gathering around the hips and often extending into long trains.



**MEN WEAR SAILOR HATS** outside the Corner Saloon, 1894.  
(Photo courtesy of Chuck Raney)

Saint Louis replaced London as the source of fashion trends for Fort Smith women. With readiness of transportation and information, the latest trends were easily available in downtown Fort Smith. Marble Hall at 311 Garrison Avenue advertised regular deliveries of hats, boots, and shoes. The store's owner promised Saint Louis styles and prices, asking shoppers to "give us a trial."

In 1879, the Boston Store opened its doors in downtown Fort Smith, taking its place alongside Hunts, E. B. Bright's Marble Hall, and other well-established retailers. Fort Smith women had access to imported off-the-rack clothing of a quality to rival any hand-stitched creation, and a store designed to transform shopping into a day-long experience. The Boston Store soon became the cornerstone of Fort Smith mercantile, drawing clients from outlying areas with its unique offerings. Mary Parker was a frequent Boston Store customer. Her purchases for weddings, birthdays, and First Communion were reported in the local newspapers, and her Boston Store charge account was closed only by her husband's death in 1896, which required a settling of his debts.

On the eve of the 1880s, the town's mayor bragged of more than 200 wagons on Garrison Avenue bearing shoppers on a single December day. The store owners were said to be displaying "silver plated smiles" born of a tremendous business season. The avenue crowded with wagons and buggies soon cleared enough space to make way for mule-drawn trolley cars in 1883. Shoppers suddenly had an easier time reaching downtown merchants. The city hired street sprinklers to water down dusty roads on summer days. Storm sewers were installed along Garrison Avenue, and a few shops boasted of electric lights. Women shopped downtown, and Fort Smith grew into a wealthy, late-Victorian community.

The 1880s were an exciting time in Fort Smith. The United States federal count replaced the U.S. Army base as the town's powerhouse institution. Travelers heading west made daily stops in town to gather supplies before crossing the Arkansas River. New things were coming to town. Citizens kept up with George Tilles and his installation of telephone poles through near daily reports in *The New Era* newspaper.

There were big plans, and fashion had the big skirts



to match. The bustle made a return near the middle of the 1800s. Larger and more extravagantly decorated than the earlier version, the protrusion from the rear of a woman's skirt grew so wide some men joked it could hold their dinner plate during formal meals. Ribbons, bows, flowers, laces, almost any trim available adorned the vibrant and bold skirts from "the big bustle" period of fashion. The front of the big bustle gown saw its own changes. The lower neckline moved up to the center of the throat. Bodices remained snugly fitted against their wearer's torso, and sleeves began to puff just a bit at the shoulder. There was a stiff, almost uniform feel to the new fashions. Large frog closures were popular on fur trimmed, brown winter capes, and red was the color of choice for evening wear.

Little girls went to school in plaid wool skirts and tops, while little boys were decked out in miniature sailor suits. Striped flannel shirts found popularity with the Fort Smith men who purchased imported east India shawls as gifts for their wives. Ready-made clothes were commonplace on Fort Smith boardwalks, with fine stores like J.A. Garlick's offering the best selection of men's made-to-wear suits in the city, all in the latest styles and up to date.

It was a grand and wonderful world in the late 1880s, and fashions reflected society's reach for the stars. Women's hats grew straight up from their heads into what were known as "flowerpot" or "three-story styles." These tall styles soared above their wearer's hair, creating a roof of sort for the total fashion look. Copied from a 1700s men style of headwear, the "flowerpot" hat was the most popular American hat style for fashionable ladies in the mid-to-late 1880s. Younger women created a style of their own with the "gainsborough." By taking a simple, flat-brimmed hat and flipping one side up and pinning it to the crown, a fashion was created that survives in today's market. Some designers went as far as to pull the back of the hat up to be pinned, leaving the front of the hat flat for elaborate decorations.

Feathers were commonplace on all hats. Even a gentleman's round, bowler hat would display a small flash of feather. Women, however, took it to the limit by sometimes placing entire dead birds on their headwear. A woman's hat would be expected to display at least a few wing or tail feathers, if not the entire appendage. It was possible to weave feathers in such a way as to create the body of a woman's hat.

Ladies lacking fashion sense, or the funds to purchase such, opted to return to the simple bonnet. Most often made of plaited straw, the invention of cardboard in the 1870s allowed the bonnet to be

manufactured and sold at low prices. The latest reincarnation of this uncomplicated design saw the body of the hat cut almost in half, with the front moved to the top of the forehead and a much smaller brim framing the wearer's face. These designs could be as simple or elaborate as a designer chose, but their low expense and long history often marked the women wearing them as spinsters, elderly, or from the lower class of Fort Smith citizenry.

At the close of the decade, the "sailor hat" caught the eye of American women and soon made an appearance in stylish Fort Smith haberdasheries. The hat itself was created for men taking part in sporting activities, primarily yachting and tennis. A simple straw creation with a low crown and narrow brim, the sailor hat was confiscated by women, who often loaded it with ribbons and flowers until barely recognizable. Since straw was acceptable for year-round wear, the sailor hat became one of many fashion creations to make its way from a gentleman's coat rack to a lady's wardrobe. The sailor hat became a standard for women taking their first steps into the job market in 1890 Fort Smith. Office jobs slowly opened for females, mostly in businesses owned by family members. Women became secretaries, mastering the latest developments in office machines and earning the title, "typewriter girls."

Retail establishments along Garrison Avenue hired female sales staff, and women joined cleaning crews around the city. These unskilled opportunities, added to skilled positions for teachers and nurses, opened many avenues for women in a time when married ladies were expected to put aside career aspirations to care for family and home. Perhaps the most attention-grabbing position for a woman in 1890 Fort Smith was that of "telephone girl." With the public's fascination with their newfound ability to communicate across telephone lines, it was natural for telephone owners to take a tremendous interest in the ladies behind the voices connecting their calls.

Working under the watchful eye of a male supervisor, telephone operators were typically young ladies from middle-income households. Their backgrounds awarded them sufficient education to accept the challenge of mastering a manual switch board but left enough desire and ambition to give the job true importance in their lives. It was more than a way to stay busy while waiting to make a good marriage. It was a way to improve their lots in life and earn respect.

Public interest in the telephone girls was so great *The Fort Smith News Record* published an 1899 article introducing the operators to their curious public. Each

of the fifteen Bell Telephone Exchange operators and one Pan Company operator were physically described for the readers, and each noted for an individual attribute, such as “a voice of liquid sweetness.” The operators were named, their duties detailed, and their physical appearance described so the callers could imagine the telephone girl transferring their calls around town. Miss Fannie Breen, the youngest of the operators, was painted by the reporter as “one of the kind a fellow likes to dance with.”

However flattering the reporter’s description might have been, Miss Breen did not need a dancing frock for the telephone office. She needed a practical, yet attractive, style of dress to be all-day wearable while highlighting her femininity. She needed the blouse and skirt outfit that became recognizable with the “gay nineties” woman. The high-necked blouses featured back buttons and puffed sleeves tapering into wide cuffs. This tailored blouse was body fitting and often accentuated with broaches or decorative pins at the wearer’s throat.

The 1890s blouse was worn with a four or five gored A-line skirt held in shape by petticoats. Gone were trains, overskirts, and boned bustle cages. In their place was a simple, elegant, powerful line—sparse enough in decoration to give great importance to the simple items, such as a leather belt, accessorizing the look. To dress up the wardrobe, the wearer added a short jacket, often made of contrasting fabric. The whole look was topped off with the simple, straw, unisex sailor hat.

Umbrellas became the accessory of choice, often making their way with a lady outside on the sunniest days. Fashion conscious women sought out decorative handles, most of which displayed buttons or knobs made of colored glass or jewels. Turquoise was popular with middle-class ladies, but silver and gold tipped handles were available for those who could afford to add them to their wardrobe.

New doors opened for Fort Smith women in the late 1800s, but they did not all lead to work. Some offered recreation and a physical freedom unknown to earlier generations. Bicycles rolled into town in such a vast variety of styles that they were soon available to almost all households, and both sexes. Suddenly girls and young women were capable of moving about town unescorted and they could visit more than one location within a day.

As welcome as bicycles were to younger riders, not everyone in town was happy to see them. One patron of the arts complained in a local newspaper of “bicycle fiends” disrupting an outside concert on an April

afternoon. The writer found it impossible to enjoy the music when “one is in constant danger of being knocked down by a bicycle.” Despite the sometimes-vocal disapproval, women would not give up their bicycles. As popularity of the two-wheeled vehicles grew, there were soon bike races staged at the city fair grounds. Palace Drug Store sponsored one such contest for women in 1896 that drew ten female contestants.

Women were emboldened by their bicycles. However, they were forever aware of their obligation to maintain a feminine appearance. The majority of female riders carried on their bicycle handlebars a bag containing a cloth used to wipe perspiration or dust from their faces, a comb or brush for their hair, and sometimes an apron to cover a skirt soiled from the ride. Most riders monogrammed these bags with their initials, or the initials of one of the several riding clubs for Fort Smith women. Even when not on their bikes, ladies made their passion for the vehicle obvious. Local jewelers sold stick pins in the shape of a bicycle wheel, which were popular with riders, as were small wheel tokens worn on necklace chains.

While the A-line skirt of the 1890s lent itself well to the cut-away shape of a woman’s bicycle, it was not perfect for the rider. Tailors soon developed riding costumes for male and female devotees that made their way to Fort Smith. They featured fitted legs on men’s pants, and women’s skirts shortened to avoid contact with pedals. Sailor hats and short jackets held their place as favorites of both male and female riders.

As the nineteenth century rolled to an end, Fort Smith women faced a new age of possibility and challenge. Equipped with a new job, a new bike, and a new self-confidence, they welcomed the twentieth century and all its amazements.

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## Suggestions for Submission of Articles

We welcome the submission of articles, previously unpublished, covering significant historical events and persons in Fort Smith and the surrounding area. Manuscripts, including quotations and footnotes, must be double-spaced, using The Chicago Manual of Style (University of Chicago Press). Footnotes should be numbered consecutively in the text, assembled at the end of the article, along with a list of additional sources.

The author's name, address, and phone number and email address should appear only on the title page. Manuscripts may be submitted on CD disks, using word-processing programs supported by Windows. Photographs should be submitted in digital format.

All correspondence and manuscripts should be submitted to:

Managing editors

*The Journal of the Fort Smith Historical Society*

PO Box 3676

Fort Smith, AR 72913-3676



MILLION DOLLAR FREE BRIDGE SKETCH

# From Shore to Shore

## *Constructing the Million-Dollar Free Bridge*

By Al Whitson

On Friday, May 12, 1922, Governors Thomas McRae (Arkansas) and James Robertson (Oklahoma), clasped hands atop the newly christened “Free Bridge,” spanning the Arkansas River and now joining their respective states.<sup>1</sup> Overhead, a fleet of eight Army Air Force planes performed stunts while a crowd of thousands looked on. It was but one of the dozens of events taking place over the two-day celebration culminating the work that had begun in earnest in July 1917, with the receipt of a telegram from Congressman Otis Wingo, U. S. Representative from Arkansas’s fourth congressional district.<sup>2</sup>

WASHINGTON D. C., July 25

Roy M. Johnston, Fort Smith:

The Garrison Avenue bridge bill passed both houses of congress today and I have arranged for the President to approve it at once. If plans for the bridge have not been submitted to the government engineer, you should present them at once to the government engineer in charge at Little Rock

OTIS T. WINGO, M. C.

Roy Johnston, to whom the correspondence was



(LEFT) U.S. REP. OTIS T. WINGO, who represented Arkansas’ 4th District in Congress from 1913-30.



(RIGHT) IRA GRANT HEDRICK of the Hedrick and Hedrick Engineering firm of Kansas City, Missouri.

addressed, was the secretary of the Sebastian Bridge District board, acting on behalf of J. M. Sparks, who had served as the board’s president since its inception, when its charter was granted by the Arkansas legislature in 1913.<sup>3</sup> That charter was later modified by the 1915 legislature. Other instrumental members of the board



**MILLION DOLLAR FREE BRIDGE**



**ARKANSAS GOV. THOMAS MCRAE**, left, and Oklahoma Gov. James Robertson.



included Fagan Bourland, T. J. Wright, Buck Williams and Charles Geren.

The original survey and sounding work for the bridge was done by Hedrick and Hedrick Engineering (a Kansas City-based firm headed by Ira Grant Hedrick) and would later play a large part in lawsuits surrounding the bridge construction, and blaming the firm's work, in large part, for doubling the cost of what

was supposed to have been a half-million-dollar bridge.<sup>4</sup>

In August 1917, with America's entry into the first World War just four months old, planning began in earnest. The street grade between First and Second streets was to be raised to a level with the approach to the bridge. However, such a change would present serious challenges for buildings on the western end of Garrison Avenue and for the Fort Smith Light and Traction company, which held a franchise on the right-of-way for their streetcar tracks.

The original contract for construction of the bridge (which was ultimately held by three different construction firms) was granted to H. C. Gass of Houston Texas, on September 1, 1917. Mr. Gass's bid, including all materials, was \$434,500, and was one of four bids filed with the board.<sup>5</sup>

Just two days later, on September 3, 1917, the first lawsuit was filed by Frank Fenolio, claiming the viaduct to Second Street would destroy the value of his property. Mr. Fenolio's suit also included a challenge to the authority of the bridge commission to build the bridge in the manner proposed, given the fact that the act itself referenced only the "foot of Garrison



Avenue,” with no allowance for the approach. He further claimed that the commission had no authority to build anything on the Oklahoma side of the river.<sup>6</sup>

Only one day later, on September 4, questions arose as to the winning bidder’s earnestness in making the bid (based largely on engineer Hedrick’s review of proposed costs in comparison to the bid itself) and, on September 13, it was the board’s turn to file a lawsuit, this time against contractor Gass for \$50,000. The bidding process would have to start over.<sup>7</sup>

As a result of many factors, but primarily the war effort, no further progress was made toward bridge construction for over a year. On February 5, 1919, the M. M. Elkan Company of Macon, Georgia, was chosen as the bridge’s new contractor.<sup>8</sup> Elkan promised to have the 3,000-foot concrete bridge completed within the contract limit of fifteen months, which would have been May 1920. And, by March 1919, concrete, mixed on site, was being poured and the first 90,000 pounds of an estimated 800 tons of steel had arrived by train.<sup>9</sup> It looked like the bridge was finally going to be built, and then, tragedy struck.

On May 1, 1919, Henry Glaumer, eighteen-year-old son of construction foreman Henry Glaumer, Sr. of Lynchburg, Virginia, drowned when he fell from his skiff after hitting a submerged cable.<sup>10,20</sup> The river was high and fast, running at the ten-foot level, hampering search efforts, which continued for several days without result. The incident threw a pall over construction operations. Unfortunately, it was not the only life to be lost during the bridge’s construction. On August 26, 1920, Albert Willis, an African-American bridge worker, drowned while working near the dredge on the Oklahoma side of the river. And once again, the body was never recovered.<sup>11,20</sup>

In the spring of 1920, the estimates to complete the bridge, according to Elkan, grew by an additional \$375,000 and the half-million-dollar bridge was inching its way toward its eventual new moniker of, “Million Dollar Bridge.”<sup>12</sup> Elkan sought to recover his projected losses by renegotiating the contract, but commission officials refused, thus creating tension between Elkan and the commissioners. It was not long before that tension came to a head, resulting in a request by Elkan, in late June 1920, to be relieved of his obligation to complete the bridge and asking the courts to award him \$152,498.50 for work already completed.<sup>13</sup> In the end, after all the suits and countersuits, Elkan lost his claim and in fact wound up owing the Bridge District \$101,082.67—in part, due to the construction delays on the as-yet unfinished bridge.

But lawsuits were not the only impediments to the

completion of the bridge. Labor unrest became a factor when, on February 27, 1919, a large contingent of bridge workers (almost all the manual labor came from the local area) walked off the job site. The men, who were working then-hour days at thirty cents an hour, had demanded that they be paid forty cents an hour and that the workday be reduced to eight hours per day. Fortunately, a settlement was quickly reached, and work resumed, but only after intervention by the Fort Smith mayor and the local labor unions.<sup>14</sup>

Other problems included the huge cache of refuse (much of it spoiled remains from warehouse fires) deposited by businesses and citizens at the foot of Garrison Avenue, and directly in the path of the bridge itself, which of course had to be removed and relocated. The rise and fall of the river’s depth forced constant adjustment on the part of the workers as they moved and poured concrete and constructed both the bridge framework and the scaffolding and tramways needed for the workmen to move about. Another issue that loomed large, and which was not initially addressed by engineers, was quicksand. One area was so bad that it was referred to as the “nightmare hole.” The “nightmare hole,” which had an estimated depth of 15 feet, lay on the east bank of the river at the location of a large shoreline abutment, and beneath an extensive pile of refuse. Making matters worse for workers attempting to excavate that location was the constant influx of water whose source was believed to be an old sewer line. That obstacle alone kept engineers and workers busy for almost five months, from April 1919 to the end of August 1919.<sup>15</sup>

The construction itself was an event of great interest to citizens of Fort Smith. Huge crowds gathered daily to watch the work progress. The relationship between Elkan and the crowds was amiable. During summer months the stretch of river adjacent to and on either side of Garrison Avenue became a free-swimming hole for old and young alike. The largest of the sandbars was generally referred to as the “Municipal Bathing Beach.” Much attention was given to this area as a tourist attraction as well, although the dreams and schemes of a beach resort, which many in the community supported, never actually came to fruition. To facilitate access to the beach, citizens were at first allowed to use the construction tramways. At their own risk, of course. With the help of the construction crew, lighting was even added to make use of the tramways at night.<sup>16</sup> But, by the summer of 1920, the tramway was considered too dangerous and was closed to the public.

In July 1920, after Elkan requested relief from his obligation to finish building the bridge, a new contract

for its completion was let.<sup>17 18</sup> The winner of this third and final bid was the Missouri Valley Bridge and Iron company of Leavenworth, Kansas. At this point, the finishing cost of the bridge was set at \$375,000 with a profit to the new contractor of \$47,500 and the new estimated completion date was set for the summer of 1921. The “Million Dollar Free Bridge” was finally completed in the spring of 1922 at a total cost of approximately \$850,000.<sup>19</sup>

While construction on the bridge continued under new management, over in the federal courthouse, the previous builder was getting his day in court. In his amended complaint, M. M. Elkan was now claiming fraud on the part of the chief engineer, Ira G. Hedrick, whom he accused of deliberately falsifying the original survey details to entice lower bidding for the work. The engineer himself was delayed in giving testimony on his own behalf, as he was engaged with burial arrangements for his son, Captain Arlos Hedrick, whose body had just been returned from France. Captain Hedrick was an assistant engineer before the war and had helped design the bridge.<sup>16</sup>

In a post-completion engineering review, written by C. A. Prokes of the Missouri Valley Bridge and Iron company for the periodical “*Engineering News-Record*,” the following technical information was provided:

The completed bridge was 3,173 feet long, consisting of twelve girder spans totaling 498.33 feet, fourteen arch spans totaling 2,047.25 feet and two smaller arch spans totaling 424.5 feet and a retaining wall on the Arkansas side that was 203.33 feet. The overall width of the bridge was 41 feet, of which twenty-eight feet comprised the roadway and thirteen feet (6.5 feet each side) was sidewalk. Total finished bridge contained 20,000 cubic yards of concrete and 784 tons of reinforcing steel. Fourteen river piers (completed by Elkan) were built using cofferdams while the remaining twelve piers were sunk by pneumatic process after the Missouri Valley Bridge and Iron company took over.

All the sand and gravel for the bridge’s construction was sourced from the Arkansas River within one mile of the bridge itself and carried by barge to the construction site.<sup>19</sup>

Although logistics in moving equipment and materials by rail during the latter part of 1920 delayed construction beyond the projected completion date, by November 1921 the end was in sight and planning began for the biggest celebration that the city of Fort Smith had ever seen!

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> *Southwest American*, May 13, 1922.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Jul. 26, 1917.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Feb. 13, 1913.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, May 31, 1917.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, Sep. 2, 1917.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, Sep. 4, 1917.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, Sep. 5, 1917.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, Feb. 6, 1919.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, Mar. 23, 1919.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, May 2, 1919.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, Aug. 27, 1920.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, Jul 30, 1920.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, Jun. 29, 1920.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, Feb. 28, 1919.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, Aug. 23, 1919.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, Jul. 16, 1919.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, Jun. 29, 1920.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, Jul. 20, 1920.

