



NEWS FROM THE PRAIRIE

SUMMER 2022

PRESERVING OUR REGION'S HISTORY

Holman Heritage Community Center Dedicates Marker

The Holman Heritage Community Center of Stuttgart along with the Grand Prairie Historical Society dedicated an historical marker Saturday, July 2 on the grounds of the former Holman School. The event took place as part of an alumni reunion of Holman students. The marker plaque, which interprets the School's significance as an education center for the area's African American community until 1970, was funded through a grant from the Curtis Sykes Foundation. Director Glenn Mosenthin of the Grand Prairie Historical Society applied for and obtained the grant through the auspices of the Black History Commission of Arkansas. Holman Center leaders Wade Hobbs and Calvin Criner led the dedication program, which was attended by over sixty persons. The two men spoke on the outreach and goals of the Center and invited the support of the entire community. President Raeann Refeld Braithwaite of the Historical Society remarked that the Holman Center "has a rich and fondly remembered history, and by placing this marker, you have ensured that Holman's heritage will continue to be shared and remembered." The wording of the new marker is as follows:

"Holman School—Named for educator Leroy Davis Holman, North Carolina-born educator who began teaching Stuttgart's African American children in 1907. The school, first located at Porter and Lincoln Streets, was rebuilt in 1924 with Rosenwald Foundation funding. Dr. John B. Bryant was instrumental in securing financial support. Early teachers were L. D. Holman, B. J. Greer, M. H. Hinton, W. M. Whitfield, J. B. Lucas, and B. J. Williams. The school was moved to this location, rebuilt, and renamed for Prof. Holman in 1932. The faculty then included Holman, W. R. Jones, Ms. L. E. Walstein and Ms. E. E. Stillwell. High school grades were added in 1938. The first class graduated in 1942, and included Audrey Skinner, Ellen Age, Robert Scroggins, Albert Thompkins, Jesse Lamb, Savanna Carter Wright and Willie Mae Jackson. A masonry building was erected in the 1940s, and the present structure was added in the 1950s. After the 1945 passing of Prof. Holman, Albert S. Baxter served as principal, with George A. Meekins leading the school 1958–1970. The last Holman class graduated in 1970, after which Stuttgart's schools were fully integrated. In 1996, the Holman Community Development Corporation began preserving the building as a cultural and historical landmark. Today it serves as Holman Heritage Community Center."

Community leader Wade Hobbs, emcee for the event, stated "We are together more than ever as a community. We won't all agree, because that is not reality, but we will continue to take one or two steps forward at a time. It is a community business and obligation, and you are that community." President Calvin Criner of the Holman Community Development Corporation said, "While we love this marker, what we really love is the camaraderie that has developed from it." Stuttgart Mayor Norma Strabala addressed the crowd and thanked the many who made the marker possible. GPHS President Raeann Refeld Braithwaite spoke on behalf of the Society, saying "The land and building are significant, but this marker will serve so much more than to mark those things. It tells the story of our collective past and connects us to history in a way nothing else can. And it will continue to do that for many years to come. Congratulations to the alumni and friends of Holman Heritage Community

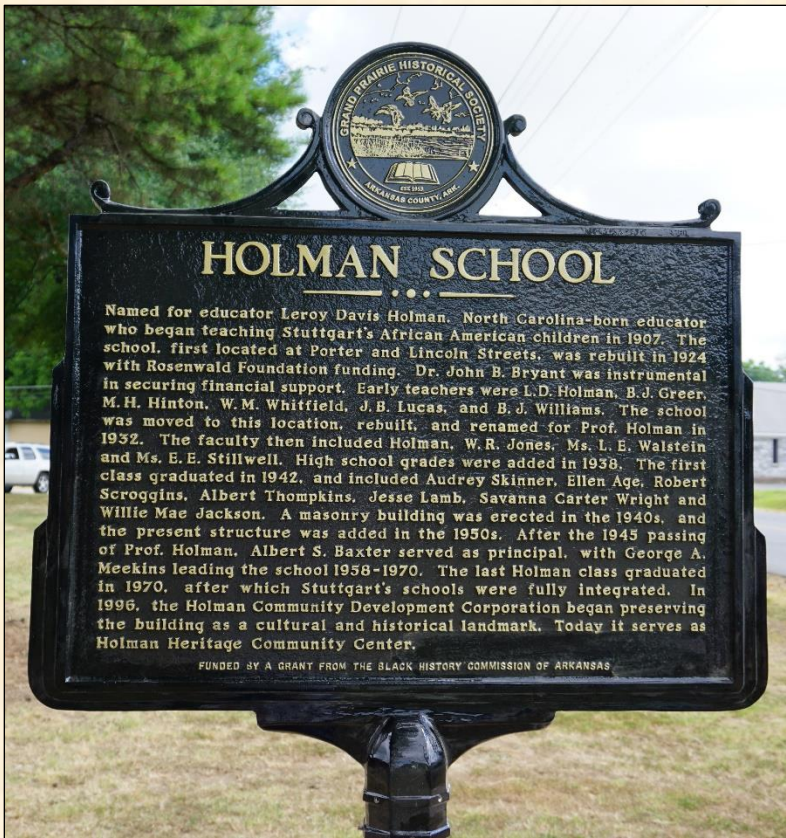
Center. You have a rich history that is shared and fondly remembered by so many who have been associated or passed through this school and now community center and by placing this historical marker, you have ensured that that heritage will continue to be shared and remembered.”

