



News from the Prairie

SPRING 2026

PRESERVING OUR GRAND PRAIRIE REGION'S HISTORY

Gillett Methodist Church Hosts GPHS Spring Meeting and Annual Potluck Dinner

The Grand Prairie Historical Society met at Gillett Methodist Church for their quarterly meeting and annual potluck dinner on April 16, 2026. Vice President, Laura Beth Place, welcomed all and introduced the presenter for the evening, Dr. Matthew Rooney. Dr. Rooney is the Station Archeologist and Assistant Professor of Anthropology at UA-Monticello. Dr. Rooney introduced attendees to the recent unearthing of a site located along the lower section of the Arkansas River—Sarassa. Attendees were also invited to view a display of pottery Dr. Rooney and his predecessor, Dr. John House, found at the site.

After a brief intermission, Laura Beth opened the business portion of the meeting. To open, attendees held a moment of silence in memory of GPHS Director, Bill Shrum, who passed away on February 23, 2026. Museums across the Grand Prairie gave brief updates on their progress, and each reflected on the role they would play in the celebration of America's 250th birthday celebration. The society was asked to participate with the Arkansas Post Museum State Park in the reading of the Declaration of Independence in July. Member, Dyan Bonhert, volunteered to oversee this endeavor. Any member interested in participating in this may contact the society. More updates will be posted on GPHS's Facebook page in the following weeks.



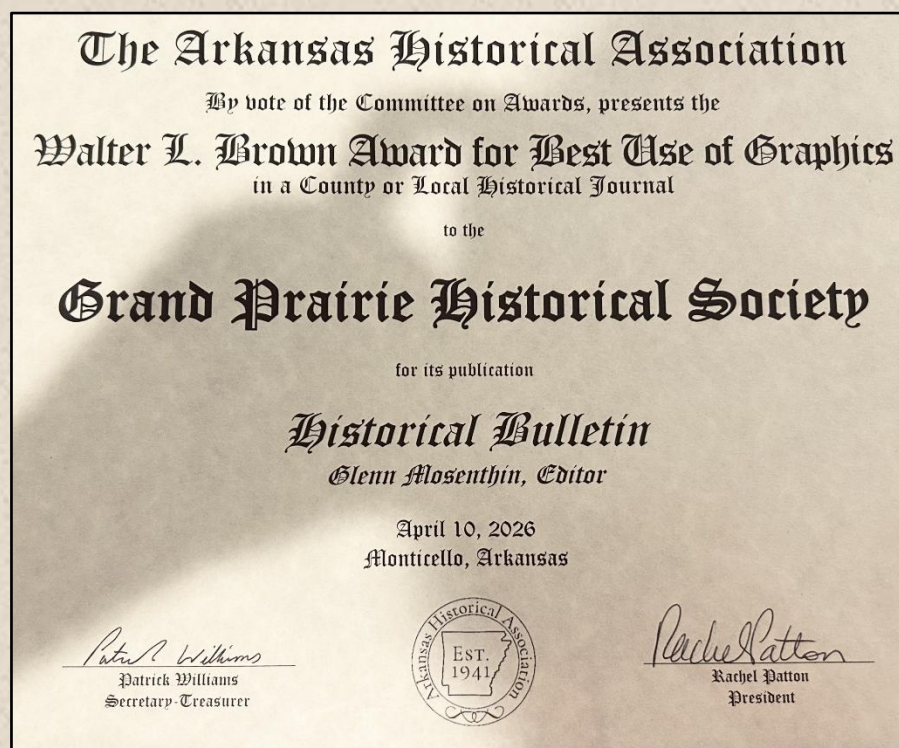
Dr. Matthew Rooney speaking at the Society's April 2026 meeting in Gillett, Arkansas.

Historical Bulletin Awarded at State Association Meeting

April 9-11, 2026, the Arkansas Historical Association met for their 85th annual conference in Monticello for their program, "Arkansas at Work." Several GPHS members attended the conference. Member Sonny Rhodes presented on Friday, discussing his research over post-Civil War controversial newspaper editor, Calvin C. Bliss.



During the Award Banquet held at the Monticello Country Club, GPHS was awarded the Walter L. Brown Award for Best Use of Graphics in a County or Local Historical Journal. Rachel Patton, president of the Arkansas Historical Association, presented the award to Makena Munger, GPHS Editor, who accepted it on behalf the Society.