<sup>19</sup> “Building a Rib-Arch Concrete Bridge In Arkansas,” [www.ahtd.state.ar.us/historic\\_bridge/Historic Bridge Resources/1922 Engineering News-Record = Garrison Ave. Bridge article.pdf](http://www.ahtd.state.ar.us/historic_bridge/Historic Bridge Resources/1922 Engineering News-Record = Garrison Ave. Bridge article.pdf).

<sup>20</sup> In his remarks at the christening ceremony on May 12, 1922, Mayor Fagan Bourland stated the during the building of the bridge, some 400 accidents and three deaths occurred. While researching this article, I was only able to identify two of those deaths.

Give Local History Fans  
You Know the Gift of Membership.

They will love the *Journal* — and you.

# In the Beginning

*Fort Smith Little Theatre—1947-1985*

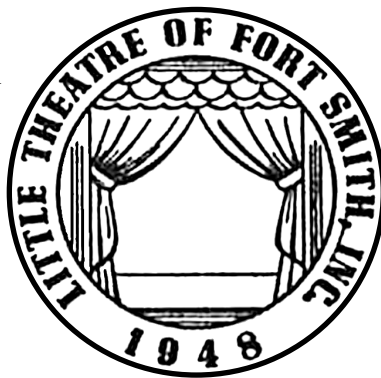
**By Joyce Faulkner**

**B**eginning in the second half of the twentieth century and continuing through the first quarter of the twenty-first, the Fort Smith Little Theatre (FSLT) has been an ongoing reflection of local culture, talent and enterprise. Generations of volunteer producers, directors, actors, singers, dancers, costumers, and light and sound technicians—supported by businesses, private sponsors and audiences—have provided Fort Smithians with entertainment and opportunity.

It all began at the May 1947 meeting of the Young Ladies' Guild of Sparks Hospital. Mrs. James (Florabel Kinnebrew) Pattee suggested that the group put together a theatrical program to raise funds for the Guild. Of course, many questions arose.

Would Fort Smith audiences support such a scheme? How would the Guild manage it? How would they pay for it? Where would they perform it? Where would they find plays? Directors? Actors? While today the complexity of such a suggestion might seem overwhelming, the World War II "can-do" spirit was still the cultural norm.

The group got down to business right away. In their subsequent 1947 meetings, they built a structure for what would be initially called "The Little Theatre of Fort Smith." First, they created committees to define organizational rules and procedures. They concluded that the theater needed a board of directors separate from the Guild's board, so they created one. It included well-known citizens like Mrs. William Eads, Mrs. D.C. Alexander, Mrs. Mosey Smith, Jr., Mrs. Ander K. Orr, Mrs. Burley Clay Johnston—and of course, Mrs. Pattee, herself. The officers were Mrs. Thomas P. Foltz (Babe), President; Lawrence Tenent, Vice President; Annis Lick, Secretary; Mrs. Packard Porter, Corresponding Secretary; and Dick DeLong, Treasurer. Other well-



## THE SCENE

The North's Apartment on Greenwich Place, New York City

### Act 1

Scene 1—Tuesday, October 25, 4 P. M. to 4:30 P. M.  
Scene 2—8 P. M. to 9 P. M., that night.

### Act 2

Wednesday, October 26, 10 A. M. to 11 A. M.

### Act 3

Friday, October 28, 5 P. M. to 6 P. M.

## CAST

Mr. North	James W. Pattee
Mrs. North	Mrs. Porter Gammill
Lt. Weigand	David Boatright
Claire Brent	Mary Helen Bass
Louis Berex	Kenneth Booth
Detective Mullins	Jimmy Elmore
Jane Wilson	Mrs. Burley Johnston
Ben Wilson	Jim Alexander Jr.
Mrs. Brooks	Sue Duncan
Mr. Brooks	Jack Taylor
Buono	Sid Maurras
Inspector O'Malley	Doc Miller
Clinton Edwards	Dr. W. L. Shippey
Cooper, a Cop	Sam Phillips
Timothy Barnes	Dr. Wright Hawkins
Medical Examiner	Bill Payne
Jenkins, Ambulance Doctor	Payne Morrow
Fuller Brush Man	P. S. Wheeler
Gordon, a Cop	Dr. John D. Olson
Fingerprint Man	Doug Smith

As their project for the year the Young Ladies Guild of Sparks Memorial Hospital has chosen to sponsor a Little Theatre Group in Fort Smith. We trust this initial effort will convince the people of Fort Smith that we should join the many cities of the United States that have a permanent organized Little Theatre Group.

Mrs. J. Burton Gregg, *President*

## THE YOUNG LADIES GUILD

or

Sparks Memorial Hospital

Presents

THE FORT SMITH LITTLE THEATRE

in

*Mr. and Mrs. North*

A COMEDY MYSTERY

By

OWEN DAVIS

Directed By

FLORABEL K. PATTEE

JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM

February 11 and 12

8:15 P. M.

known local families—including the Huttons, the Meeks, the Mulholands and the Sparkses—pitched in when a need was identified.

The next step was to select the first play and staff it appropriately. Given that it was Mrs. Pattee's idea and that she had previous experience in such endeavors, she agreed to direct. Given the amount of work to be done in such

a short time, they only scheduled two productions for 1948—both to be performed in the Fort Smith Junior High School Auditorium.

## Here's the Answer to the Question

# Well, What Is a "Little Theatre," Anyway?

The Little Theatre's the talk of the town!

But what exactly, some people are wondering, is a Little Theatre?

"An organized group of amateur actors inspired by a creative impetus," answers Mrs. James Pattee Jr., director of the local group, whose parents were active in the Shreveport, La., Little Theatre for many years.

"Everyone acts sometime in their lives and the Little Theatre gives people a way to express this innate desire," she explained.

"Psychology is just another name for acting, because acting is often used to achieve an end, or to make others do as you want them to," she said.

**Little Theatres, which sprang up about 1910 when road companies began to disappear, are located in towns throughout the country.**

Some have their own theatre, but others perform in churches or in the high schools as ours does, said Mrs. Pattee.

"Little Theatre really means that the community is growing up—that it is striving for cultural attainment," she said.

**And there is no class distinction in the Little Theatre. There is a place for everyone.**

"A grocer can paint scenery and a girl who works at her typewriter by day can act at night,"



**MR. AND MRS. NORTH**, played by James Pattee Jr. and Mrs. Porter Gammill, search for clues to solve a murder in a scene from the Little Theatre play to be given Wednesday and Thursday nights at the junior high. They are assisted by Detective Williams (left), played by Jimmy Elmore, and Lieutenant Weigand, who is David Boatright. (Staff photo).

emphasized Mrs. Pattee.

One of the main aims of the Little Theatre here, and every Little Theatre, is to have a theatre of its own.

**Several plays of different types will be presented each**

**year.**

"Mr. and Mrs. North," a mystery-comedy to be presented Wednesday and Thursday nights at 8:15 o'clock at the junior high auditorium, will be followed by another production in May.

**THE YOUNG LADIES' GUILD**, Sparks Memorial hospital, sponsors of the movement, eventually hope to see the Little Theatre become an independent project. And they don't think it will be too long before this is accomplished.

The first play, *Mr. and Mrs. North*, was billed as a "comedy mystery." The program from that production still exists, carefully preserved over the years—and now lives electronically on the website ([www.fsmlt.org](http://www.fsmlt.org)). In it, Mrs. J. Burton Greg, President of the Young Ladies Guild of Sparks Memorial Hospital, expressed the hope that, "...this initial effort will convince the people of Fort Smith that we should join the many cities of the United States that have a permanent organized Little Theater Group."

That first effort did attract financial investments from the community. Aside from the usual information one would expect in a "Little Theater" program, it included three pages of "patrons." Successful businesses of the day like Surgical Supply, Acee Milk, Dixie Cleaners, Fort Smith Structural Steel, Oklahoma Gas and Electric and Williams Hardware all sponsored the first show. A long list of established and well-known Fort Smith families—the Allens, the Belands,

the Berrys, the Bourlands, the Echolses, the Littles, the Neys, the Rodgerses, the Randalls, the Sharums, the Speerses and more—supported the effort as well. This kind of community enthusiasm surely helped the fledgling theater prove the value of their undertaking.<sup>1</sup>

It seems that trust was well-founded. The first Little Theatre of Fort Smith performance was an amazing success, attracting over 1,500 people for its two-day run in February 1948. The second play, *John Loves Mary*, followed in November. Of course, since the Guild was sponsoring the Little Theatre, they took 75% of the box office to fund the needed surgical equipment for Sparks Hospital. It was a big win-win though. Fort Smith audiences happily attended these performances starring their friends and neighbors while raising money for a good cause. In fact, the Little Theatre introduced a new concept for their marketing efforts—season tickets for the 1949 two-play lineup.

In June 1949, the Little Theatre performed *What a*

*Life at the Junior High School*—and invited Fort Chaffee soldiers for a preview. Hundreds showed up. The attendance for the two-day run itself was well over a thousand.

By 1950, it was clear the Guild had launched something bigger than they ever expected. Earning thousands of dollars for Sparks Hospital, they had achieved what they wanted and they were ready to move on to other endeavors. However, Fort Smith was hooked. In June, the Fort Smith Junior Chamber of Commerce took control. Even with this new arrangement, the Fort Smith Little Theatre only received 60% of the profits.

As the seasons rolled by, the Little Theatre grew—in range, in available talent, in ambition—and in audiences. In 1951, the organization tried a new concept—*theater in the round*. The play was *Southern Exposure*, hosted by the Ward Hotel on Garrison Avenue. It was also directed by Flora Pattee, who was once again expanding theatrical options for the young local organization. The program notes for this production introduced the format and included this explanation:

With "Southern Exposure," your Fort Smith Little Theatre is proud to introduce to its patrons THEATER-IN-THE-ROUND. This intimate type of production, staged right in the middle of the audience, is zooming in popularity.

Though new to most Americans, arena presentation is actually the oldest form of drama. Like the amphitheater in ancient Greece and the Elizabethan playhouse, the modern arena theatre uses little or no scenery. A blackout takes the place of a curtain for scene changes, and between acts a few stagehands put on a show of their own moving props and furniture. Since footlights would blind the audience on the opposite side, the stage is lighted from above. Actors enter and exit through the audience.

In two short paragraphs, the FSLT framed how Fort Smith audiences would experience local theater for the next seven decades—from the type of space that would be required to seating to costuming to sound equipment to lighting. The format created an intimacy between the players, the set, music, the audience—and the story.

By 1952, FSLT was freed from any sponsorship or partnering agreements. Creatively, Flora Pattee continued producing plays using the theater-in-the-round concept. Local talent was available in numbers, range and enthusiasm. Local businesses were happy to help with costumes and set materials for a plug in the



**THE BABY GRAND GROCERY STORE**, located at 3800 North O Street, became the site of the Fort Smith Little Theatre in 1952.

program—especially since Fort Smith audiences showed up in sizable numbers. No longer having to share box-office receipts with other entities, the Little Theatre's financial situation was solid.

However, logistical issues were becoming problematic. What to do with costumes and scenery after the play for which they were acquired was over? As the troupe became more popular, audiences wanted more plays per season. However, renting performance space made scheduling more difficult. The board decided it was time to explore purchasing their own theater.

Eventually, the group found what looked to be a viable option at 3800 North O Street. The Baby Grand Grocery Store was for sale for \$15,000. The location, general size and access to parking were perfect—however, a grocery store and a theater are not the same thing. Significant modifications were necessary. Such an endeavor was a stretch for the all-volunteer organization.

The first challenge was the down payment. While rehearsals for the first play of the 1952 season, *One Foot in Heaven*, progressed over in the Goldman Room at the Ward Hotel, volunteers went about raising the \$3,525 needed to hold the property on O Street.<sup>2</sup> It was challenging. However, one patron and board member, Mrs. Ed Louise Ballman, donated \$2,000 to the cause.<sup>3</sup> With that initial gift, volunteers found additional donors from a growing pool of solid Fort Smith theater supporters.

The second challenge was the mortgage. With the theater being loosely structured and reliant on volunteers, local lending institutions were tentative. However, a theater-lover sitting on the board of a local savings and loan convinced his fellow directors that the



FSLT was a winning bet.<sup>4</sup>

So now with the property secured, another team of volunteers began the renovations that would turn a store into a theater in the round. The only professionals called into help were electricians. The work continued deep into the fall. In fact, finishing touches were being made while the cast and crew of *Skylark* were engaged in dress rehearsal.

*Skylark* was the first play performed at the newly remodeled FSLT theater on North O Street. It was also the last play directed by Flora Pattee. She and her husband, James, moved back to their home state of Louisiana shortly afterward. The idea of a Fort Smith Little Theatre was hers, and she directed all but one of the productions from 1948 until the fall of 1952.

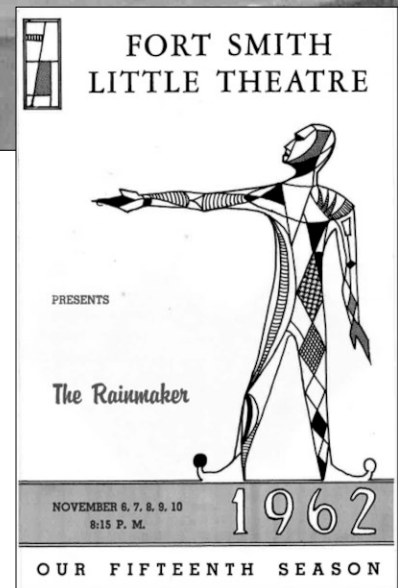
One of the most remembered and remarked upon features of the FSLT's new theater-in-the-round on North O Street were the poles that supported the ceiling—and could not be removed. Directors, actors, stagehands and patrons remember them with a mixture of amusement and irritation. Directors found many ways to deal with them. They made them part of the show or decorated them so that they enriched the look of the set or staged the action around them like they did not exist at all.

Throughout the years that FSLT performed at this location (1954-1968), additional features were added as need was established and/or money was available. Many changes were structural and only remarkable in that they addressed existing or potential problems. However, a few reflected the growing community of Little Theatre participants and audiences. For example, storage and dressing rooms were invisible to the audience but valued upgrades for casts and crews. On the other hand, everyone applauded the installation of a payphone in the lobby. In 1955, casts, crew and audiences alike welcomed air conditioning. And this investment had a financial benefit in that it allowed the building to be used even in the hottest months of the year. In the 1960s, the board remodeled the lobby and added additional storage and bathrooms. As money was available, they purchased a new stained-glass window and Ron Watson's "comedy and tragedy" mask light fixtures. And finally, Al Reis, owner of the Reis Art Gallery and School, and Jay Anderson, one of his instructors, designed a stained-glass sculpture—known as the Harlequin Man—which stood outside the theater entrance and became a symbol for FSLT.

As the years rolled by, the FSLT added more productions each season. This was because they owned their theater. It was relatively comfortable, pleasantly decorated and designed specifically to support theater-



(ABOVE) The Harlequin Man statue is shown outside the old Fort Smith Little Theatre location on North O Street. (Right) The Harlequin Man is included on the cover of the 1962 program for the FSLT program for *The Rainmaker*..



in-the-round. It was also because Fort Smith audiences were willing to come out for additional shows. And with more slots to fill each year, directors expanded their program rosters—and more people became interested in directing new shows. The organization went from two shows in the 1948 season to three in 1949 to five in 1954 to seven in 1965. They also added variety. From comedies to drama to musicals to mysteries to simple readings, directors explored the varying tastes of Fort Smith theatergoers and stretched

## BACKGROUNDS AND BUILDINGS . . .

Today in these United States the amateur theatre is a flourishing institution. Throughout the land, in universities, colleges, high schools, churches, and community groups, thousands of people, young, and those not so young, are participating in some form of theatre activity.

In spite of the widespread popularity of the motion picture and the radio, the living stage is more than holding its own. Scattered all over the country, hundreds of amateur groups are endeavoring, in their own small way, to make some definite contribution to the cultural life of the community.

The urgent need of most of these groups is an adequate theatre plant—a suitable place in which to work. Some have no theatre plant at all. They produce their plays in schools, in churches, or in rented auditoriums which were not designed for theatrical performances. Yet it is under such circumstances they must work; they must take it as they find it. They must make the wisest possible use of what they have, and hope for something better. Handicaps can be overcome. The history of many amateur groups has proved this again and again.

It may be of interest to you in our audience to know about some of the handicaps surrounding this particular production. After two o'clock Thursday afternoon we moved the set furniture and the properties into the Gold Room, set up the lights, and were ready for the first dress rehearsal at seven-thirty. Several businessmen interested in Little Theatre used Friday to erect the "risers" (platforms to you) and to place the chairs. Whatever time was left before final dress rehearsal was spent in "polishing" the set and lighting facilities.

If a line appears too deeply cut on a player's face, dear friends, please do not blame the make-up crew . . . it comes from strain and exhaustion! But all of us are happy to take on an extra line for the civic cause, and for the genuine personal satisfaction this creative endeavor brings us.

The abilities, the enthusiasm, and the cooperative hard work of the many individuals who have spark-plugged Little Theatre since its formation in 1948 have at last been rewarded with the attainment of that "hope of hopes," that "dream" of all amateurs—OUR OWN BUILDING! Well-I, perhaps not quite our OWN . . . there's the Mortgage. But the profits we have husbanded from past productions, plus the generous donations of many interested people, have enabled us to make a substantial down-payment on the building at 3800 North O Street. A great deal of planning, for the present as well as for the future, preceded this purchase.

It is with honest pride in our past accomplishments, faith in our future, and confidence in your continued support, that we place our name on the building. It will be dedicated to YOU—our patrons.

. . . The Building Committee.

## The Little Theatre of Fort Smith, Inc.

### One Foot in Heaven

A Play in Three Acts  
under the direction of  
FLORABEL K. PATTEE

CAST		
REVEREND WILLIAM H. SPENCE, a minister	ROY D. HIDEY	
HOPE SPENCE, his wife	MURIEL HOLDER	
HARTZELL, their son	WILLIAM WEST	
EILEEN, their daughter	ANN ROSS	
DR. ROMER, a good friend	ADOLPH "DOC" CHANDLER	
LOUISE, a pretty miss	LEE DIXON	
MARIA, a Mexican girl	CELIA POLA	
MOLLY, a crusader	PAT COLEMAN	
RONNY, her brother	LAURENCE G. LUCKINBILL	
LETTY, a pest	GINGER FRYE	
MRS. SANDOW, a proud woman	ERNA KRONE	
MRS. DIGBY, a choir singer	BESS HARRIS WIDDER	
GEORGIE, her son	LARRY RANDOLPH	
MRS. CAMBRIDGE, a church worker	ANN SIMS	
MRS. JELLISON, a church worker	FAYE MARIE TAYLOR	
MAJOR COOPER, a gruff man	DALE CRAMPTON	
BISHOP SHERWOOD, a just man	JAMES W. PATTEE, JR.	

\*\*\*\*\*

Reverend Fraser Spence, prologue and narration . . . CHARLES V. DIXON

PLACE: The little town of Laketon, Iowa.

TIME: About 1910.

SETTING: Mr. Spence's parsonage.

ACT ONE Scene One: Early afternoon in April.

Scene Two: A rainy afternoon in June.

ACT TWO Scene One: An hour later.

Scene Two: A Saturday afternoon in September.

Scene Three: Afternoon, a few days later.

ACT THREE Scene One: Afternoon, a few days later.

Scene Two: A Sunday morning in June of the following year.

PROLOGUE AND NARRATION: Pulpit of the Reverend Fraser Spence's church in Laketon, Iowa. Time: the present.

— Coffee will be served in the Silver Lounge during intermissions —

## WHO'S A-ROUND . . .

Though he has been diplomatic in his avoidance of any reference to specific circumstances, it is evident in his co-workers that Chaplain ROY HIDEY has himself been involved in situations not unlike some of those which confront "Father" in this play. Captain HIDEY, now stationed at Chaffee, entered the Methodist ministry in 1938. He and his wife are native Missourians, and they have two daughters.

MRS. PHIL HOLDER ("Mother") is one of several Van Buren residents Little Theatre is happy to welcome in its ranks. She herself is a teacher of dramatic expression, presenting both spring and fall recitals of her pupils. Mrs. Holder has been active in school and church theatricals, and was a former member of the Fort Smith Community Players.