GPHS Director Glenn Mosenthin gave thanks to the Black History Commission of Arkansas for approving the Curtis Sykes Grant to fund the commemorate plaque. He also gratefully acknowledged Calvin and Bronwyn Criner, Holman Heritage Community Center; Tatyana Oyinloye, African American Coordinator at the Arkansas State Archives; Director Dr. David Ware of the Arkansas State Archives; Carla Hines Coleman, past chair of the Black History Commission of Arkansas; GPHS President Raeann Braithwaite; and Society Director Larry Fortune, all of whom greatly contributed to the Holman School marker project. Wade Hobbs concluded the event by saying “If a few people can get this marker done, imagine what a handful of people can do when they are unified.”



The marker dedication ceremony took place during Holman School’s July 2 alumni reunion. *Photos courtesy of Fara Foster.*





The marker was funded by a Curtis Sykes Grant from the Black History Commission of Arkansas. (rt.): Raeann Braithwaite, Calvin Criner, and Wade Hobbs. (Below): Dennis Fortune (left) and Gauge Gracey installing the Holman marker prior to dedication day.



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Historical Society Meets at PCCUA-DeWitt with Potluck Dinner

Grand Prairie Historical Society held their summer quarterly meeting the evening of July 21 at Phillips Community College in DeWitt. Attendees enjoyed a potluck dinner beforehand. Several joined in via Zoom. An interesting and informative program was presented by Janice Streeter of Citizens for Immanuel. Her topic, "The African American Smith Family of Arkansas County," detailed the migration and experiences of her ancestors, interwoven with historical parallels. President Raeann Braithwaite presented a donation to Citizens for Immanuel for their outreach efforts (photo, below). She reported that the Society's social media outreach continues its steady growth through the website, email list, and Facebook page. Museum reports were delivered by Braithwaite for both Arkansas Post facilities, Glenn Mosenthin for Museum of the Arkansas Grand Prairie, and Claudia Ahrens for the St. Charles Museum.

Pres. Braithwaite reported on the Holman School marker dedication held on July 2 in Stuttgart. Mosenthin described the process of obtaining a Curtis Sykes Grant, receiving the plaque, and planning the dedication event. He thanked all who assisted. Braithwaite reported on Society involvement in the Crocketts Bluff July 4th picnic. Ahrens informed attendees that the Battle of Arkansas Post marker is in process of being repainted and will be returned to its location in the near future. Braithwaite explained that the Society is awaiting details on a proposed collaboration with Grand Prairie Chapter, D.A.R. on a Revolutionary War 250th anniversary marker for Ark. Post National Memorial. Further reports will be given as developments occur. Glennda Fread reported that the county record book earmarked for restoration from a donation to the Society will be sent off soon by Circuit Clerk Sarah Merchant. Fread informed attendees that a company from Texas has taken over the ongoing restoration work from the previous firm that was based in New Orleans.



Raeann Braithwaite with Janice Streeter.

A recommendation from the board of directors proposing a reorder of 1,000 driving tour brochures passed by acclamation. Another board recommendation that the Society direct a recent donation from the Nathan Cummings Foundation to Green Grove Cemetery Association also passed by acclamation. In response to a need for cleaning the St. Charles Civil War monument, Mosenthin moved to provide up to \$500 for proper non-destructive cleaning materials. This motion was passed. Braithwaite reminded attendees of the Society's 2nd annual youth essay contest and urged them to solicit entries. It is open to those aged 15-18.

Bill Shrum reported on the need to recognize the late historian and Society officer Jim Bennett by adding signage to that portion of the Museum of the Arkansas Grand Prairie designed by Bennett. Shrum and Museum Director Fara Foster will collaborate on the developing of signage. Mosenthin, who is a new trustee of the Arkansas Historical Association, announced that the 2023 AHA annual conference will take place April 13-15 at DeGray Lake Resort near Arkadelphia. The theme is "Sports, Leisure and Pastimes." Grand Prairie Historical Society's autumn meeting will be held October 20 at the Schoolhouse Lodge on Highway 276 near Bayou Meto United Methodist Church, featuring a program by owners Eddie and Pat Lumsden. The Lodge is located in the former Bayou Meto School, on its original site. It has been nicely restored by the Lumsden family. Please make plans to attend!