Society Presents Memorial to the Stuttgart Public Library

In March, GPHS members presented the Stuttgart Public Library with a donation to be utilized towards the organization's children's literacy programs. This donation was done in memory of the Society's late Director, William Robert "Bill" Shrum, who passed away February 23, 2026. Bill was an avid reader, writer, and poet, publishing several of his works. He was often found reading to the children of Stuttgart at the Stuttgart Public Library. The Society and its members are indebted to Bill for his contributions towards the preservation of both the Grand Prairie's history and its future generations. Bill will be dearly missed.



Pictured left to right: Dyan Bohnert, Sonny Rhodes, Paul Braithwaite, Clara Jane Timmerman, Raeann Braithwaite, Jerrie Townsend, Glenda Fread, Jessie Walsh, Gena Seidenschwarz, and GPHS President, Glenn Mosenthin.



Parade on Main Street in Stuttgart, Arkansas. *Courtesy of the Museum of the Arkansas Grand Prairie.*

Arkansas County Records Restoration Committee Receives Society's Donation

The Society presented a donation to the Arkansas County Circuit Clerk, Sarah Merchant, for the County Records Restoration Committee in Arkansas County. The committee has taken the responsibility of preserving some of the oldest historical documents west of the Mississippi River. Their work has allowed researchers and historians to glean invaluable information about the Grand Prairie's past.



Pictured left to right: GPHS President, Glenn Mosenthin, Sarah Merchant, Glennnda Fread, Paul Braithwaite, and Raeann Braithwaite.



"A busy day, Stuttgart, Ark." Courtesy of the Museum of the Arkansas Grand Prairie.



The Tindalls were some of the earliest innovators of irrigation on the Grand Prairie. The two men in this photo, Augustus and either Art or Verne Tindall, are seen standing beside their water pump in 1920 around Crockett's Bluff, Arkansas. *Courtesy of Kay Trice.*

The Arkansas Historical Association invites your membership!

Join the Arkansas Historical Association and receive four issues of the Arkansas Historical Quarterly per year, as well as the Association's newsletter for the following rates:

- Individual, one year, \$25;
- Individual, two years, \$45
- Family, one year, \$35;
- Family, two years, \$55
- Foreign, one year, \$30;
- Student, one year, \$15
- Contributing, one year, \$55;
- Sustaining, one year, \$100
- Supporting, one year, \$200
- Life Membership, \$500 (payable over three years)
- Permanent Membership, \$1,000 (payable over five years).

One-Year Corporate/Business Memberships:

- Sponsor, \$120;
- Patron, \$500;
- Benefactor, \$1,000
- Renewal and new memberships can be paid online at arkansashistoricalassociation.org.

Grand Prairie Historical Society is a proud sponsoring member of the Association.

Arkansas State Archives

The mission of the Arkansas State Archives is to keep and care for the official archives of the State of Arkansas; collect material bearing on the history of Arkansas from the earliest times; copy and edit official records and other historical material; and encourage historical work and research for the public. Hours: Monday—Friday and the 1st and 3rd Saturdays of each month, 9-12 and 1-4. Phone: 502-682-6900.

<https://www.arkansasheritage.com/arkansasstatearchives/home>



2026 Grand Prairie Historical Society meeting dates and places:

January 15, 2026 – Museum of the Arkansas Grand Prairie, Stuttgart

April 16, 2026 – Gillett Methodist Church, Gillett

July 16, 2026 – First Christian Church, DeWitt

October 15, 2026 – Arts Center of the Grand Prairie, Stuttgart

All meetings start at 6:30 with light refreshments. Guests who wish to arrive for the presentation should be there at 7:00.



Early road paving in Almyra, Arkansas. *Courtesy of the Museum of the Arkansas Grand Prairie.*

Grand Prairie Historical Society

P. O. Box 15
Almyra, AR 72003
870-830-1425
www.grandprairiehistory.org

Officers

President – Glenn Mosenthin
Vice-pres. – Laura Beth Place
Secretary – Jessie Walsh
Treasurer – Raeann Braithwaite

Newsletter Editors

Makena Munger
Glenn Mosenthin
Visit us on Facebook at
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