PFC. WILLIAM WEST (Hartell), whose home is in Elwood, Kansas, staged and acted in college productions at the University of Kansas. He is a member of the University Players, and a charter member of the Theatre Technicians Fraternity. At the summer of his senior year at the University, he was drafted into the army, and has spent fourteen months at Chaffee.

"DOC" CHANDLER (Dr. Romer) toured several seasons in the United States, Canada, and Cuba, with shows out of New York and Chicago. He has played summer stock in Dallas, St. Louis, and Chicago, and his talents have been used in many local shows. With more professional experience than most of our actors, "Doc" asks to put in a plug for Flo Pattee, for he considers her one of the best directors with whom he has worked.

Several young women who are members of Sock 'N' Socks at Fort Smith High School grace our stage in this play. ANN ROSS (Eileen) and GINGER FRYE (Letty) were last seen as college girls in "Goodbye, My Fancy." They are both active in high school dramatics. LEE DIXON (Louise) has had little acting experience hitherto, but is so enthusiastic she plans to continue dramatic studies in college.

PAT COLEMAN (Molly) has already begun to collect dramatic honors. She was first place in the State Interpretative Reading contest. CELIA POLA (Maria) has carried her interest in theatre arts with her as her army family has moved about the world. She began working in Little Theatre while in the Panama Canal Zone.

New in Junior College, LARRY LUCKINBILL (Ronny), when a student in St. Ann's Academy, produced and directed several plays of his own composition. He is looking forward to a career in medicine.

Her vigorous characterization of Emmeline Randall in "Southern Exposure" made the reappearance of MRS. KENNETH KRONE (Mrs. Sandow) a demand performance. A native of Iowa, Mrs. Krone was active in Little Theatre work in Des Moines. She finds the group here, as they find her, hard-working, cooperative, and friendly.

MRS. BESS WIDDER (Mrs. Digby), during her residence on Long Island, played with the Fortnightly Players in "The Women," "I Remember Mama," and many one-act plays. Her debut here in "Southern Exposure" as the effusive, gossipy Mary Belle Tucker, was a delightful, tongue-in-cheek characterization.

LARRY RANDOLPH (Georgie) has "grown-up" with Little Theatre. Let him tell it! "When 'John Love Mary' was in rehearsal, I lingered in the auditorium one day after Junior High assembly. Mr. and Mrs. Pattee came to work on the set, and promptly enlisted me to run errands. That evening I came back to watch rehearsal, then dress-rehearsal, then performance. Since then I have spent countless happy evenings as color-runner, clean-up committee, and general handyman. Now I have advanced to the immortal rank of the actor. I guess the grass-putter's got me!"

ANN SIMS (Mrs. Cambridge) first came on-stage for us as one of the "Two Blind Mice." Since then she has been pressed into service for work with properties, make-up, and as prompter. And she is now a member of Little Theatre's board of directors. She, too, admits that theatre "gets in your blood." "You work hard, but it's creative — and lots of fun!"

Another Van Buren resident, FAYE MARIE TAYLOR (Mrs. Jellison) acted in plays as a student in Okanabe College, where she was a member of the Dramatic Club and took courses in public speaking and play production. She earned her M.A. at the University of Arkansas. For four years Miss Taylor had charge of speech and dramatics at Van Buren high school, and she is now history teacher and debate coach at Fort Smith Senior High.

DALE CRAMPTON (Major Cooper) says this is the first "ham-ting" he has done since playing the sheriff in "Lightnin'" in 1931. "We were fortunate in finding him, in a desperate search for the right man for this role. We don't think he's a bit rusty, and we look forward to hearing him well-polished in future performances."

CHUCK DIXON (Fraser Spence) and JIM PATTEE (The Bishop) have a special message to the gentlemen in our audience: "We are running out of make-up," they say. "If you begin to tire of seeing of faces assume as many roles, give the audience a break by turning down for try-outs for the next show!" Chuck is the new president of the Board of Directors. Jim is chairman of the building committee.



(COUNTERCLOCKWISE FROM TOP) Program from the Little Theatre of Fort Smith's *One Foot in Heaven* production. Scene from the 1948 production of *Mr. and Mrs. North*, and cast photos from *Twelve Angry Men* (1966), *The Curious Savage* (1957), and *Stalag 17* (1966).

(Photos courtesy of the Fort Smith Little Theatre)



the range of directors, crew and actors. They did classics or what was popular or what was new and refreshing—from *John Loves Mary* in 1948 to *Twelve Angry Men* in 1966. And from *Curious Savage* in 1957 to *Stalag 17* in 1966.

In 1968, the Little Theatre observed their twentieth anniversary with a new production of their very first event, *Mr. and Mrs. North*, in honor of the Sparks Guild—and Florabel K. Pattee and her husband, James, who returned to Fort Smith for the nostalgic celebration.

Fort Smithians were drawn to participate in the Little Theatre for many reasons. Some were performers looking for an audience. Some directed, some moved the furniture around. Some sang, some danced—and some perfected the pratfall. Some designed sets, others built them. Some put together costumes, others sold tickets. Some were already elderly and others were still very young when they discovered the FSLT. People came together who might never have known each other under normal circumstances. That is the magic of community theater.

Like in ordinary life, the passing of time brought changes. People with different interests joined the board. New folks moved to town. Others moved away. Youngsters grew old enough to try out for parts or they left for college and never returned. Older participants found new interests or got sick or passed away. New generations took over and put their own stamp on directing, acting, management and programming. And of course, it was inevitable that what was once new and shiny would age or outgrow its usefulness. This eventually happened to the North O Street building and a decision was made to build a new location.

*See the September 2022 edition of the Journal for the rest of this story.*

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## Fort Smith Little Theatre—Early Profiles

### FLORABEL K. PATTEE

Florabel Kinnebrew Pattee was born in 1908 in Limestone, Texas, to Charles Kinnebrew, Sr., and Zoudi Schwartzenburg. As Charles' career successes in the oil industry progressed, the family became financially comfortable and socially active. The local newspapers documented the beautifully dressed young Florabel's regular appearances at teas and cotillions as she progressed through high school and college. The social pages commented on her charm, talent and



**CENTENARY COLLEGE** in Shreveport, Louisiana.

outgoing personality—and either described or photographed her in the latest fashions. Flora enjoyed performing from an early age. For example, *The Times* (Shreveport, Louisiana) commented on her musical interpretation of *Forest Sprites* on the piano when she was only nine years old.

Flora did well both academically and socially throughout her school years. Immediately after high school, she attended Centenary College in Shreveport and then Northwestern University in Chicago where she was active in the Gamma Phi Beta Sorority.<sup>5</sup>

After college, Flora married a young man by the name of Reginald Burton Chapman. It was celebrated in the social pages of the *Shreveport Times*. However, their relationship did not last and within a few short years, Flora was back living with her parents.

Then she met Erwin Lowe Gill who was studying to become a doctor. Again, Flora's wedding was the reported with enthusiasm in the Shreveport society pages. They married in 1935 and settled into life in Shreveport. In 1938, they had a son—Erwin Lowe Gill, Jr., who they lovingly called "Sonny." Life was good.

During the war years, Erwin and Flora moved into their own home in Shreveport near the hospital where Dr. Gill worked. In the fall of 1943, Flora's mother, Zoudie, became ill and was hospitalized. Flora rushed to her side. Although Dr. Gill had already spent



**FLORABEL  
KINNEBREW  
PATTEE**

the day of October 31, 1943, working at the hospital, he came home to watch over Sonny while Flora tended her mother.

Sometime during that night, fire broke out in the Gill home, and it burned to the ground.

Later, firemen determined that a dropped cigarette ignited a cloth chair. Whether an exhausted Dr. Gill dropped that cigarette or a young man who was boarding with them, remains unknown. Fortunately, the boarder was able to escape. However, firemen found Dr. Gill in six-year-old Sonny's room, asphyxiated by smoke. They rescued little Sonny, but he had been horribly burned and died within a few hours. Later investigations surmised that Dr. Gill died trying to rescue his little boy.

Within a year of the tragedy, Flora moved to Fort Smith and stayed with friends, Dr. and Mrs. Colquitte. They introduced her to Fort Smith society, and she got involved in the Sparks Hospital Guild. It was not long before Flora Gill learned to love again. She met Captain James Pattee, an officer assigned to field artillery at Fort Chaffee. They were married at the home of Dr. and Mrs. Colquitte. Her friends and family joined them. The date was October 26, 1944. Five days short of the one-year anniversary of the fire that killed Dr. Gill and Sonny.

Together, finding meaning after the war years and Flora's personal tragedy, the Pattees threw themselves into the early years of Fort Smith Little Theatre. Flora directed all but one of the plays performed in the first four years. And James performed or worked behind the scenes.

Eventually, the two moved on to find new jobs, new towns, new homes, a new little theater company—and eventually a new baby.

James Pattee died in 1969—and Florabel K. Pattee passed away in Louisville, Kentucky, on October 12, 1998. She was ninety years old.

The Fort Smith Little Theatre might have blossomed eventually, but it began when it did because of Florabel Pattee's ideas and years of directing.

#### **MRS. BURLEY CLAY JOHNSTON, JR.**

Marjorie Allen Johnston was one of the earliest participants in the Fort Smith Little Theatre. Not only



**FLORABEL KINNEBREW  
CHAPMAN GILL PATTEE**



**MARJORIE ALLEN**

was she on the board, she also acted and directed many of the programs presented in the early years of the Fort Smith Little Theatre.

Filled with personality, energy and opinions, she was a force of nature. She and her husband, Burley Clay Johnston, Jr., were popular figures around town. In fact, they both participated in Fort Smith Little Theatre productions.

Marjorie loved all aspects of it, from her work with the nascent Fort Smith Little Theatre team starting in the late 1940s, she wrote plays for kids which she directed and produced. Her purpose was to teach them the ins and outs of creating and producing a play. Dr. Micki Voelkel, longtime actor and director at the Fort Smith Little Theatre, remembers Marjorie's impact on her, "When I was twelve years old, Marjorie taught me in a workshop through Fort Smith Community Children's Theatre (now the Young Actors Guild). She directed me in my first leading role in *The Emperor's New Clothes*. I remember her teaching us foundational rules about the theater like terminology, expectations and behavior. She had the most precise diction of anyone I've ever met. She was inspiring." Apparently,



theater was a family matter. Her husband, Burley Johnston, II, played the emperor in that show.

Marjorie Mae Allen was born on August 23, 1920, to George Wesley and Esther Allen in Fort Smith. Esther enjoyed participating in church and civic activities. She was city chairman of the State Centennial celebration in 1936—as well as chair of the organization to handle sales of Tuberculosis Seals. She also participated in the Red Cross, United Service Organizations and the Gary ladies. Like her mother, Marjorie had many interests. According to Marjorie's sons, Burley III, Allen, Elliot and Jeffery, she was interested in travel, art, local and national politics, and the Civil Rights Movement. But it was her rich creative talents that led her to literature and theater.

The Allens saw to it that their daughter received the best education possible at the time. Jeff, her youngest son says, "Not uncommon then, Mother spent one year at Mount Vernon, a ladies' 'finishing school,' before going to Smith. It was at Smith where she became a lifelong friend of Madeleine L'Engle. Smith did not have a 'study abroad' program in France, so Mother enrolled in at Northwestern her junior year. Just weeks before they were to board a ship, Hitler invaded France, so she didn't go."<sup>6</sup>

The lovely young woman who returned to Fort Smith was full of imagination and ideas. She attracted the attention of Burley Clay Johnston, Jr., who also had impressive academic credentials. They became engaged in 1942 and married before the year was out. Burley began working in his family's business, Johnston's Quality Flowers.

Marjorie's interests were vast and quirky, as were her talents. She enthusiastically participated in first the Sparks Hospital Guild. However, her short attendance at Northwestern fed her interest and enthusiasm for theater. In the early years, she performed many roles for the young Little Theatre. In the first show in 1948, she is billed as being on the board of directors. In the second season, she was the female lead in the 1948 drama, *Blythe Spirit*. She is a program chairman and the recording speaker of the board for that one too.

Jeff Johnston remembers his mother's sense of humor—and that acting need not be reserved for the



**MARJORIE ALLEN  
JOHNSTON**

## Miss Allen Is Burley C. John

**T**HE ENGAGEMENT of Miss Marjorie Allen, daughter of Mrs. George Wesley Allen and the late Mr. George Wesley Allen, to Burley Clay Johnston Jr., son of Mr. and Mrs. Burley Clay Johnston, Prairie View addition, is announced by Miss Allen's mother.

Date for the wedding has been set for Thursday, Dec. 31. The ceremony, at Mrs. Allen's home, 400 South Nineteenth street, at 8 o'clock in the evening, will be followed by a reception.

Miss Allen was graduated from Smith college, Northampton, Mass. She attended Mount Vernon Seminary, Washington, D. C., and Northwestern university, Evanston, Ill. She is a member of the Chi Omega sorority.

Mr. Johnston, graduate of St. Anne's academy, attended Notre Dame university, South Bend, Ind., and graduated magna cum laude, with the class of 1940. For the last year he has been a civilian flight instructor for Lou Foote Flying service at Dallas, Texas.

**ENGAGEMENT ANNOUNCEMENT** of Marjorie Allen and Burley Clay Johnston Jr.

*(Images courtesy of the Fort Smith Little Theatre and Southwest Times Record)*



**MARJORIE JOHNSTON** shown in the Fort Smith Little Theatre.



**MARJORIE JOHNSTON** had an “indefatigable spirit and compassion for others,” her son Jeff remembers.

(Courtesy of the Fort Smith Little Theatre and Southwest Times Record)

stage. “When Marjorie was in labor with me, she called the doctor to tell him I was ‘on the way.’ He told her he’d just examined her two days earlier and it was probably false labor. Marjorie: ‘How many children have you delivered?’ Doctor: ‘Marjorie, you know that’s hundreds if not a thousand!’ Marjorie: ‘No, truly delivered yourself? Zero! I have delivered three. Meet me at the hospital.’ And he did.”

Another time, when banks began requiring account numbers on “bank checks” for cash, Marjorie was horrified at the very idea. The tellers all knew her. In fact, the bank president was a high school classmate. She complained to him directly, but he assured her that the number was a formality. His signature was the key. Unconvinced, she spent the next month writing checks signed by any name imaginable (think Queen Elizabeth etc.). All the checks processed.

Jeff says, “I was with her when we stormed into the president’s office (as the secretary was trying to stop us). As he looked up from his phone conversation, Mother tossed the monthly batch of cancelled checks into the air exclaiming, ‘See. My name means nothing!’ And we left.”

Marjorie was civic-minded and determined. Jeff remembers, “She could be counted on to rally the citizenry to start an organization, expand an effort, fill a need, bridge community divides or just lend a hand. Her vision, Rolodex of community leaders, indefatigable spirit and compassion for others in need spurred her to lead efforts to better Fort Smith: League of Women Voters, Head Start, Little Theatre, Broadway in Fort Smith, InterFaith Council to name a few. Her efforts culminated with her receiving a ‘Key to the City’ award.”

Burley Johnston Jr.	Marjorie Johnston
<p>Burley C. Johnston Jr., 76, of Fort Smith died Tuesday, June 14, 1994, in Fort Smith. He was co-owner of Johnston's Quality Florist, a member of Christ the King Catholic Church, past president of Rotary Club and Salvation Army and a member of Hump Pilot Association.</p> <p>Rosary will be recited 7:30 p.m. today in Edwards Funeral Home Chapel. Funeral Mass will be 10 a.m. June 17 in Immaculate Conception Catholic Church with burial at Holy Cross Cemetery.</p> <p>He is survived by four sons, Clay Johnston III of Atlanta, George Allen of Falls Church, Va., F. Eliot of Richardson, Texas, and Jeffrey D. of Hickory, N.C.; 11 grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren.</p>	<p>Marjorie Allen Johnston, 73, of Fort Smith died Wednesday, June 15, 1994, in her home. A homemaker and civic leader, she was a member of First Presbyterian Church and a recipient of the first Civic Center Honors Award in 1993 for her leadership, commitment and involvement in the community.</p> <p>Memorial service will be 10 a.m. June 17 in Immaculate Conception Catholic Church with burial at Holy Cross Cemetery under the direction of Edwards Funeral Home.</p> <p>She is survived by four sons, Clay Johnston III of Atlanta, George Allen of Falls Church, Va., F. Eliot of Richardson, Texas, and Jeffrey D. of Hickory, N.C.; 11 grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren.</p>

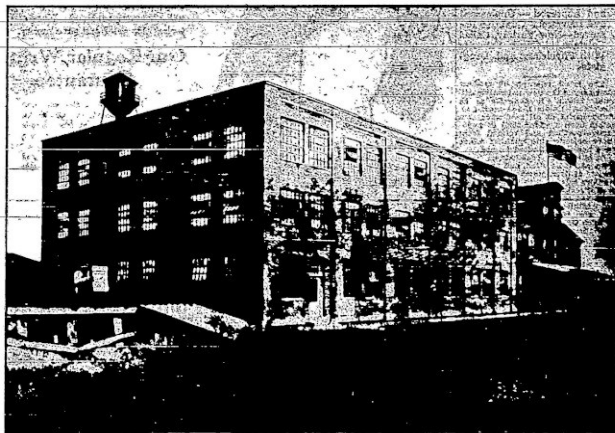
**NEWSPAPER OBITUARIES** of Burley Johnston Jr. and Marjorie Johnston from June 1994.

## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Example of local supporters: EADS. Bros-Furniture and Lamps, Elmore's Record Shop, Stromberg-Carlson Radio-Phonograph, Louie's Men's Store—Uniforms, Tillis Inc. supplied costumes for Miss Gamble, Arkola Sand and Gravel Co., Creekmore Insurance Agency, KFSA, KRKN and KFPW, *Southwest Times Record*, *The Fort Smithian*, Ward Hotel, Southwestern Bell Telephone Co., Pine Tree Shop and Rockwood Shop provided costumes worn by Mrs. Creekmore, General Biddle's Stars.
- <sup>2</sup> *One Foot in Heaven* is memorable for several reasons. It was the last play staged in the Goldman Room of the Ward Hotel. It featured young Laurence Luckinbill, a Fort Smith native who went on to have a long career in acting. And finally, it was one of the last productions Flo Pattee directed.
- <sup>3</sup> Mrs. Ballman continued to support FSLT for the rest of her life. And after her death, the organization continued received gifts from the Ballman Foundation.
- <sup>4</sup> Records showed that the FSLT was a good bet. They were never late with a payment nor was one ever missed.
- <sup>5</sup> Centenary College in Shreveport, Louisiana, a private liberal arts school affiliated with the United Methodist Church, was founded in 1825. It was the oldest chartered and accredited liberal arts college west of the Mississippi River. In 1906, the Louisiana Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, decided to move the school to Shreveport. The Centenary opened there in 1908. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools accredited it in 1925.
- <sup>6</sup> Madeleine L'Engle is a well-known author. Her most famous book is *A Wrinkle in Time*. <https://www.madeleinelengle.com/madeleine-lengle/>.



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# GREETINGS

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## Arkansas Coffin Co.

South Fort Smith, Ark.

ADVERTISEMENT from the *Southwest American*, May 28, 1919.

# The Neighborhood Industry Built

*The Beginnings of South Fort Smith*

by Sue Robison

These men showed their public spirit and confidence in Fort Smith to name the new industrial suburb South Fort Smith.

—*Southwest Times*. January 11, 1914. Page 14.

The dawning of the twentieth century filled Fort Smith business owners with energy and a commitment to advancing the development and wealth of the area. The men driving this effort were eager and optimistic when they organized themselves into the Commercial Club. Turning their attention toward a vast prairie four miles south of town, they made quick and determined advances toward transforming a flat piece of land into a new, modern industrial area to support the future growth of Fort Smith. They called it South Fort Smith.

By 1903, the Commercial Club was entertaining management from Arkansas Coffin Company, an early factory to locate in the new addition. With its concentration on affordable coffins, there was no other manufacturer of its type west of Memphis, making the whole of the southwest United States its market.

E. B. Miller, secretary of the Commercial Club, reorganized the group of business owners into the Western Arkansas Improvement Company in 1909. The

group held 1,000 acres in the community of South Fort Smith with the intention of developing the land into a bustling, giant space for factories producing a variety of goods shipped around the globe.

With what seemed an endless supply of energy and dedication, the new organization quickly brought Fort Smith Stove Works into the area businessmen sometimes called “Factory Town.” The Stove Works factory built two large buildings on the Arkansas Central Railroad in the vicinity of Fort Smith Coffin Company.

Fort Smith Stove Works joined the Fort Smith Sign Company, the Fort Smith Novelty Company, and the Fort Smith Coffin Company in 1909 as the fourth industry in the new community. The plants were built on the main road which cut through an area known as Falconer Street—later renamed South Thirty-First Street—running north from what is now South Zero Street. It was not long before Fort Smith Wheelbarrow added a new manufacturing plant, drawn to the area by the accessibility to railroads and concessions made to new business owners.

Without a dinner bucket brigade, no city can expand.

—Quote from a member of the Businessmen's Club reported in the *Southwest American*, January 3, 1914. Page 1

As exciting as the growth was to local industry in the early twentieth century, it paled when compared to the explosive leaps made when Best-Clymer Sorghum Mill and the smelters came to town. These immense businesses covered acres with their factories and lured hundreds of men to the area to fill the jobs they created.

The men taking these positions settled mostly in the Fort Smith area. However, in the years before automobiles were common, it was no simple task for them to make a daily four-mile trek for a job outside city limits. Transportation was provided primarily by the city's trolley system, which was overwhelmed by the demand. Negotiations between Fort Smith Traction Power and Light Company and business representatives resulted in special fee schedules for South Fort Smith workers but did not address the commute time or overcrowded cars. The workers needed to be closer to their jobs.

An article in the March 6, 1910, edition of the *Southwest American* newspaper reported six four-room cottages constructed near Fort Smith Stove Company were already occupied by factory employees. The paper declared the cottages "very pretty," and reported ten more structures under construction for factory workers. South Fort Smith was becoming a residential, as well as commercial, area.

By 1913, the Western Arkansas Improvement Company became the Businessmen's Club. The new organization announced the arrival of the giant Best-Clymer Mill in South Fort Smith where the production of sorghum syrup would begin in January 1914. By far the largest operation to invest in the industrial community to date, Best-Clymer was billed as the world's largest sorghum mill. It was expected to employ hundreds of men and bring tremendous growth, not only to the factory community, but to the city of Fort Smith.

Understanding a need for housing would accompany the new plant, the Businessmen's Club organized what they called "a mammoth disposal" of lots located in the South Fort Smith area. The club scheduled January 19, 1914, as the sales date of what it considered choice lots in South Fort Smith, encouraging the purchase of property to be used for building homes to become rental property.

Cottages constructed by the Stove Factory—and homes built as rental property—were the first residences in South Fort Smith. Beginning at South Zero and spreading on either side of Falconer Street, the houses were small, simple, and built to be inexpensive dwellings for factory workers. While most have disappeared from the area, it is still possible to find a small, four-room dwelling near South Zero Street and South Thirty-First Street.

**WANTED—Ten factory workers—  
Experience not necessary. Good  
wages steady job. Apply at once.  
Western Wheelbarrow Mfg. Co.  
S6. Fort Smith.**

**ADVERTISEMENT PUBLISHED** in the *Southwest American*, March 4, 1920.

War rolled across Europe in the second decade of the twentieth century, bringing with it a sudden, urgent need for brass shell casings. Zinc was an alloy used to create brass—and its manufacture required great quantities of natural gas. The United States government stepped forward to offer price supports to companies producing copper for the war effort and Fort Smith, like many communities, turned its attention toward the zinc industry.

Natural gas was abundant in the Arkansas River valley near Fort Smith and the area appeared to have a near endless supply of water. A zinc production company opened in Van Buren and by 1916 the Athletic Smelter was the third, and final, smelter to open in Fort Smith. The Athletic Smelter was located near the area known as South Town with its construction at the intersection of Greenwood Road and South Zero Street.

Athletic Smelter was undoubtedly South Fort Smith's largest and most influential employer. Hundreds of families depended the company for their income. The Smelter Workers' Union Local 258 gave employees a financial interest in their work that was unavailable in other local industries. As a result, men flocked to Athletic Smelter hoping to secure a job and the security it provided.

With these workers came their families, creating new demands on a still developing area of Sebastian County. Workers lived inside Fort Smith, but the commute was a constant problem. The Businessmen's Club and South Fort Smith business owners reopened negotiations with Fort Smith's trolley company to create a new set of special fares and routes for men commuting to factories south of town. Perhaps because the trolley company was already negotiating similar agreements for the smelter located north of Van Buren, they were not willing to meet the new requests of South Fort Smith businesses.

The trolley stop at Falconer Street (South Thirty-First Street) and what is now South Zero Street was the primary stop for South Fort Smith. Years later, the same location became the stop used by the Fort Smith public bus line.

Local real estate companies seized the opportunity to develop homesites near South Fort Smith industries. In 1916, the Yarden and Dobbins Agency offered package deals on South Fort Smith building lots. Investors—believing growth in the area would soon raise lot prices beyond their reach—snapped up their twenty percent cash down with no interest payment deals.

The Mazzard Land Company built ten houses in South Fort Smith just two short weeks after the July 1, 1916, first firing date of an Athletic Smelter kiln. A twelve-room hotel was constructed for workers. Newspaper articles encouraged developers to supply at least sixty new homes to furnace men who “make comparatively good wages and are able to live in good homes.”

The Athletic Smelter promised a steady work force of between 200 and 250 men. Scott Robinson, a spokesman for the Clear Creek Oil and Gas Company who owned the Athletic Smelter, worked directly with real estate companies to seek housing inside Fort Smith proper for smelter employees. When this proved an impossible task, Robinson called for “a building boom” to supply the number of houses needed.

Most of early homes constructed in South Fort Smith were built near Falconer Street, or South Thirty-First Street. Beginning near the roadway now called South Zero Street, the houses spread north, moving both east and west. This general construction and expansion pattern continued until the area—now called “South Town” by its seasoned residents—reached Phoenix Avenue on its north, Interstate 540 on its east, and South Twenty-Fourth Street on its west.

...The South Fort Smith Methodist Episcopal Church, South, is planting two acres of cotton and one acre of corn to pay the conference collection, which is a collection raised each year by the church for the orphan's home, the widow's hospital, etc. Three teams will be needed to assist in the work....

—*Southwest American*. May 18, 1929

The arrival of families and the establishment of households changed the face of South Fort Smith. Attention shifted from industry to the needs of families. Merchants set up shop, children headed off to school, and church doors opened throughout the area.

By 1925, the South Fort Smith Baptist Church membership had expanded with such vitality that residents of Fort Smith proper made the trek to South Thirty-First Street on Sundays. In fact, South Fort Smith Baptist Church operated special trolley runs—with pick-up and return sites as far away as Texas Corner—to transport guests to their weekly services.

## Buy a Lot Now in South Fort Smith

The fastest growing industrial center in the southwest. Another smelter now under construction and other factories coming. The price of these lots have advanced rapidly—and another advance will be announced soon. This is your opportunity to make a splendid investment.

**TERMS:**  
**20 per cent cash---10 per cent per month**  
WITHOUT INTEREST OR TAXES  
**DON'T DELAY— —SEE US AT ONCE.**

### YADON & DOBBINS

EXCLUSIVE AGENTS

17 South Sixth Street. Phone 71.

**YADON & DOBBINS ADVERTISEMENT** for lots in South Fort Smith, published in the *Southwest American* on December 13, 1916.

Temple Baptist Church on South Thirty-First Street continues to open its doors to Fort Smith residents as it has for more than a century. Nancy Dunn Ahlert considers her memories of attending Vacation Bible School at Temple Baptist Church while living in South Fort Smith during the mid to late 1950s and early 1960s some of her favorite childhood recollections.

The Methodist Episcopal Church made its first appearance in South Fort Smith with a 1910 tent revival. The first congregation met in the South Fort Smith Community Center eventually, moving to a permanent brick structure on South Thirty-Second Street. After Fort Smith annexed South Fort Smith into its city limits in 1949, South Fort Smith Methodist Episcopal Church changed its name to Saint Luke Methodist Church.

Saint Luke Methodist Church continued to grow and change, meeting the needs of South Fort Smith residents, until it merged with Glover Methodist Church to create a new, modern facility on Phoenix Avenue. Saint Luke and Glover Methodist churches were sold to finance the construction of Wesley Methodist Church, which opened its doors on Easter Sunday, 1963.

Other churches moved into the South Fort Smith area, including a Church of the Nazarene which continues holding services on South Savannah Street. While many of the older church buildings gave way to new construction, the original congregations continue to serve South Fort Smith residents.

Nelson Scott and his family operated the mercantile most often associated with South Fort Smith. They have a rich and long history of providing retail needs to the area's families—and are generous supporters of the effort to preserve South Fort Smith history.

Many residents remember visiting a grocery



**THE ORIGINAL SAINT LUKE METHODIST CHURCH ON SOUTH THIRTY-SECOND STREET.**

*(Photo courtesy of Sue Robison)*

establishment known as Peerson Brothers on South Thirty-First Street. Located near the Arkansas Coffin Company, Peerson Brothers was situated in the center of South Fort Smith, drawing customers from homes located near the heart of the area.

Peerson Brothers Grocery was located on the west side of South Thirty-First Street. Across the road stood a small establishment known as Peerson Variety, which offered a wide selection of items to its customers. One former resident remembered the business as a hardware store, while another declared it to be a variety store offering women's negligees. It seems both were available at the Peerson Variety Store.

Jack's Service Station on South Thirty-First Street did business across the road from where Temple Baptist Church is now located. As a young man, Don Kelley visited the station when employees of the Athletic Smelter dropped by for a soda on their way home after work so he could hear their stories.

The earliest families in South Fort Smith sent their children to Mill Creek School. By the late 1920s, South Fort Smith had an elementary school of its own located on South Thirty-First Street. It was aptly named South Fort Smith Elementary School.

In 1928, the school reported a student body consisting of seventy pupils with classes from the first through sixth grades. Each grade had a "first and second," or "high and low" version of itself. And the school's principal taught one of the sixth-grade classes.

An active Parent-Teacher Association supported the school from its earliest days. An October 9, 1927, edition of the *Southwest Times* newspaper reported the election of officers and plans for a school-wide yard cleaning.

A rock building on the school grounds housed a basement cafeteria and school offices. A wooden structure facing South Thirty-First Street was soon added to house rapidly expanding lower grades of the elementary school. These buildings comprised the campus of South Fort Smith Elementary School until Carnall Elementary School opened on South Tulsa Street in 1962. After the official opening of Carnall Elementary School, the South Fort Smith Elementary School building remained in use for several years in various other capacities, including hosting rehearsals for fund-raising events such as the "Red Stocking Review." Eventually, the school buildings were demolished to make room for an apartment complex, which now stands on the playground where children spent recess at South Fort Smith Elementary School.

When Southside Senior High School opened on South Gary Street in 1963, it completed the process of moving education closer to South Fort Smith residents. When its doors opened, Southside Senior High School offered classwork for grades eight through twelve. Many of the 100 students who attended Southside Senior High School for five years, entering in the eighth grade and staying until graduation in 1968, were South

Fort Smith residents. With children now moving from Carnall Elementary School to Ramsey Middle School and completing their public education in Southside Senior High School, education for current South Fort Smith students is a neighborhood experience.

I hope it's snowing when I get home.

—Letter from Binh Thuy, Vietnam,  
during the Vietnam War from Floyd Robison  
to his grandmother, Ruth Dooley, addressed  
to the South Fort Smith Post Office. May 5, 1971.

Before its annexation into the city limits of Fort Smith, the community of South Fort Smith functioned as a semi-independent entity. While South Fort Smith used city utilities, fire, and police services, it retained its identity through its postal service.

The small South Fort Smith post office operated under the auspices of the United States Postal Service, offering all services found in the larger downtown Fort Smith post office. The “South Fort Smith Station” designation on mail sent to the location differentiated it from all mailings destined to the city, although it used the 72901 downtown Fort Smith zip code.

Several citizens of South Fort Smith held the office and title of Postmaster for the small station throughout its service years. E. F. Dooley was appointed the first Postmaster at the station and ran the office with his wife, Ruth. Mrs. T. M. Scott, who also served as president of the Fort Smith Business and Professional Women’s Club, held the position of Postmaster for South Fort Smith in 1931.

The post office continued serving the area after South Fort Smith’s annexation into Fort Smith proper. As the growth of Fort Smith moved toward other areas, the needs of the postal service shifted away from the small post office. Decreased volume eventually drove the Postal Service to move operations to their Market Trace branch—and the South Fort Smith Post Office closed its doors at the end of 2010, after a century of service.

The sense of community in South Fort Smith was enhanced when the area citizen’s fielded their own semi-pro baseball team. The South Fort Smith Smokers were a group of area men who came together to face off against local baseball teams across the region and bring attention and pride home to South Fort Smith with each victory.

Former team member, Emery Lundquist, told of his experiences with the Smokers during an interview for the World War II Veterans’ History Project recorded by the Fort Smith Historical Society. He remembered that



**THE SOUTH FORT SMITH SMOKERS** baseball team, shown in 1920, played on a field on South Thirtieth Street.  
(Photo courtesy of John Barton)

the team won the state title every year he played. Mr. Lundquist explained that he worked as a mail carrier and would “get home at four o’clock, put on a ball uniform, we’d go to Heavener... I just loved it. Come in at two o’clock in the morning, go back the next day.”

The South Fort Smith Smokers reached their height in the 1950s, proving themselves serious competition for local teams. However, they faded away in the following generations. Remnants of the baseball diamond where the Smokers practiced in South Fort Smith are still visible off South Thirty-First Street.

South Fort Smith boasts of two possessions not common to small communities: The Parker and Watts Circus winter camp and an airport. The circus winter camp site was located beside the Wal-Mart location at today’s intersection of South Twenty-Fourth Street and Zero Street. Residents with memories of the area in the 1940s are quick to tell of children watching elephants and being enthralled with circus life.

The 1920s airport was located where Carnall Elementary School now stands on South Tulsa Street. Little more than a place for brave pilots to tie down their small private planes, the airport was unique to South Fort Smith and remains a proud memory.

My dad told me the smelter tried to convince people that it wasn’t harmful. To demonstrate it, they planted catalpa trees. That’s how all the catalpa trees got started around South Fort Smith. They can survive in acidic soil. That’s why you see so many in that part of town.

—Oral interview of Tom L. Scott  
by Joe Wasson and Ben Boulden for the Fort  
Smith Historical Society. February 17, 2006.

Bringing an industrial complex up from a bare

landscape and creating a market where none existed was a challenging undertaking for Fort Smith entrepreneurs at the dawn of the twentieth century. Along with tremendous success came serious problems, some of which were not discovered until years after the first factory opened.

The Best-Clymer Sorghum Mill was the first South Fort Smith business to present difficulty to its host community. Nearby residents whose businesses depended on Mill Creek water supply complained of a foul odor in the water. Their livestock refused to drink it. Dairy operators lodged formal complaints, claiming the cane run-off into Mill Creek made the water undrinkable and adversely affected their ability to produce milk for the marketplace. Scientific studies were ordered, Health Department officials from Little Rock made investigations, and the water supply came under scrutiny.

While some residents near the mill claimed there was no harm to Mill Creek from the overflow of cane residue into its water, the decision was made to hold Best-Clymer responsible for the pollution. The ruling was simultaneous to a slow-down in the sorghum market. The company stumbled beneath the blow. After a lawsuit filed in 1933 by the mill's debtors, the world's largest sorghum mill began a slow decline. Eventually, it was sold in a public auction to settle its debts. The new owners were unable to restore the mill to full operation.

Hardships created by debut, bad crop seasons, and continued allegations of pollution took a toll on the mill throughout the late 1930s and early 1940s. The business eventually closed its doors. A portion of the building remained on the site for generations, used by local businesses as warehouse space.

At the height of its twentieth-century manufacturing boom, Fort Smith was the recipient of great wealth from area smelters. Three operating smelters in Fort Smith opened with concessions and support from federal and local governments. The Arkansas River Valley became a true national leader in manufacturing zinc for the American market.

As years wore on, shifts in production techniques, advances in manufacturing processes, and changes in the market began to decrease the role of smelters. They were subject to allegations of pollution, including stories of a "smelter dust" settling on neighborhoods while the smelting was in process. In a 2006 interview for the Fort Smith Historical Society, Gene Inman recalled, "I lost a colt. I had an old mare, and she had a colt. That smelter started up and I had this old Palomino mare. It absolutely ruined her."

The Athletic Smelter, situated just outside the eastern edge of South Fort Smith, was not immune from world and local situations affecting its business. At the end of the Second World War, demand for brass declined and the market soon looked for untapped resources. Labor problems and an occasional severe injury nipped at the smelter's success, but it was a simple market down-turn that eventually stilled the fires at Athletic Smelter.

Exide Technology took over the property once owned by the smelter in the mid-1970s. Stryten Manufacturing now occupies the area where Greenwood Road meets South Zero Street that was once home to the Athletic Smelter.

In 1921, two original South Fort Smith businesses merged. The Western Wheelbarrow Works and the Fort Smith Stove Works joined operations and constructed a new building in South Fort Smith. These bustling businesses too waned in the face of modern advancements and eventually faded from the area.

The flagship of the South Fort Smith industrial project, Arkansas Coffin Company, was the first industry to open its doors in the area and the final original business to halt operations. After name changes, production modifications and market adjustments, the coffin factory saw its last days of operation in 1989.

I miss the old neighborhood so much.

—Former South Fort Smith resident, Helen Knight. Interview with author. August 20, 2021.

South Fort Smith was more than businesses and houses. It was families living amid the construction, the furnaces, and the railroads.

An eight-year-old boy in his back yard in the late 1950s—watching for his father's blue DeSoto to return home from a day's work at Athletic Smelter—was not thinking of smelter dust. The boy did not know why there were catalpa trees in his yard. He knew only that his father had one of the best jobs in town—and the bean pods on catalpa trees made excellent weapons in battles with friends. When the boy grew to manhood and shared his memories of South Fort Smith, he talked of family, not factories.

While the businesses brought to South Fort Smith by the Commercial Club in the early 1900s disappeared, the neighborhood they created thrived. When Nancy Dunn Ahlert's parents purchased their home on South Thirty-Second Street at South Quincy Street near Phoenix Avenue in 1954, it was the only house on the block. Today, houses built in the ranch style popular in



the 1950s occupy those lots and sit in neatly spaced rows, filling the roadways from South Zero Street to Phoenix Avenue.

It is the older homes built flush to South Zero Street that are giving way to the new business construction projects encroaching on their back yards. South Thirty-First Street is a bustling main road through the area. New merchants are taking possession of old sites and bringing new life to the neighborhood.

Fort Smith extended its city limits past South Zero Street toward the town of Greenwood in 1960. Modern factories sprang up on South Zero Street, an interstate blocks the view from South Fort Smith to the old Athletic Smelter grounds, and the rush of an ever-growing city moves past the old neighborhood without notice. The designation "South Fort Smith" does not have the same meaning that it did one-hundred years ago—and the expression "South Town" is heard only in memories.

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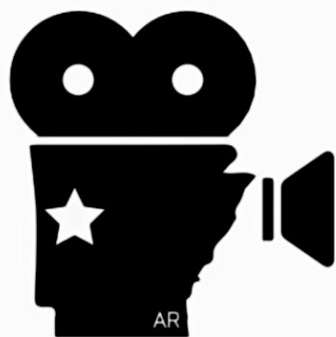
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F O R T   S M I T H  
I N T E R N A T I O N A L  
F I L M   F E S T I V A L

# Fort Smith Film Festival

*Inaugural Event Cultivates Creativity*

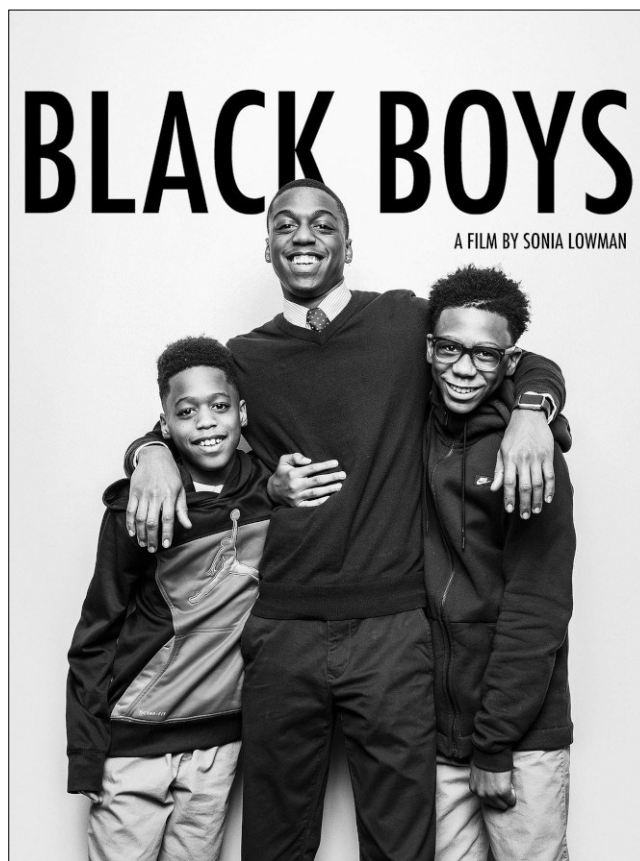
**By Dr. Brandon Goldsmith**

The Fort Smith International Film Festival rose out of the River Valley Film Society's goal to grow the local creative economy by expanding access to movies from within and beyond. The society started with a showcase of local filmmakers. The idea was to create a space where artistic networks could be nurtured between directors, writers, actors, crew, and film fans. This initiative created the desire to further cultivate the region's emerging creative class with an international film festival.

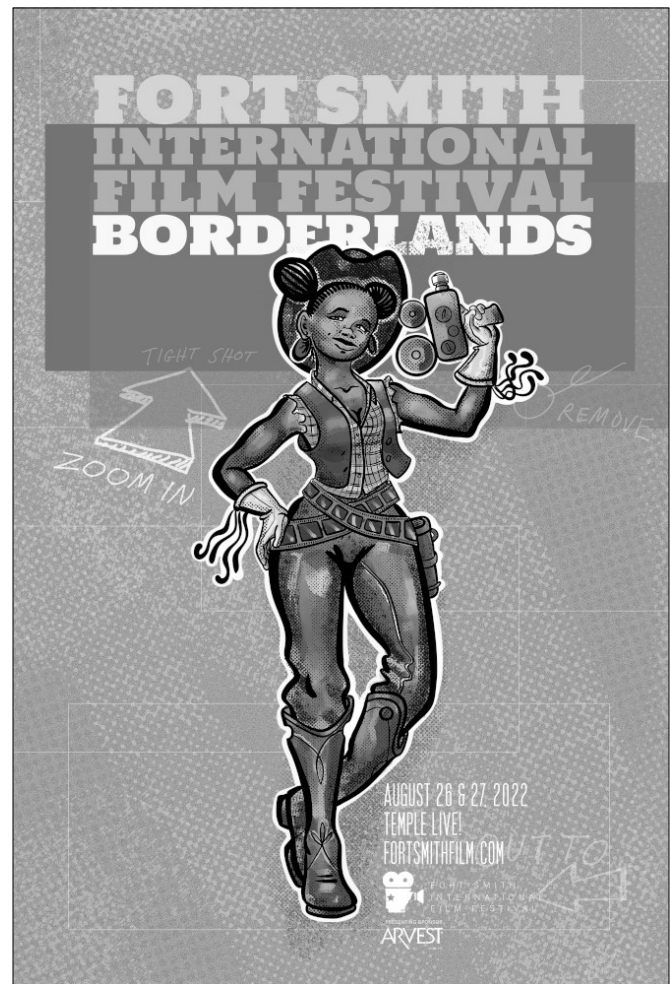
Born in the mist of COVID-19, the Fort Smith International Film Festival's inaugural year drew from a universal experience people across the globe could connect to—masks. The theme, "Through Their Eyes," explored the many masks we wear and the eyes through which we see. Through film we lend our eyes to another, to see through their perspective and walk in their shoes.

Constructed within the kairos of the societal moment, the festival's submission categories were designed to forefront the artistic expression and diverse experiences of Native Americans and People of Color. With the Cherokee and Choctaw nations on the other side of the river, Fort Smith essentially exists on an international border, and the festival pays tribute to that reality. Additionally, the River Valley is a global community with dozens of languages spoken in the region's public schools. One of the film society's objectives is to give voice to a diversity of stories.

In the first year, the festival received 396 submissions from forty-three countries. These



**BLACK BOYS** garnered awards for Best Overall Film and Best People of Color Film at the inaugural Fort Smith International Film Festival in August 2021.



**THE THEME FOR THE 2022** Fort Smith International Film Festival, which will be held August 26-17, is “Borderlands.”

submissions were screened and curated down to 132 films. The festival structure gave homage to the town’s theatrical past when multiple cinemas inhabited the downtown corridor. On August 13-14, 2021, movies were shown in four locations across the city center, giving attendees a chance to explore historic Garrison Avenue.

Opening night featured a keynote address from Giovanni Jackson, Chief Executive Officer, and Keith Kaplan, Chief Operations Officer for TGE, a global entertainment company. They discussed Arkansas’ place in the worldwide entertainment market and the possibilities that exist for Fort Smith’s growing creative economy.

Experiencing the city through a guided tour, TGE’s team came across a statue of Bass Reeves, a black lawman, whose story they will feature in a motion picture project currently in development. Recognizing the River Valley’s potential, they have also begun initial investments in a twenty-acre Hollywood style movie studio in the Chaffee Crossing area. Since the

festival, TGE has been working to bring their opening night dreams to life.

The movie *Black Boys* won overall best film and the People of Color category. Director Sonia Lowman explains in a *Southwest Times Record* interview (August 22, 2021), “I only ever got depictions of Black men in the media that were like rappers and sports players or else like criminals. You get this very kind of flattened stereotypical, really dehumanizing, depiction. And so, the film was an effort to really look at the full humanity of Black men and boys.” Coke Riobóo winner of a Goya Award, Spain’s Academy Awards, for his 2006 short film *Said’s Journey*, was awarded best animation for his surrealistic stop-motion short, *Made in Spain*. The film category was judged by two celebrity jurors, Johnny Mchone, Cartoon Network’s *Robot Chicken*, and Brad Neely, CBS’ *Harper House*.

*Pole Boy*, a documentary about an amputee pole dancer who narrates his story through the experience of entering his first pole competition against able-bodied dancers, was awarded best international film. The

executive team from the Cisterna Film Festival judged the international category. Cisterna, Italy, became Fort Smith's sister city in 1984. The Italians refer to our bond as twinning, "gemellaggio." Former Cisterna Mayor Gianni Salis, who organized the twinning, invited festival Executive Director Dr. Brandon Chase Goldsmith, Programming Director Clay Pruitt, and Fort Smith Museum of History Director Caroline Speir to a cultural visit. During their trip, Goldsmith and Pruitt were guest jurors for the Cisterna Film Festival, and Ms. Speir researched the historic connections between the cities.

Here is the complete list of all the 2021 winners:

- ❖ *Black Boys*, Best Overall Film; Best People of Color Film.
- ❖ *Let's Grow*, Best Short Film – Overall; COP Best Animal Film.
- ❖ *The Rock of Gibraltar*, Fort Smith in Film.
- ❖ *Land of Lights and Shadows*, Best Documentary Feature Film.
- ❖ *Pole Boy*, Best International Film.
- ❖ *Blood on the Risers*, Best Regional Short Film.
- ❖ *Project Decius*, Best Overall High School Film.
- ❖ *Fish Hook*, runner-up Overall High School Film.
- ❖ *Luke*, third place Overall High School Film; Best Regional High School Film.
- ❖ *Disconnect*, runner-up Regional High School Film.
- ❖ *Caring for the Past, Preserving the Future: The Legacy of the Smith Hospital*, third place Regional High School Film.
- ❖ *Djäkamirr: Caretaker of Pregnancy and Birth*, Best Indigenous Film.
- ❖ *Kaali Maati*, Best Narrative Feature Film.
- ❖ *Voices from the Sit In*, Best Documentary Short Film.
- ❖ *Made in Spain*, Best Animated Film.
- ❖ *Sure Don't Miss You*, Best Music Video.
- ❖ *Sundown Town*, Best College Short Film.
- ❖ *Indians, Outlaws, Marshals and the Hangin' Judge*, Best Western Film.
- ❖ *Shotgun*, Best Regional College Film.

- ❖ *Rat*, Best Short Film – Drama.
- ❖ *Shotgun*, Best Short Film – Comedy.
- ❖ *Suono*, Best Short Film – Experimental.
- ❖ *Connected*, Best Short Film – Sci-Fi.
- ❖ *The Connection*, Best Short Film – Action.

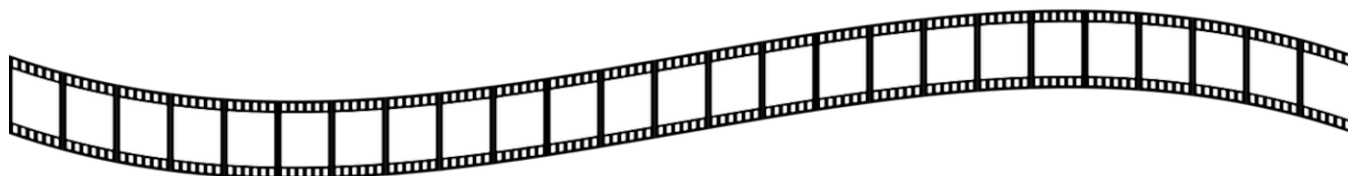
On January 20, 2022, it was announced TempleLive, a historic downtown Fort Smith venue, would serve as the anchor location for the festival on August 26-27. Built in 1929, the masonic temple houses several rooms with original art deco fixtures and Egyptian themed murals, which will serve as the backdrop for screening rooms and filmmaker workshops. Harkening back to the venue's past as a theater, TempleLive will provide an all-in-one movie going experience for festival goers and filmmakers. The theme for the second year will be "Borderlands."

Located in an original wild west border town, the 2022 Fort Smith International Film Festival, celebrates Borderlands, where the stories of our lives exist. Our shared humanity is experienced at the borders between countries, nations, states, cities, neighborhoods, languages, races, genders, cultures, social economic classes, and ages.

"Borderlands" are where innovation happens, realities are challenged, novel concepts and fresh identities are born and questioned. These societal edges represent a coming together of physical and emotional boundaries, the forming of territories, the space where conflicts are both heightened and resolved.

Film acts as a threshold between actuality and fantasy capturing the moment a border is established, defended, or overcome. For filmmakers, art is our manifest destiny, and the 2022 Fort Smith International Film Festival, will be a theatrical gateway to creativity's wild west, where all perspectives and points of view are welcomed.

*Dr. Brandon Chase Goldsmith is President of the River Valley Film Society, Executive Director of the Fort Smith International Film Festival, and a visiting instructor of media communication at the University of Arkansas-Fort Smith.*



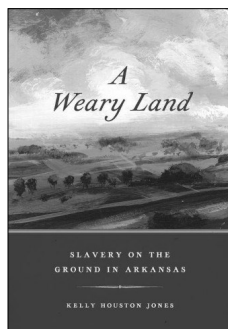
# Book Reviews

***A Weary Land: Slavery on the Ground in Arkansas.* By Dr. Kelly Houston-Jones. (University of Georgia Press, Athens. 2021. Pp 268.**

**Acknowledgments, introduction, notes, bibliography, and index. This book is one of the 21 volumes of Early American Places series by the University of Georgia Press.)**

A round of cheers from the academic throngs in Arkansas were lifted as Kelly Houston Jones, a native of the state, completed the first book-length study of Arkansas slavery in more than sixty years.

Through her excellent writing with an eye for historic details, *A Weary Land* offers a glimpse of enslaved life on the South's western-most margins, focusing on the intersection of land use and agriculture within the daily life and work of bonded Black Arkansans.



Jones (UA-Little Rock, University of North Texas, and University of Arkansas-Fayetteville) is a former student and protégé of Dr. Jeannie Whayne, Patrick Williams and others on the flagship campus, writes with a freshness and crispness to fill this volume with exciting new details and insights.

She vividly describes how these enslaved peoples were given only a cursory mention by name in previous historic treatments decades ago. She now brings each to a full and meaningful life by her careful details and writing. As Jones writes of how these slaves cleared trees, cultivated crops, and tended livestock on the southern frontier, as Arkansas's enslaved farmers connected culture and nature, creating their own personal meanings of space, place, and freedom.

She writes not from a detached view of these enslaved individuals' names, but transforms these individuals from a brief sanitary, cursory mention to become real peoples with real struggles in this social, political, and economic system.

Following a narrative filled with names and circumstances, each well researched, Jones analyzes how the arrival of enslaved men and women as an imprisoned workforce changed the meaning of

Arkansas' acreage, while their labor transformed its landscape.

It is not all about Delta stories or surroundings well documented in previous accounts found in this rare diamond of a book. Jones delves deep within some well-known accounts, such as the enslaved holdings of John Drennen and his business partner David Thompson of Van Buren, to expand the known narrative of them "keeping slaves," to what status and economic benefits this peculiar intuition had on the western side of Arkansas.

She explains fully how escaping enslaved people often avoided the Indian Nation west of Fort Smith, as the fugitives could not trust that the wild and often lawless territory west of the Arkansas state line.

Jones make sure the readers know that enslaved people made the most of their surroundings despite the brutality and increasing labor demands of the "second slavery"—the increasingly harsh phase of American chattel bondage fueled by cotton and timber cultivation in the Old Southwest.

Jones contends that enslaved Arkansans were able to repurpose their experiences with agricultural labor, rural life, and the natural world to craft a sense of freedom rooted in the ability to own land, the power to control their own movement, and the right to use the landscape as they saw fit.

*A Weary Land*, is indeed a book for all of us to read, and savor its revelations, tragedies and outcomes of this peculiar institution, regardless of our geographic location or station in today's Arkansas.

—Maylon T. Rice, Fayetteville, Arkansas

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***American Atrocity: The Types of Violence in Lynching.* By Guy Lancaster (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2021. Pp. 200. Introduction, conclusion, notes, acknowledgments, and index, \$19.95, available online for \$14.96 from UA Press website.)**

*American Atrocity* is small book with a powerful message of uncovering more than just the centuries of these hidden crimes in Arkansas. This volume, exposing

lynching to the light of history, justice and scholarship, is a unique gem of social enlightenment from the University of Arkansas Press.

Guy Lancaster, the editor of the *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*, and a very well-versed writer on the subject of lynching, expands his examination of more than the actual crime. He delves into the social, psychological, and emotional underbelly of lynching, this grisly form of injustice and all the accompanying social underpinnings. His research and written examinations found within *American Atrocity*, provides a wide breadth and depth to the roots, cause and causations of these crimes in our state.

For local history readers supposing that lynching in the state was most often a “delta crime.” Lancaster has also unearthed and redocumented an ugly episode known as the “Catcher Race Riot” that began December 29, 1923. This case wound through the courts, jails, and communities in the Arkansas River valley.

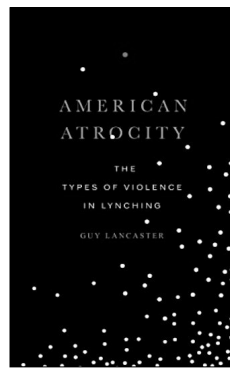
The case was a violent death of a twenty-five-year-old Effie Lattimer, who was shot in the back with a shotgun, beaten, and cut all over her body while in her home. She allegedly gave a dying description of her assailant.

Over the following days, outbreaks of mob violence and widespread suspicion on this matter involved those living in an African-American settlement known as Catcher in Crawford County. Area law enforcement, in both Van Buren and Fort Smith, were involved in this episode, trying to calm community emotions, and protect those men jailed under suspicion, against mob violence. Also, the forty or so residents of Catcher, four miles southeast of Van Buren, were said to be threatened with “expulsion from Crawford County.” At one point, eleven African-American men from the Catcher area were arrested, jailed, tried, acquitted, and finally released.

The human toll of this incident at Catcher had a deadly side. Four African-American men were dead, one killed by a mob, two were tried, sentenced to die, and executed by the state, and another man, sentenced to life in prison, was soon found suspiciously dead in the fields of the state Prison Farm.

In his book, Lancaster writes more of the various social examinations of the group violence that was lynching.

He explains how “group violence” as opposed to a “collective violence” is a better mechanism to understand lynching not as an end to wrongdoings, but



as lynching, in its racialized manifestations, is basically the violence of one group against another.

—Maylon T. Rice, Fayetteville, Arkansas

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***Backroads and Ballplayers: A Collection of Stories about Famous (and Not so Famous) Professional Baseball Players from Rural Arkansas.*** By Jim Yeager and contributions from the members of the Arkansas Society of American Baseball Research. (Pp. 302. A self-published book available from author Jim Yeager, 2350 W. 4th, Russellville, AR 72801 or Amazon, \$15, softback.)

Yeager’s volume on baseball history contribution to the state’s baseball scholarship with some very valuable stories on some of the most overlooked and nearly forgotten boys from rural Arkansas who played professional baseball across the decades.

Seldom do historians read self-published works, but this book, while bereft of the academic rigors of footnotes, sources, et al, is one Arkansans, especially those who love the sport of baseball, should have on their shelf.

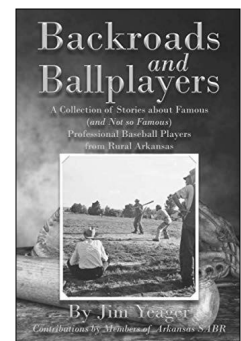
Readers in the Arkansas River valley—and certainly the Fort Smith community—will find several of the young farm boys having made it to the various semi-pro and professional teams, at times, finding their home in the Fort Smith area.

And those who played just over the state lines in Oklahoma and Texas certainly played against some minor league and semi-pro teams headquartered in Sebastian County during their careers.

A major section of the book is dedicated to a group simply called the “cup of coffee” crowd. These are players who broke into the squads of major league teams but stayed only briefly—say, only long enough for a cup of coffee. That is the moniker given to a short stay in professional baseball.

Names like the big, red-haired Mays and his identical twin, Hays, the Copeland brothers of Mountain View; Charles Edward “Chuck” Daniel of Bluffton (Yell County); Otis Davis of Charleston; Herbert Lee Herring of Shark (Yell County); and among others Silas Albert “Arkansas Al” Williamson of Buckville (Garland County).

In his “cup of coffee” moment in 1928, “Arkansas





Al” for the White Sox came into a game against the St. Louis Browns. Already down 10-0, in drafty old Sportsman’s Park in St. Louis when he got the call to the mound, “Arkansas Al” pitched only two innings. The Sox fell, 12-0, but he allowed just one hit and faced seven batters, with an ERA of 0.0. He was not tagged as the loser of the game, in his only Major League moment.

Sent back to the minors, “Arkansas Al,” played minor league baseball another decade until 1939, winning more than ninety-five minor league games in his 260-game career.

This book is chock-full of such other stories of major and minor league exploits of Arkansas’ baseball boys.

And there are the ladies! Choctaw (Van Buren County) native Glenna Sue Kid broke into baseball as a fifteen-year-old on a steamy June night in 1949 at Little Rock’s Travelers Field.

The Tuesday-Wednesday night barnstorming trip of the Springfield (Illinois) Sallies and the Chicago Colleens to Little Rock was to search for girls wanting to kick off an alternative league. It was, perhaps, the first such all-girls semi-pro game Glenna Sue Kid ever saw on that fateful Tuesday night.

The very next day, Wednesday, she had a try-out and was signed with the Sallies and actually pitched an inning in the evening’s contest, kicking off a six-year career playing baseball in the Midwest.

Other chapters include a section on Dizzy and the Deans; Doctor Baseball and the Greenbrier Baseball School; Havana; The Kells and The War Years. Yeager has produced for us a wonderful look at some fifty Arkansas farm boys who dreamed of reaching the big leagues.

—Maylon T. Rice of Fayetteville

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### **A Night with the Band**

They appeared at my doorstep one night in the mid-1980s. Paul Berry, a close friend from college since the early 1960s, and his friend Kirby Penick, both from Fayetteville, had told me that they were coming.

They were dressed in wide-brimmed “Montana” rock-and-roll hats and brown jackets with tassels hanging from their shoulders. I was slightly taken aback by their attire. I called goodbye to my beautiful wife from 1964, Carolyn Schneider Hubbard. “Be careful,” she said. As we were walking down our sidewalk, Kirby yelled, “We’ll keep him out of jail.” And they

did. We entered a van that Paul, a good friend of the Band members and their appointed “road manager,” had rented.

I knew the reason for this nighttime journey; Paul had told me it was to see a live performance of a musical group who before they struck out on their own as The Band had been The Hawks and backed up Ronnie Hawkins, a noted Arkansas rock ‘n’ roller who had left Fayetteville for a singing career in Toronto, Canada, where he still lives and is a legend. After Ronnie, there was Bob. This group accompanied Bob Dylan on a 1968 tour of Europe. They remained in close contact.

The Band, in their 1980s tour, had accepted a gig in Fort Smith at Charlee’s next door to the Lighthouse Restaurant near the Van Buren bridge. Members of The Band included Arkansas native Levon Helm, drummer, and Canadians Rick Danko, guitarist, and Garth Hudson on keyboards.

We entered Charlee’s concert hall, and I was surprised to see not only The Band on stage, but the Cate Brothers, a very popular band from Fayetteville, and Fred Carter, known as the best guitarist in Nashville, Tennessee, and father of singer Deana Carter.

When the music started, no doubt with The Band’s classic song, *The Weight*, through the evening ending with another classic written by this group, *The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down*, what I had witnessed that night was an incredible blending of rock ‘n’ roll sound and song and showmanship like I had never heard or seen before and have never heard or seen since. It was magical.

When the show was over, late, The Band (minus Garth), Paul, Kirby, and I drove to a local hotel where Paul had reserved a suite. The Band told many funny stories of their time in Canada and some adventures in a wonderful musical career.

I got back to my house at around 4 AM. I was at work at 8 AM and somehow made the day.

As I write Robbie Robertson and Garth Hudson are both alive. The other Band members are playing rock ‘n’ roll music in Heaven. Paul, Kirby, and I are still “rocking” and thankful to be alive.

—Charles G. Hubbard, Fort Smith

*EDITOR’S NOTE: The Band is the subject of a 2019 documentary directed by Martin Scorsese titled Once Were Brothers. It is available streaming. Scorsese also directed the 1978 feature film The Last Waltz starring The Band, its songs, and its many friends and contacts in the music world who performed on stage with them.*

# 1922 Newspapers

By Al Whitson

The dominant news during the first half of 1922 was the completion and celebration of the Million Dollar Free Bridge, commonly referred to today as the Garrison Avenue bridge, spanning the Arkansas River and opening a highway into the territory our ancestors helped to settle. Its completion had been a long time coming, and preparations for its dedication rivaled that of a presidential inauguration.

The crime wave of late 1921 continued as well, with streetcar holdups, and auto thefts, keeping the constabularies on their toes and resulting in one local man (notorious for his bloodhounds) being shot in the pursuit of justice. Naughty magazines, aimed at youth, were a topic of concern for local churches and the old jail was renovated into a holding place for our youthful delinquents. Fort Smith also continued its own form of workfare, with a municipal rockpile, which was openly admired by several of our neighboring cities.

Many companies expanded their businesses, and a new plumbing supply company was formed here with a name readers may recognize. A movement to dam the Poteau River grew in momentum, and both the airfield and the baseball field on the Alexander property (just on the other side of the new bridge) received much needed facelifts. And, in a move that surprised their recently hired manager, the Twins got new owners. Owners who would help to cement the city's relationship with a "big-league" team, whose home was also on a river, and into which our own, newly-bridged-river, flows.

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**Sunday, January 1, 1922**

## COLORED PHONOGRAPH STAR COMING TO FORT SMITH

Arrangements have been made to bring to this city the world-famous colored phonograph singer, Mamie Smith, who will appear at the Lincoln Auditorium in a special performance Saturday night, Jan. 7, 1922, assisted by her celebrated Jazz Hounds and an all-star company of entertainers and musicians. Mamie Smith has the distinction of being the first colored girl artist to

*A Rollicking, Jazzy*  
**Melody of Merriment**



—AT—  
**LINCOLN AUDITORIUM**  
 TONIGHT, SATURDAY, JANUARY, 7th  
**MAMIE SMITH**  
 —AND HER—  
**All-Star Jazz Revue**  
 A Brilliant Company of Syncopators, Singers,  
 Dancers and Comedians  
 Gorgeous Costumes - Superb Scenery  
 Company Includes Many of the World's Greatest Colored Entertainers and the famous "Mamie Smith Jazz Hounds."  
**Admission \$1.50**  
 Seats now on sale at Red Cross Drug Store and  
 Chavous Cafe on North 9th Street

attain world-wide fame as a phonograph singer of the first rank. Mamie Smith was born in Cincinnati and was educated in the public schools of that city, later she studied music in New York and became a concert and light opera singer, gaining much praise for her splendid voice and personality. Last summer she was engaged to make a series of phonograph records and, almost overnight, she became the most popular graphophone artist of the day, her popularity in this respect rivalling McCormack, Galli-Curci and Melba. The success of Mamie Smith has in fact been one of the astonishing incidents in phonographic history. Today her records are selling around the globe, and her visit to this city will afford her many admirers an opportunity of seeing and hearing her in person, surrounded by a company of Metropolitan entertainers, featuring the famous Mamie Smith Jazz Hounds, who are said to be the last word in genuine jazz music.

## DUO BRINGS CONDUCTOR TO CITY IN AUTO

Capping the climax of a series of holdups, burglaries and hi-jacking prevalent here during the past two weeks, two unmasked men Saturday night purloined the automobile of D. C. Green, manager of the Fort

Smith Light and Traction company, and immediately proceeded to stick up a motorman-conductor on the South Fort Smith line, two blocks out of the Fort Smith station.

To make the holdup more dramatic the duo forced their victim to accompany them in the automobile to the city limits of Fort Smith. For their trouble the men secured \$30, the day's receipts of the conductor. The automobile was stolen at the country club at 10:30 o'clock and the holdup occurred 30 minutes later.

Boarding the car two blocks from the end of the line the two robbers forced Motorman Plant, at the point of a gun, to abandon his car and accompany them to the city limits of Fort Smith. The bandits boarded the car at 11:15 o'clock.

D. C. Green, manager of the company, reported the theft of his automobile at midnight and when found early Sunday morning, the money changer of the Conductor Plant, and small tokens or "streetcar money" was discovered in the bottom of the auto, giving the clue that Green's automobile was used by the two men in staging the stickup.

The scene of the holdup is in an isolated spot on the car line. No passengers were on the car, which probably accounts for the ease with which the trick was turned.

Motorman Plant says the men boarded the car and one of them immediately flashed a gun with the command to "put 'em up." The two then forced him to get off the car and get into an automobile standing in the shadows nearby. After robbing him of his money. One drove the machine while the other held a gun against Plant's ribs, and a wild ride toward Fort Smith began. When the party neared the canning factory, they made Plant get out, after which they drove on toward the city. The motorman went to the nearest telephone and reported the holdup to the police.

### **THREE MASKED MEN HOLD UP VAN BUREN CAR: ROB MOTORMAN OF DAY'S RECEIPTS**

Following closely on the report of a streetcar robbery near South Fort Smith three masked men stopped the Van Buren "stub" trolley car at 12:00 o'clock last night, at Stop Four, two miles out of Van Buren, and robbed Conductor-Motorman Hargrove of all the money he had and his watch.

The trio stepped in front of the car as it approached the station and signaled for the conductor to stop. As soon as the motorman opened the door for the supposed passengers to enter, they ordered him to throw up his hands.

The car was returning to Van Buren from the Spelter in the Ray addition when the holdup occurred.

One of the men covered Hargrove with an automatic revolver while another searched him. After taking his money and watch they disappeared in the darkness.

Officers are of the opinion that the bandits returned from South Fort Smith and hurried to the spot outside of Van Buren as their general description is understood to coincide with the description given of the men who robbed the South Fort Smith car.

Officers also believe a ring operating in systematic procedure is responsible for the series of holdups and highway robberies perpetrated here. It is understood the traction company will place guards on each "one man" car beginning tonight. Where two men operate a car, each will be heavily armed.

\*\*\*

## **Tuesday, January 3, 1922**

### **BEN WALKER SHOT BY HOLD UP TRIO**

A quick sidestep to the right just as a bullet from a 45 automatic pistol was fired at him probably saved Ben Walker, special deputy sheriff of this city, from serious injury early Sunday night in the railroad yards at Spiro, Oklahoma, after he had placed under arrest two of a trio of men wanted for several hold-ups in Fort Smith recently. The bullet intended for Walker's heart passed through the muscle in the left arm, causing only a slight wound, and he was able to return to Fort Smith Sunday night.

According to his story, Walker and an Oklahoma officer had been trailing the men all day Sunday but had been unable to locate them exactly. Ben left the officer at Panama and boarded a freight train for Spiro, intending to return to Fort Smith.

When the train pulled into the yards at Spiro, Walker said, he saw two of the three men he was



**BEN WALKER AND THE CITY BLOODHOUNDS**

looking for, and rather than give them the opportunity to escape again, he decided to attempt an arrest unassisted. He had already placed the two under arrest and searched them for weapons when he asked where their partner was.

"He's up toward the front of the train," one of them answered.

"Nope, here I am," the partner replied as he stuck the muzzle of a gun in the small of Walker's back with the command to "put 'em up."

The trio then relieved Walker of his gun, watch and about ten dollars in money, after which they marched him out on the prairie with the statement that they were going to kill him because they knew he knew too much on them.

One of the men held a gun to Walker's sides on the trip across the prairie and another a gun at his temple. One of the trio told Walker to turn his back so he could shoot him. Ben turned and fell to the ground. He jumped up and stepped to the right and kept the second bullet from hitting him in the back. It struck him in the arm. He ran, and all other shots missed.

\*\*\*

## **Saturday, January 7, 1922**

### **MAYOR TO STOP SALE OF ALLEGED OBSCENE BOOKS**

Notice to newsdealers in Fort Smith to discontinue the sale of "Whiz Band," "Wampus Cat," "Hot Dog," "Pajamas," and other periodicals classed as obscene, will be given within a day or two, Major Fagan Bourland said Friday afternoon. The matter has been under discussion for several days by the commissioners, but no definite action has yet been taken, it is understood.

Condemnation of the efforts of the commissioners to suppress the sale of the periodicals was contained in a letter received Friday by Major Bourland from the Methodist Men's club of the First Methodist church of this city. The letter was signed by James G. Williams, secretary, who stated in the letter that he had been instructed by the club to inform the commissioners on the recent action by the club.

\*\*\*

## **Tuesday, January 10, 1922**

### **MAYOR TELLS POLICE TO CHASE TRAMPS OUT OF CITY**

"Where one is arrested for vagrancy, several are run out of town." Mayor Fagan Bourland said Monday

afternoon in discussing the problem of clearing Fort Smith of undesirables.

"Throwing bums in jail and feeding them is a large expense in addition to the prospect of starting a smallpox epidemic," the mayor said. The police force has been instructed to order all undesirables to get out of town, and if they do not heed the warning, they are then arrested and placed in jail. Scores have left since warned by police officials, and I believe it is a better plan than to put them in jail at once and add an expense to the taxpayers of the city."

\*\*\*

## **Saturday, January 14, 1922**

### **ST. LOUIS CARDS PLAY TWINS AT ANDREWS FIELD TWO GAMES APRIL 4-5: NEW PLAYERS SIGN**

Negotiations were completed yesterday morning by the Fort Smith baseball management for two pre-season games with a major league club. Contracts were signed with the St. Louis Cardinals of the National league for games at Andrews field for April 4 and 5.

These will be the first two games of the training season said Fay Bullock yesterday. Others are to follow, dates and names of clubs to be announced this week. Roger Hornsby will accompany the Cards on the Fort Smith trip and will play in both games.

Hornsby secured his start in organized baseball in the western association and his appearance here should prove a great drawing card. Under the terms of the contract Branch Rickey will bring half of his regular crew and the other half in recruits.

**St. Louis Cardinals**  
vs.  
**Twins**  
**ANDREWS' FIELD**  
**APRIL 5th and 6th**  
**Seats on Sale Monday at Smoke Shop  
and Brown's Cigar Store**  
**Prices:**  
**Boxes, \$1.10. Grandstand, 75c**  
**Bleachers, 50c**

Contracts duly signed were received yesterday from O'Shea, Winkler, and Kauffman, the trio secured by the local management from Detroit.

\*\*\*

## **Sunday, January 15, 1922**

### **FIRE OF UNKNOWN ORIGIN CAUSES \$15,000 DAMAGE AT AMERICAN OIL PLANT**

Fire of unknown origin totally destroyed a hull house and several hundred tons of cottonseed hulls at the plant of the American Cotton Oil company, North First and G streets, at 9:30 o'clock last night, causing a loss unofficially estimated at \$15,000.

### **HEALTH OFFICERS QUARANTINE MEN, STOP K.C.S. TRAIN**

Headed by Commissioner M. J. Miller, a corps of health officers flagged K.C.S. train No. 104, due here at 8:10 p.m., at the city limits last night and removed three men who boarded the train at Poteau and are holding them in quarantine.

Commissioner Miller said last night that the K.C.S. had promised they would not sell tickets to persons in the infested district, but from now on inspectors would board each train at the city limits and inspect passengers from the south and west.

The fault rests with the depot officials at Poteau, according to Mr. Miller, who said the conductor of the train notified local health officers over long distance from Spiro that he had three men from Poteau aboard, and through this co-operation health officers here were prepared to meet the train at the city limits.

It is understood that the trio will be permitted to proceed on to their original destination today or tomorrow if local officials consider it safe to let them travel.

### **TWO UNIDENTIFIED MEN CREMATED IN HULL HOUSE**

Two unidentified men were caught in a death trap on the second floor of the Hull house at the plant of the American Cotton Oil company when it burned last night, and their charred bodies were buried beneath tons of hulls and smoldering debris, asserted their two companions who succeeded in escaping from the building only after it was a raging fiery furnace. The men who escaped were evidently strangers in Fort Smith and had taken up their quarters for the night in the hull house. They failed to give their names but disappeared soon after they emerged from the burning

building and informed firemen that two men were in the building.

Firemen were endeavoring to force an entrance through the closely packed mass of hulls this morning and are of the opinion that the lower floor of the building is practically intact as only the roof and upper walls caved in, but there is little, if any hope that the two men who were caught near the rear of the building on the second floor, are still alive, for there is no opening whereby they might obtain air even though it were possible they were not cremated.

\*\*\*

## **Sunday, January 22, 1922**

### **BOARD OF HEALTH ISSUES WARNING TO PERSONS GUILTY OF BREAKING SANITARY RULES**

Local health officers have issued orders that the practice of draining kitchen sinks and bathtubs into alleys and streets must be stopped, as the practice is both unsightly and is detrimental to the health of the population. As a result of numerous complaints and reports filed with the Board of Health, Dr. Giles Lucas, city health officer, issued the following order yesterday:

There are reports and complaints frequently coming to me about people draining their kitchen sinks and bathtubs into the alleys and streets, and the Board of Health believes that this practice is unsightly and is detrimental to the good health of our city, as it furnishes a breeding place for bacteria, and in hot weather the danger will be augmented by the breeding of mosquitoes, which carry malaria. There is an ordinance against this practice, and we give notice that violators will be prosecuted.

Signed Giles Lucas  
Chairman Van Buren Board of Health

\*\*\*

## **Wednesday, January 25, 1922**

### **MANY RESPOND TO CALL TO CITY ROCK PILE BUT FEW GO TO WORK**

If work continues at the city rock pile at the same pace it started yesterday, the city will soon have enough crushed rock for its paving purposes.

Yesterday morning about 110 men reported to the mayor's office to learn details of the establishment of the municipal rock pile to give work to the unemployed.

A large percent of those reporting were evidently of the opinion that the pay offered carried no element of charity with it, and decided not to engage in the work.

Yesterday afternoon there were a score or more of workmen employed breaking rock. Inasmuch as workmen have to furnish their own tools, there was a wide variety in evidence. To a casual onlooker it appeared that a youth of about fifteen to sixteen years of age was going to have quite a bit of difficulty in earning very much at the rate of \$1.50, which is in effect, as he was attempting to break rock with a hammer hardly larger than an ordinary claw hammer.

\*\*\*

## **Saturday, January 28, 1922**

### **VISITORS ARE NOW ALLOWED ON NEW BRIDGE**

#### **Many Interesting Facts Come to Light: Garrison Avenue Free Bridge is Official**

Do you know that, it will take more square yards of paving to pave the Arkansas river concrete bridge than it did to pave Rogers avenue.

Do you know that, if the big bridge were to change ends and its west end rest at the Frisco depot, the east end would nearly reach St. Edward's Infirmary.

Do you know that, if the rising grade from the west end of the bridge and the west thirteen spans were continued up Garrison avenue, it would clear the roof of every avenue building and strike the spire on the Church of the Immaculate Conception within forty feet of the top.

And, if you do not know that the highest point on the bridge affords the finest view over the widest range of country and river in this city, just go there and see. The bridge is open to the eager investigator now.

Midway of the third span from the east end there is permanently attached to the north bridge rail a most interesting sign composed of steel plate. It reads, "State line." Thus, the bridge has over thirteen spans in Oklahoma and not quite three in Arkansas.

Yesterday, construction forces were laid off except the wrecking crew who have yet to finish taking down the tramway abutments and rails and clear up the vast quantity of form materials now stored on the bridge. A small concrete force still must place a part of the side railing on the west span, and the caps must yet be placed upon most of the forty-six light towers. These pillars consist of base and column rising seven feet from the walk floor: and the caps which will carry the lighting, will add another 20 inches to the height.

It has not yet been determined what character of paving will be used but hinted that asphaltic pavement will be chosen.

The bridge commission was yesterday to have acted upon bids for the short fill which will connect the west terminal of the bridge with the Oklahoma side grading, which has already been done. There is about an 80-foot fill to be made to close up the west approach. It was stated last night that no action was taken, the matter being deferred to a later meeting.

During the past week, contractors completed placing the four bronze tablets which have been placed on the bridge. There are four of these tablets, two at each end of the bridge. They are placed facing toward the roadway, on the end abutments so that they may be read. It was stated yesterday at the office that the tablets were secured over six weeks ago.

Each tablet is 18-by-24 inches, in bronze relief border, and lettering. They were provided by the district and placed by the contracting company.

Upon the face of each tablet is carried lettering which shows that the commission named the bridge many weeks ago, "The Garrison Avenue Bridge." This name occupies the top line on each tablet.

Next, below the bridge name, follows the lettering "Erected by Sebastian Bridge District 1919-1931."

Immediately below this is the following:

"Commission: J. M. Sparks, president, Charles Reynolds, C. N. Geren, Fagan Bourland, Buckner Williams, J. M. Sparks Jr., assistant secretary, J. B. McDonough, attorney."

Next below and separated by a relief line is:

"Hedrick & Hedrick, Con. Engineers, W. W. Robinson, Res. Engineer."

The bottom third of the tablet contains the following:

"The Missouri Valley Bridge and Iron Company, M. L. Wagner, Supt., L. A. Prokes, resident engineer."

\*\*\*

## **Wednesday, February 1, 1922**

### **FIVE NEW STORES FOR FORT SMITH AND VAN BUREN**

Five additional Star Cash Grocery Stores will be opened in Fort Smith and possibly two or three similar stores in Van Buren during the current year, F. R. Miller, manager of the chain of Star grocery stores said yesterday.

The present warehouse on South Sixth street, where a \$20,000 surplus stock is carried and offices of the



manager are maintained, will be abandoned within the next sixty days. The stock will be removed to a location to be decided on within a few days, where one of the five stores will be opened.

Stores will be located on North Sixth street, Bluff avenue, Dodson avenue, Little Rock avenue and one other place later to be selected.

Preparations for opening the first store in Van Buren are well under way. The store will be located in the building opposite the Frisco depot, formerly occupied by the Gem café. Remodeling and redecorating of the interior of the building has been in progress for several days, and indications are the building will be ready for occupancy in the latter part of February.

The first store in Van Buren will be the only one located in the business district, Miller said. Additional stores will be situated in the suburbs.

\*\*\*

## Thursday, February 2, 1922

### POLICE APPREHEND TWO LOCAL YOUTHS FOR CAR THEFT

Two youths, Milo Thebeaudeau, South Twenty second street, and Henry Carter, Lexington avenue, were taken into custody late yesterday by local police as a result of their investigation of the disappearance of an auto truck from Garrison avenue on the night of January 27. The truck was recovered by the police and the boys, whom the police alleged confessed to taking the car, were sent home in the custody of their parents last night.

According to police, the boys admitted they took the car and drove it to a point near the county hospital, where they removed the body and afterwards drove the

chassis about the city. They drove through several wire fences and explored several fields in the vicinity of the spot where they stripped the car down to racing style.

\*\*\*

## Sunday, February 5, 1922

### NEW MANAGER TAKES HOLD OF BASEBALL AFFAIRS HERE

Ducky Holmes, Twins manager, spent yesterday in consultation with the Fort Smith management and in unpacking his trunk—yes, Ducky brought along his trunk and will be with us until late in September. He also visited Andrews field yesterday afternoon and voiced his approbation of the work now under way out there under the supervision of Fay Bullock, part owner of the Twins, assisted by “Butcherman” Abington. “Give me a club house and a players’ bench, not a dug out,” said Ducky after inspecting the plant. Holmes does not favor “under the ground” treatment for his players but wants a player’s bench, covered, out on top of the ground. He also wishes a club house out in the open. Not under the stands, but where the sun hits it all day. Concrete and no sunshine make dampness, and this does not augur well for the players, says the new Twin pilot, who ought to know, for he has been at the biz for a few years. His nibs has no fault to find with the new pasture. The drainage and width of the infield, practically a heart shape, meets his idea of a perfect diamond. “Now that you have given me a field and paths to run on,” said Ducky to Fay Bullock, “I hope to give you the players to play on the field and run on the paths.

“But in all seriousness, the matter of a club house should be arranged immediately. This is highly important, and I trust the management will arrange this



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FIRST  
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Make a complete inspection tour of our modern and up-to-date Bakery—See how the Flour is handled, mixed and made into HOLSUM Bread—the many steps employed throughout our various departments will greatly interest you!

Come and Help Us Celebrate—This is YOUR Party, So Be Here!

# SHIPLEY BAKING CO.

feature. The players bench matter can be left in my hands. I will look after it.”

Mogul Bullock intends to take up the matter with John Andrews, president of the athletic association this week and it is believed a club house will be in readiness by the time the first recruits report. Support of the fans is also desired along this line.

In the meantime, Manager Holmes and the Twin management are “fishing” for one or two players necessary to complete the machine. Announcement of progress should be made this week.

#### **POTEAU RIVER DAM MEASURE WILL GO TO CONGRESS MONDAY**

Introduction of a bill in Congress authorizing the city of Fort Smith to build a dam across the Poteau river will be made tomorrow, according to advice contained in a letter received from Senator T. H. Carraway by Mayor Bourland yesterday.

All necessary papers were forwarded to Washington by the city attorney last week.

The dam is to be constructed in order to ensure a pure water supply to Fort Smith when the Poteau is in its lowest stage.

Senator Carraway advised he anticipated an early passage of the bill.

#### **THE BELLE POINT FILLING STATION OPENS THIS WEEK**

The Belle Point Filling station, owned by Luther Hopkins and located on Towson avenue and South J Street, will make its debut in the Fort Smith business and automotive world Friday, February 10.

Real genuine service will be given customers, who will be treated only with the utmost courtesy and consideration.

The very latest equipment will be installed in the filling station, which is rapidly nearing completion. The air compressor and attachments were purchased from the Atkinson-Williams Hardware company, and the pump and underground storage tank were obtained from the Magnolia Petroleum company.

The station was built under the direction of Jack Adams, and the electric fixtures were obtained from the Carter Electric company. The Arkansas Valley Trust company is carrying the insurance policy on the new building.

The Belle Point station is ideally located and will be very convenient to motorists. The Deep Rock brand of gasoline, motor oils and greases, supplied by the Shaffer Oil and Refining company, will be distributed by the station.

Deep Rock products are of excellent quality, go farther and last longer. Automobile owners will find that Deep Rock gasoline, oils and greases are a saving to purchase.

The need of a filling station on Towson Avenue has been long felt, and Mr. Hopkins feels that he is giving the Fort Smith automotive world a service to which it has been entitled for months.

\*\*\*

### **Wednesday, February 22, 1922**

#### **FORT SMITH KU KLUX KLAN HOLDS BIG INITIATION AWARDED NATIONAL CHARTER**

Kidnapped at 10 o'clock last night on a downtown street and carried blindfolded in an automobile several miles into the country to witness part of a ceremonial staged by several hundred figures in white robes, was the experience of a *Southwest American* reporter, who was informed he was in the hands of the Fort Smith chapter of the Ku Klux Klan, who was initiating a class of 200 new members.

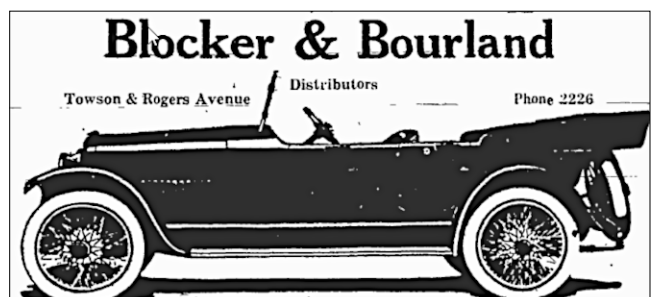
Judging by the hundreds of automobiles parked in a deep forest and the great crowd of white robed figures gathered around an immense American flag and a flaming cross, the reporter estimates the membership present between 1,500 and 2,000 persons. However, he was unable to accurately judge the membership of what he was told was the Invisible Empire for the reason he was not allowed inside the great circle. He was allowed only a few minutes to gaze upon the scene, then the blindfold was replaced and the automobile brought him back to the city.

\*\*\*

### **Friday, March 3, 1922**

#### **RIVER FRONT IMPROVEMENT UNDERWAY**

City property on the river front will be improved as soon as practicable, according to decision made by the city commission at its meeting yesterday afternoon.



Mayor Bourland brought the matter before the commission, and said the city was not receiving any rent to speak of from the shacks placed on its property along the river front, that such shacks were an eyesore to the city and suggested that, upon expiration of leases on such shacks, that they be not renewed.

Commissioners Miller and Smith were in accord with the mayor and went even further. They suggested that immediate steps be taken to dispossess those occupying the property who do not have leases.

It was unanimously decided that persons occupying the property at the present time without a lease be dispossessed, and that all others be required to move as soon as leases held by them expire. The shacks will be torn down and removed.

Immediate work on improvement of the property will begin and Commissioner Miller suggested that all able-bodied men now obtaining free board at the county jail be permitted to work on this property and thus in some measure pay for their food and lodging.

#### **TO BROADCAST SPECIAL MUSIC BY RADIOPHONE MONDAY NIGHT**

The radio station operated by John Fink Jewelry store will be in operation Monday evening, and in addition to broadcasting the regular musical program and weather reports, special arrangement has been made with the Johnny Campbell Society orchestra to give a special concert. Stations as far distant as the northern part of Wisconsin and Denver, Colorado, communicate regularly with the local station and several of these will send out musical numbers on that night.

Beginning sometime this week permanent installation of the set will be completed and broadcasting programs will be a daily feature, Mr. Fink said last night.

\*\*\*

### **Tuesday, March 7, 1922**

#### **CIRCUIT JUDGE ORDERS JURY TO INVESTIGATE SALE OF RISQUE BOOKS**

Renewed life was given to the movement for suppression of the sale of periodicals such as "Whizz Bang," "Hot Dog," "Pajamas," from the newsstands of Fort Smith by Judge John Brizzalora yesterday when he paid his respects to such publications in his charge to the grand jury.

Judge Brizzalora instructed the grand jury to inquire regarding the sale of magazines containing obscene matter and stated that state laws prohibiting the

sale of magazines and periodicals containing obscene matter are in existence and are enforceable. Proprietors of newsstands dealing in such publications, he declared, could be proceeded against under the law prohibiting sale of obscene matter.

This matter was first brought to wide attention when representatives of civic organizations broached the matter at a meeting of the Civic Council, at which time Mayor Bourland, chairman of the council, said the city would take immediate steps to suppress sale of such publications. The mayor reported at a later meeting of the council that after investigation of the matter that the city was powerless to proceed, as it had no ordinance covering the matter.

Judge Brizzalora said yesterday that in his opinion the city commission has full power to pass an ordinance prohibiting such sales.

\*\*\*

### **Thursday, March 9, 1922**

#### **GARBAGE REMOVAL PLANS PERFECTED BY MATT MILLER**

Householders of Fort Smith will be compelled to supply themselves with covered metal garbage cans not later than April 1, it was said yesterday, by City Commissioner Mack Miller, who said also arrangements have been perfected whereby the garbage is being collected once each week from every home in the city.

"These metal garbage cans are absolutely essential for the protection of the public health," Mr. Miller said. "Garbage properly handled and placed in these cans can be kept for a week without attracting flies or causing disagreeable odors. Housewives should cooperate with our department and help us to carry out our plans to make Fort Smith the cleanest and most healthful city of its size in the country.

"A circular firebox can be quickly and cheaply constructed of hog or chicken wire, at every home, in which the housewife can burn all her garbage—kitchen refuse, paper trash of all kinds, and even tin cans. The fire destroys everything except cans and bones, and these are dried so they will not draw flies or cause odors. The stuff not destroyed by the fire should be placed in the garbage can."

Mr. Miller explained that his department has installed a "Complaint wagon" service, allotting to one wagon the duty of calling for all garbage cans which have been missed by the regular drivers. It is only necessary for the householder to notify Mr. Miller's office by telephone when the garbage man misses a can.

Mr. Miller instructed the police yesterday to notify all retail merchants that after this morning, there will be police court summons for all businessmen who fail to observe the new ordinance prohibiting the placing of trash boxes, garbage cans and other such articles along Garrison avenue.

"I made an inspection trip Wednesday morning and found exactly seventeen violations of the ordinance," said Mr. Miller. "We intend to enforce this ordinance, even if court trials are necessary."

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## Thursday, March 16, 1922

### HARRY KELLEY GIVES SITE FOR HOME OF LEGION POST

Victor Ellig Post of the American Legion last night, at one of the best attended and most enthusiastic meetings yet held, made plain its thanks and appreciation of the gift of a lot in North B street between Fifth and Sixth streets as the site for its new home. The lot was given to the post by Harry E. Kelley and announcement of the gift was received with regular world-war-times enthusiasm.

### WOMEN PLANNING REAL OBSERVANCE OF ARBOR DAY HERE

In observance of Arbor Day, the City Federation of Women will plant vines and shrubs around the grounds of the Fort Smith Welfare building. The day set for this observance is March 20. The actual work of planning the arrangement of the vines and shrubbery will be in charge of Miss Ed Louise Ballman, who has made a special study of landscape gardening.

Each club president of the clubs of the city affiliated with the City Federation of Women is urged by the president of the Federation to appoint a committee to be at the Welfare building on that date and lend assistance.

In order that the public may have a more active part in the beautifying of this public welfare center, all who have vines, shrubs, bulbs or plants which they will contribute are asked to telephone Mrs. W. L. Bocker, Fort Smith 1889, for instructions where to take or send them.

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## Sunday, March 19, 1922

### SCOUTS PLANNING FOX HUNT FRIDAY

Boy Scouts of Fort Smith and Van Buren, members of the executive council and W. I. Mayfield, scout executive, will participate in the annual fox hunt next

Friday evening, leaving at 6 o'clock for Wildcat mountain. Dinner will be cooked in camp fashion after the hunter's hike to their destination. An invitation has been extended to the parents and friends of Scouts to share in the evening's pleasure, Mr. Mayfield said.

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## Saturday, April 1, 1922

### ANIMATED LEGS ATTRACT CROWD TO HOSE DISPLAY

The flurry on Garrison avenue in the 700 block yesterday afternoon, which caused a crowd to



accumulate on the sidewalk between the hours of 3 and 4, was caused by a no less momentous occurrence than the showing of hose and shoes on living models in the windows of the Robin Shop. The curtains were lowered so that nothing could be seen by the crowd on the sidewalk except pairs of animated legs encased in the most sheer of chiffon hose, or modish gray ones, displaying all sorts of smart models in slippers and pumps. Posing, pointing, pirouetting coquettishly, these detached legs created much more than a passing interest.

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## Sunday, April 2, 1922

### TWINS MANAGEMENT TO ERECT GRANDSTAND AND BLEACHERS ON SITE OVER IN OKLAHOMA

Fort Smith baseball fans who journey across the new Fort Smith free bridge into Oklahoma to witness the Twins trounce opponents or comrades as they might be called on Sunday afternoons this summer, will find a grandstand and bleachers in the place of Bermuda as a seating convenience, according to plans announced yesterday by the Fort Smith Baseball association in letting it be known that Alexander field was to be a regular institution for Fort Smith fandom.

Work of grading up the diamond will start

tomorrow morning. Bids for construction of the grandstand and bleachers will be asked for this week and construction is to begin immediately afterwards. Present plans provide that work start not later than one week from tomorrow.

A lease has been secured for several years and the Twins management intends to build a permanent baseball and athletic stadium. Other events may be scheduled in addition to regular baseball games of clubs in the Western association.

All week-day games will be played at Andrews field. Fans of Fort Smith will hardly recognize the lot [Andrews] when they travel out there this week to see the Cards in action Wednesday and Thursday. The fence has been radically changed and the grass is coming along nicely on the diamond. Other changes include rest rooms for the women and other conveniences for both fans and fanettes, not to mention shower baths, club houses and players benches for the "hired help."

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## Sunday, April 9, 1922

### COMPLAINT AGAINST ROCK-THROWING BY BOYS FROM BRIDGE

Complaint has been made against a habit which has been formed by boys, of throwing rocks and other missiles from the new free bridge, into the river, at the foot of Garrison avenue, and the authorities have been asked to take steps to stop this practice.

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## Wednesday, April 12, 1922

### COKE HILL FIGHT ENTERAINS COURT

A fight between two girls of the Coke Hill



community, which occurred Friday evening in Coke Hill, and which resulted in charges being filed against one of the girls, was aired in considerable detail in Municipal court yesterday afternoon. There were plenty of witnesses, pro and con, as it were, but the jury of six, good men and true—who appeared to really enjoy their service, judging from their frequent smiles at the testimony—found the defendant girl, not guilty.

There was a crowded courtroom when the case was called, but most of the crowd was made up of men and women witnesses to the affair, and most of the women apparently brought the[ir] children along. Prosecuting witness Nellie Franks and defendant May Briggs occupied the center of the stage. Hands, feet, fingernails, teeth, a Tom Walker and an axe, not to mention language and rocks, all figured more or less in the testimony. Incidentally, it developed that a "Tom Walker" is a half of a pair of stilts. Nobody appears to have been hurt to any extent, and after the defendant was acquitted, the Coke Hill population departed, one faction taking one route, the other another course, back to their home section.

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## Sunday, April 23, 1922

### BASEBALL FANS ALLOWED USE OF DRIVEWAY

The new free bridge will be available for use today by baseball fans and other persons who want to drive to Oklahoma, it was announced yesterday. It is expected the big concrete structure will be crowded throughout the day and early evening.

The approach on the Oklahoma side is rapidly being completed, the contractor having suffered some interruption both from weather and from high water stages in the river. Rapid progress is expected to be made within the next few days, which will terminate work on that contract and have the bridge ready ahead of the date set for the formal opening and celebration.

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## Tuesday, April 25, 1922

### LANDING FIELD READY FOR PLANES

Alexander landing field, across the Arkansas river, almost at the terminus of the approach to the new free bridge, will be in fine shape for the use of the eight airplanes detailed here by the war department for the bridge celebration, it was reported yesterday by Leigh

Kelley, chairman of the committee in charge of that detail of the arrangements.

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## Saturday, April 29, 1922

### FORT SMITH PANTS WORN EVERYWHERE BY MEN AND BOYS

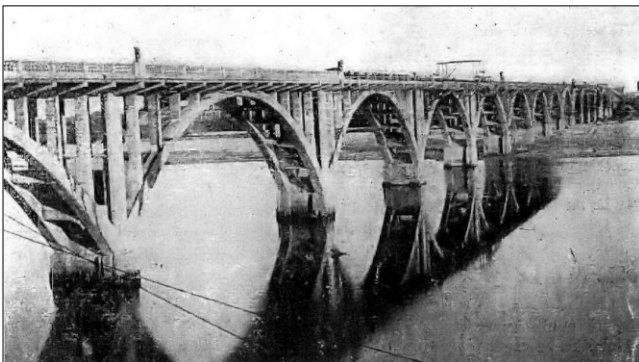
Thousands of men and boys in Chicago, Kansas City, Cincinnati, Philadelphia and even in New York—are wearing trousers made in Fort Smith. The sales records of Woods Manufacturing company show that daily shipments of trousers leave the local plant for numerous points in the north and middle west. In fact, almost every state in the union is included in the trade map of the concern.

The chief market for made-in-Fort Smith pants is found in the cities of the middle west. Over fifty jobbers in Chicago, some of whom are among the largest in the United States, are regular customers of the local company. People in Fort Smith purchasing pants, breeches, or trousers from Butler Brothers or other large out of town concerns, might be surprised to know that they stand a good chance of receiving goods manufactured by the Woods Pants company.

About 130 men and women are employed in the plant and the average output is 1,500 pairs of pants daily. Breeches of all sizes, grades, colors, and descriptions are made.

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## Saturday, May 6, 1922



**MILLION DOLLAR FREE BRIDGE**

### FREE BRIDGE NOW OPEN FOR TRAFFIC

Fort Smith's \$1,000,000 bridge was finally completed yesterday.

The last work was done and the last employee finished his task in the presence of Mayor Fagan

Bourland, who declared that he was "there at the finish."

The Sebastian Bridge district, at the regular session last night, directed that the barriers be torn down at the entrance to the bridge and that the structure be thrown open permanently for use by the public.

The Alexander estate, through whose property the Oklahoma approach to the bridge is built, has informed the bridge commission that it will make a deed to the bridge for a strip of land 100 feet long to widen the approach and in addition, will donate an additional 80-foot strip, so the approach will run up to the Missouri Pacific right-of-way, where the railroad already has been instructed by Oklahoma corporations commission to build a tunnel through which the road will run.

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## Friday, May 12, 1922

### BRIDGE IS CHRISTENED AS GREAT CROWD CHEERS

When, immediately following the parade, her Imperial Majesty Queen Louise, and her court, arrived at the speaker's platform erected on the bridge at the Arkansas and Oklahoma state line, the formal christening ceremonies of the Fort Smith Free bridge were opened.

Charles Darland, chairman of the bridge celebration, introduced the Queen of the Bridge Celebration, Miss Louise Golden, sponsored by the United Commercial Travelers. Her majesty was surrounded by the members of her court, whose bright frocks in rainbow hues formed a colorful background for the royal purple of the queen's robe.

The clouds which had been overhanging all day and which had shed a few scattering drops with the beginning of the parade, lightened and the sun sent forth a few bright rays, as encouragement.

Following a brief welcome by Charles Darland to visitors and guests, the queen gave her message of greeting; a message which expressed the spirit of Fort Smith in the opening of this great link in the highways of the country.

Friends, our greeting, royal and courteous!

The Queen and her court, especially representing Fort Smith and surrounding cities, command you, one and all, to have a jolly, good time while here.

It is with great pride that we give to you and touring visitors the perpetual use of this magnificent bridge.



Mayor Fagan Bourland delivered the address of welcome, on behalf of the people of Fort Smith, speaking in the following words:

#### **The Mayor's Welcome**

Ladies and Gentlemen—I see you are all here and I wonder, after looking over this vast assembly, if you have left anyone at home. As Mayor of the City of Fort Smith, I want to assure you that we welcome you to participate in this great event of celebrating the opening of our Free Wagon Bridge.

I would like it if you would look up the river and let your vision rest just beyond the Missouri Pacific Railroad bridge. About this point is the place where we used to land. That was during my boyhood days, when we hauled freight from Muskogee, Oklahoma to our city. We would haul hides, cotton and farm produce to Muskogee and bring back merchandise of various kinds. That was before we had any railroad facilities here. Muskogee was fortunate enough to have railroads several years before we did. Calling your attention to freighters fording this river is merely to show you how inadequate transportation was in old days. It usually took a good team from one half to a full day to haul a wagon across the sand bar as the sand was so deep the team could draw their load but a few steps until they would have to be permitted to rest. Look at the difference in how we had to travel and the obstacles we had to overcome, compared to the convenience of this magnificent free bridge that now spans the Arkansas river here.

The mayor then gave a succinct history of the bridge, quoting names, dates and figures, and proceeded

as follows:

This bridge cost, in money, approximately one million dollars, but that is not all the cost. In building a structure like this many unavoidable accidents occur, even involving the loss of life. There were over 400 accidents, and three lives were lost during the construction of this edifice. And of the five commissioners elected in 1915, there are only three living. Those who have passed away are T. J. Wright and J. M. Sparks. All of which goes to show that building a structure of this kind is a big task, but it will prove to be a great benefit to this community, and we welcome you who have assembled here today, from all parts of the country. We hope you will enjoy yourselves by having a good time while with us, and I do not want this to be your last visit. I want you to come often, as we now have no barriers in the way nor any toll to pay.

The Queen and her court then ascended the speaker's platform for the christening ceremony. Three bottles of water one from Hot Springs, representing the eastern terminus of the Albert Pike highway, one from Colorado Springs, representing the western terminus, with a third from Siloam Springs, Ark., northern terminal of the Sequoyah trail, were used in a triple christening ceremony.

#### **ROGERS AND BRUCE BUY MEISTER-BRACHT**

Controlling interest in Meister Brothers-Bracht, dealers in wholesale plumbing supplies, has been purchased by Douglas Rogers and Bert Bruce. The company located at 201 South Sixth street will be known as Bruce-Rogers company.

***YOUR BUSINESS IS EARNESTLY SOLICITED.  
COME AND SEE US!***

# **Bruce-Rogers Company**

201 South 6th St.

Successors to Meister-Bros. Bracht Co.  
Fort Smith, Ark.  
—Exclusively Wholesale—

Phone 641





**LOOKING EAST ON GARRISON AVENUE AS FORT SMITH MARKS  
THE OPENING OF THE "MILLION DOLLAR" FREE BRIDGE**

Meister Brothers-Bracht retain control of the business house at Tulsa, Okla., and it will be under the direction of Ed Bracht.

### **SCOUT POLICE DIRECT TRAFFIC LIKE OLD-TIMERS**

There are fifty-two members of the Boy Scouts detailed to police duty for the entire celebration. The boys have been a great help in keeping the cars off the avenue. Cars are not allowed to park on the avenue and it keeps the Scouts busy to prevent people from parking.

During the parade yesterday the boys were detailed to keep all cars off the avenue, unless they bore an official badge, the sheriff and deputy drove on the avenue, without a badge, and were promptly arrested by one of the Scouts. The officers had quite a time in establishing their right to be on the avenue as the scouts did not recognize them and were only complying with their orders. The Scouts aided about 400 people in securing rooms Thursday and aided them in many other ways.

A rest room for women and children was provided at the tent on the Plaza and was in constant use all day yesterday.

Plenty of ice water was to be had at the tent all of the time.

Scouts were detailed as guides for Ray Gill and C. A. Darland, who are in charge of the celebration.

The two Eagle scouts, Lee Rutz and Charles McKennon, will be aids to Governor McRae today. Charles McKennon is in charge of the wireless at the Plaza, as he is an efficient wireless man.

The public in general were very nice to the scouts who were on the police force and have the hearty thanks of Mr. Mayfield, scout executive and all of the scout masters.

The scouts had one of the best floats in the parade yesterday and deserve much praise for it.

Remember, the scouts are at your service all of the time. Anyone wanting them, call scout headquarters, No. 532.

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## **Saturday, May 13, 1922**

### **1200 FEET OF FILM SHOW CELEBRATION**

Approximately 1200 feet of film were used yesterday by two motion picture operators, who took pictures of the parades and the ceremonies on the new free bridge.

Eddie Shelton, representing Fox film people, came over from Oklahoma City to take several hundred feet of pictures for the Fox News service. The local representative of the Pathe film folks also had instructions to take some news pictures. Between them, they exposed about 1200 feet of film. Shelton returns to Oklahoma City this morning.

### **GOULD TOLL BRIDGE PASSES INTO HISTORY ON MONDAY MORNING**

With the closing day of the Fort Smith free bridge celebration came the announcement yesterday from Superintendent M. J. Crotty of the Central division of the Missouri Pacific railroad company at Van Buren that the Gould bridge over the Arkansas river would cease to be a toll bridge and that it will be closed to public use on Monday, May 15, after being in use over thirty years.

Notification to this effect was received by F. B. McKee, depot ticket agent of the Fort Smith station, from Supt. M. M. Crotty, with the additional information that a force of workmen will start at 7 o'clock Monday morning removing the planking from the vehicle driveway and from the foot-passenger walks on each side of the bridge. Disposition of the thousands of feet of timber in the floor of the bridge has not been announced, but it is understood bids have been put in for it.

The bridge was named in honor of Helen Gould. The story of the big event in this city attending to its dedication was printed in this newspaper last Sunday.

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## **Tuesday, May 16, 1922**

### **DUCKY HOLMES RELEASED AS FIRST STEP IN SALE OF TWINS CLUB TO CARDS**

#### **Thomas to be New Boss**

Release of Ducky Holmes as manager of the Twins was announced yesterday by the owners of the Fort Smith baseball club.

This action is taken, it is said, to clear the way for its sale to the St. Louis Cardinals.

A representative of the National league club arrived in Fort Smith last night to complete the deal and the change in ownership will probably take place today.

The St. Louis moguls in their preliminary negotiations, declared they would not take over the contract between Manager Holmes and the Fort Smith owners, since they desired to place a Veteran player now on their payroll in charge, in the event the

purchase went through. This necessitated the release of Holmes.

President Faye Bullock said Monday that there was no personal animosity between the club owners and the manager, and that the release of Holmes was being made as a preliminary step in the sale. In the event any hitch in the negotiations arises and the sale was not made, Bullock declared Holmes would be offered his old job.

Ducky said yesterday his release came as a surprise to him since he knew nothing of the deal with the Cardinals. He also declared that he regretted that the sale would necessitate his turning over the reins of the Twins to a successor. The veteran, in accepting the job here, had planned to make Fort Smith his permanent home and sooner or later acquire the ownership of the club.

He said that he had made several attempts to purchase the Twins and that he secured the necessary financial backing but could not agree on the price with the present owners.

Holmes was under a straight six-month manager's contract and could not be released without payment of the salary provided in the contract. An agreement between Holmes and the management was reached yesterday.

Louie Jones, veteran second sacker, was placed in charge of the team temporarily and made his debut as manager yesterday, with a victory over Henryetta in the final game of the present home stay of the Twins.

The identity of the Player whom the St. Louis owners have in mind for the managerial job is not definitely known, but it is thought to be Ira Thomas. Thomas is at the present time coach for the cardinals and would be an ideal man to place in charge of the major league farm. Thomas is a veteran catcher and was a member of Connie Mack's championship Athletics.

Rumors of the sale of the Twin club to the Cardinals have been heard here for several days, and confirmation was secured by the *Southwest American* from local owners Saturday. Details of the negotiations, such as purchase price, will not be made public until the deal is completed.

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## **Wednesday, May 17, 1922**

### **TOURIST PARK NOW BEING BUILT**

Road Commissioner Jim Johnson is lending his aid and co-operation for several days, to the building of the automobile tourist park, which is being established on

South Seventh street, just outside Andrews Stadium.

The grounds are being graded and cleared, comfort stations and sheds with gas and water connections are to be installed and it is expected the entire park will be ready for use by automobile tourists with the next two weeks.

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## **Tuesday, May 18, 1922**

### **BLUE BIRD SCHOOL BUILDING IS NEAR FINAL COMPLETION**

One of Fort Smith's latest enterprises, the "Blue Bird School" is now nearing completion. It is now located at 614 Greenwood ave., and is owned by Mrs. David Shapard.

The new building is being constructed at 208 Lecta avenue and will, when complete, have housing room for the kindergarten, the first and second grades and classes in music and French.

The building itself is of stucco in mission style with four classrooms, 18 by 18, with 12-foot ceilings, a gymnasium 23 by 46 feet, a teacher's rest room and an office. It will have numerous built-in features. These will include a separate locker for each child.

The playground, situated at the rear of the building, is 75 feet by 85 feet. It will have drinking fountains in addition to the regular playground equipment and will be electrically lighted for evening affairs. A basement runs under the building which will contain the steam heating plant.

No expense has been spared to make this one of the most modern and select private schools in the Southwest. It will be such a school as would do credit to a much larger city.

The gymnasium will attract unusual attention as there are very few schools in the country for primary children which have a regularly equipped gymnasium. Mrs. Shapard has been in communication with some of the greatest authorities on kindergarten and primary work in the country and the gymnasium is the result of much careful thought and consideration.

Mrs. Shapard as director and owner, will be assisted by a teaching staff of four, with a teacher of music and French.

All teachers in the school, in addition to college degrees, have had special preparation for their work, special training along the lines they will teach. All will study this summer, even to the young girl who will be in charge of the office. Mrs. Shapard herself will leave shortly after school closes in June for a summer in the

north which will be devoted to study.

The name "Blue Bird" has been chosen by Mrs. Shapard as significant of the spirit of the school. The "Blue Bird" typifies happiness, and children, according to Mrs. Shapard's theory, are really only truly happy when they radiate spiritual, physical and mental well-being.

The school flower is the American Beauty rose. The colors are blue and gold. The school pin, which is just being designed, is a blue bird adaptation.

The autumn term of school will open September tenth in the new building with a greatly increased enrollment.

Mrs. Shapard opened her first kindergarten in the Goldman hotel three years ago, later removing it to her home in Greenwood avenue, where it has grown from a kindergarten to a kindergarten and primary department. As the kindergarten at its opening was the only one in Fort Smith, it was a pioneer in the Fort Smith field and was warmly welcomed by parents who realized the benefit of kindergarten training for the young child.

The "Blue Bird" school was the subject of much interesting comment during the Bridge celebration when the pupils appeared in the "Blue Bird" float with the 27 small members of the school in blue bird costumes and singing a blue bird song of happiness, while small acrobats performed on miniature trapeze. It was one of the prettiest of the floats and the result of much labor on the part of Mrs. Shapard and her assistants.

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## **Sunday, May 27, 1922**

### **CITY WILL HAVE HISTORY IN FILM OF CELEBRATION**

A film history of the dedication of the big million-dollar free bridge, and the festivities attached thereto, will be presented to the city of Fort Smith with the compliments of the New Theater management, as soon as necessary formalities have been completed, it was learned yesterday.

The pictures were taken by Hugh B. Gunter, local representative of Pathe, and in all there was about 1,000 feet of film exposed, a full reel. Of this, about 10 percent was flashed by the Pathe people on the screen in approximately 14,000 movie houses in this country the past week, the New theater here being among the number.

So much interest was aroused in the pictures shown at the New, that Messrs. Chauncey Lick and Cap Tilles

Lick decided they would have the entire reel printed and shown here, after which they will present the film to the city to go into the archives of Fort Smith. It is probable also that the entire reel will be shown in a number of cities before it is placed in the archives.

Years and years hence, when Fort Smith has another important celebration, it will be interesting to take out and show this film, that residents might have vivid recollections of a sure-enough big entertainment that Fort Smith staged in 1922.

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## **Wednesday, June 7, 1922**

### **TAXICAB DRIVERS CAUSE OF COMPLAINT**

Traveling men and other persons occupying sleeping cars have made complaint to Mayor Fagan Bourland and other city officials against the noise made at the railroad stations during the night hours by drivers and chauffeurs of taxicabs who, in the language of one complaint, "appear to have a contest to find out which has the loudest voice."

Passengers on the Rainbow Special in particular have made complaints and the police have been instructed to take the necessary steps to abate the nuisance.

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## **Sunday, June 18, 1922**

### **TWO OLD WATERING TROUGHS REMAIN HERE IN FORT SMITH TO SATISFY DOBBINS THIRST**

Moss covered, apart, and conspicuous in its singleness, stands an iron constructed apparatus on Garrison avenue.

Young children in passing often ask mother, or father, whoever happen to be driving the family car. "What is that thing over there?"

Near the city park on South sixth street there stands a similar iron container. It long since has rusted out on the inside, showing that at one time it had contained water. Around it on the pavement are sprigs of grass, where once many a proud animal stood.

Children play in the old thing, hardly stopping to wonder what it is.

And so, we find the only two watering troughs in Fort Smith, the old watering troughs where Colonel So-and-so's horse used to drink on hot summer days. The same trough where youths with their young sweethearts

in rigs stopped, if they thought enough of their horse to do so, to water their proud mare.

In those days drivers lined up to water their horses. The watering trough was a gathering place for politicians and others. It was the center of attraction, but today—all this is gone, and the children, in passing ask mother or father what the trough is. They do not understand. The only trough in town still in use as a public watering place is on Towson and Garrison avenues.

Today, only occasional stops are made before it each day. The moss has grown up around it, and the pungent odor, damp and somewhat cooling on summer days, has left it. The water runs slow through the intake and is always warm.

The old watering trough has been displaced. Its proud position in the community has been taken by the glaring lights of the filing station, where the clerk impatiently grinds out the liquid and collects, with little thanks.

An old drayman, of long ago, at onetime owner of the best horses hereabouts, stopped before the Garrison avenue trough a few days ago.

"Funny how folks—," he stopped. "Well, Nellie," addressing his horse, "well, Nellie, we're gonna stick it out old girl. You're blind now, and I'm glad for you, that you can't see the disgrace. Folks ain't right these days—they jist ain't right, nor humane, to you hossess."

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## **Wednesday, June 21, 1922**

### **NEW \$100,000 CONCERN BUYS PALACE, CRESCENT, STERLING STORES FROM CARNAHAN COMPANY**

Negotiations were completed last night which resulted in the purchase by the Krack-Williams Drug company of the string of local drug stores heretofore owned and operated by the Carnahan Drug company—these stores being the Palace, at 603 Garrison avenue, the Crescent, at Eighth street and Garrison avenue and the Sterling, at Eleventh street and Garrison avenue, together with the supply house at 419 Garrison avenue.

The consideration has not been given out, but it was stated the new owners will take charge with the opening of the stores this morning. Many details of the transaction are yet to be completed and there also are many details to be completed in the organization of the Krack-Williams Drug company, which is a new concern.

George C. Krack of Decatur, Ill., with Leon

Williams, John B. Williams and Rupert Condrey of Fort Smith are expected to be the directors of the new company, which will have a capital stock of \$100,000. Leon Williams probably will be the president of the new company, with George C. Krack as general manager of all the stores of the company.

The new company, it was said last night, will operate not only the three retail drug stores formerly operated by the Carnahan Drug company, but is looking for two more locations on Garrison avenue, it being the intention of the company to operate a chain of five drug stores and to operate them as popular price drug stores in the most up-to-date manner.

In keeping with the chain store plan, the fronts of all the stores of the Krack-Williams company will be orange, with black letters. The stores will all be "Rexall Stores" the Krack-Williams company handling Rexall products, Liggett and Whitman candies and Eastman kodaks and photographic supplies, all of which lines it will popularize.

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**Wednesday, June 28, 1922**

### **HIGH SKIRTS AND HIGHER CAR STEPS ARE WAGING BATTLE FOR SUPREMACY**

Women of Fort Smith are on the warpath.

The high steps on some of the local street cars was bitterly denounced as almost "immoral" by several prominent feminine reformers of our fair city in interviews yesterday. The women are even threatening to take the matter up with the traction company or with the city commission.

A representative of the traction company unofficially declared that any change, in this day of weekly passes and cut rates, was out of the question, although he confessed that the needed reform was news to him.

The car man intimated "how come" that women for the past several years have been wearing skirts that flirted with their knee caps, should suddenly become aroused over car steps that seldom take the skirt above the approved line of vision.

The women reply that skirts are getting longer now. Paris decrees it. At first there was rebellion in feminine hearts because women had found new freedom and delight in the abbreviated styles. But when it comes to a contest of fashion Paris generally wins out in the long run, and so it is now skirts are longer and therefore the knee should be hidden, even when boarding a trolley car. There are many masculine souls, accustomed to

**Just Out**  
New Victor Dance.  
**Records**

All the Latest Dance Hits of the day  
Are now on sale at the  
"Original Victor Dealers"

**R. C. Bollinger Music Co.**  
Est. 1878 701 Garrison

loitering at street corners and "car stops" who disagree with this entirely.

The car men further say there is no style of step known that would fit all the varying moods of the designers of women's clothes. They cite the "bobble skirt" for instance. That was a long skirt, but very tight around the ankles. Women had a terrible time with car steps. Not only would the skirts rise unceremoniously until the knee, but more than often exhibited—in addition to a wealth of silk hosiery—a penchant for sticking to the knee or higher.

The hobble skirt furthermore caused a number of serious accidents, tripping the wearers as they attempted to run for a car, or to "step lively," in getting aboard.

The traction folks say that some of the cars have especially high steps for clearance purposes along the road, just as railway cars have high steps. They also say it is impracticable to have the conductor, hop off with a stepping box, each time a passenger desires to get aboard or be "let down."

The women say there is a lack of consideration or cooperation somewhere, and the suggestion now is made for a liaison officer between the car builders of the future, and the makers of women's style.

Just so long as steps are higher, and skirts are tight, the feminine knee cannot be denied its occasional place in the sun.

*Al Whitson selects and edits of the Journal's long-standing section of reprinted 100 years ago newspaper articles, pictures, and advertisements concerning Fort Smith, a city and its history to which Al is dedicated and serves so well.*



# Visit Our Website

[www.fortsmithhistory.org](http://www.fortsmithhistory.org)

*Find links to these sites and more to aid your research!*

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

**Arkansas Freedmen of the Frontier**—The African-American experience in northwest Arkansas is chronicled here.

**Arkansas Historical Association**—This association promotes the preservation, writing, publishing, teaching, and understanding of Arkansas history through the publication of *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* as well as other activities.

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

**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.

**Center for Local History and Memory**—This center 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 info on Arkansas' participating in the 150th anniversary of our nation's struggle with itself.

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

**Fort Smith Trolley Museum**—For more than twenty years, the 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**—This museum 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 Regional Airport, the museum is a treasure trove of facts and artifacts that tell the story of Fort Smith's aviation history.

**Historic Fort Smith**—Contains general info about Fort Smith history, heritage tourism in the city, and links to other sites.

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

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

**Richard C. Butler Center for Arkansas Studies**—The center proudly presents what it hopes will one day be the premier online resource for historical information related to Arkansas.

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

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

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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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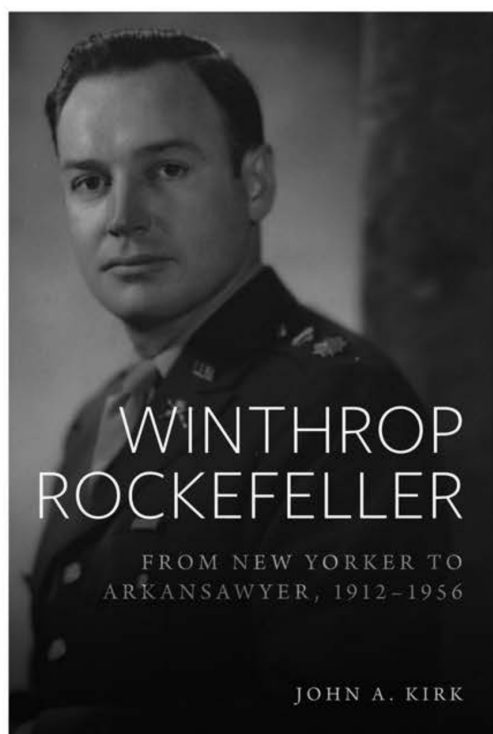
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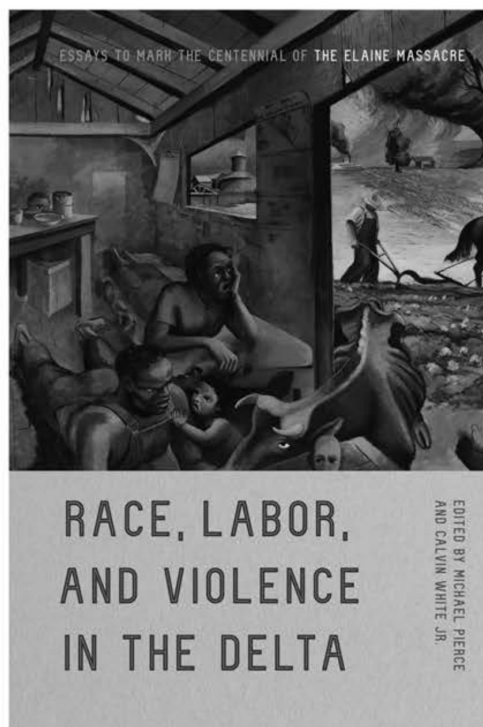
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