View our website at www.grandprairiehistory.org

Descendants of Waterfowler Hall of Fame Inductees Attend Award Dinner

Several descendants of Arkansas County residents who are newly inducted members of the Arkansas Waterfowler Hall of Fame gathered at Chenal Country Club in Little Rock on May 19 to accept the prestigious awards in honor of their deceased family members. Due to the pandemic, two sets of inductees were honored at this year's event. The honoree for 2020 was Pat Peacock of Stuttgart, for her nationwide advocacy of Arkansas waterfowl hunting, and numerous achievements including being the first woman to hold the title of Duck Calling World Champion and Champion of Champions. She held leadership positions in several conservation organizations. Pat's award was accepted by her daughter Melody Stackhouse of Stuttgart. The 2021 honorees were Dr. Harold V. Glenn, Thad S. McCollum, and Verne L. Tindall, for their founding of the National Duck Calling Contest, now the World's Championship Duck Calling Contest and part of today's Wings over the Prairie Festival. The three men were officers in Stuttgart's Daniel Harder American Legion Post 48. The event is the pinnacle of competitive duck calling and along with the festival is a major economic driver for the Grand Prairie region. Dr. Glenn's award was accepted by his grandson Glenn Mosenthin of Searcy. Mr. McCollum's honor was accepted by his granddaughter Amy Bennett Norton of Franklin, Tennessee. Mr. Tindall's award was accepted by his granddaughter Kay Tindall Trice of Stuttgart. All three grandchildren have close ties to Grand Prairie Historical Society. Also honored that evening were 2020 inductees Wallace Claypool, John Olin, George Purvis, and Dr. Scott Yaich, and 2021 inductees Carl Hunter and W. R. "Witt" Stephens Jr. The event's presenting sponsor was Saracen Casino Resort of Pine Bluff. The Hall of Fame benefits the Museum of the Arkansas Grand Prairie and was added to the Museum's waterfowl wing a few years ago. You can learn more about the hall of fame, all its members, and their efforts to preserve and promote duck hunting by visiting www.waterfowlerhof.com. Thanks go to the event photographer for the below images.



(l. to r): Kay Tindall Trice, Amy Bennett Norton, Glenn Mosenthin, and presenter Matt Mosler. (right): Melody Stackhouse and Mosler.



Email the Society at grandprairiehistory@gmail.com.

Crocketts Bluff Community Holds Annual Fourth of July Reunion

Citizens of the Crocketts Bluff community held their annual Fourth of July celebration and reunion on a hot Independence Day. Around one hundred persons attended the traditional get-together, which featured a parade, singing of patriotic music, speeches by various community leaders, and a hamburger picnic. The speakers included County Judge Eddie Best, State Rep.-elect Jeremiah Moore, State Rep. Mark McElroy, Kenneth Graves, president of the Crocketts Bluff Community Club, and Glenn Mosenthin, a director of Grand Prairie Historical Society. Mosenthin spoke on the research leading to the process that he, Larry Fortune, and Jim Prange undertook to replace the old historical marker along Hwy. 153. The namesake of the town was proven to be William Finley Crockett, uncle of Col. Robert and son of noted Tennessee congressman and frontiersman Davy. The Society had several members on hand and sold back issues of the *Historical Bulletin*. The recently produced brochures, "A Driving Tour of Arkansas County Historical Markers and Sites," were distributed.



This photo from the early 1950s was taken at the Whiteway Café (later Mack's Café, now the Gossip Shop) in Stuttgart. From left to right: Jennie Allen, unknown, Rose Rich Pond, unknown, Annette Roberts, movie star Dennis Morgan, Gwynne Roberts, Bob Roberts, Dana Pond, Chet Pond Sr., unknown, and Jimmy Pond. Mr. Morgan was likely in town for duck season. *Garner Allen photo; Museum of the Arkansas Grand Prairie.*



J. I. Case Model 1010 Rice Special self-propelled combine, shown in the 1960s on Grand Prairie. The writing below the cab reads "Power Steering." Jerome Increase Case founded the company at Racine, Wisc. in 1842 as the Racine Threshing Machine Works. *Courtesy of Museum of the Arkansas Grand Prairie.*



Undated image of the Rice Branch Experiment Station, seven miles east of Stuttgart on Hwy. 130. This facility, now greatly modernized, is the University of Arkansas Rice Research & Extension Center. *Courtesy of MAGP.*

Report from the Museum of the Arkansas Grand Prairie

It has been a fruitful few months since our last report to the Grand Prairie Historical Society. Jessie Walsh was promoted to the role of Exhibits & Events Coordinator on July 1. She has been a constant on the Museum staff for seven years and her focus will narrow to strictly management of our exhibits and hosting events pertaining to the operation of the Museum. Caleb Anderson joined the Museum staff as a part-time employee in 2020, specifically to catalog the *Stuttgart Daily Leader* archive. A former *Leader* employee, Caleb was instrumental in completing the project including a scan of the negatives gifted to the Museum. On July 26, he will become a full-time employee dedicated to digitizing our entire collection.

We have hosted two group tours, two weddings, and ten events, including:

- Scavenger Hunt: May 22
- Victorian Luncheon: June 16
- Projects on the Prairie
 - June 14 - Flag Day, presented by Museum Staff
 - June 21 - Birdhouse Painting by Monica Petters
 - June 28 - Exterior Exhibit Tour by Museum Staff
 - July 12 - Native American Games by Delta Cultural Center
 - July 19 - Animal Chat by Delta Rivers Nature Center
- Coffee with the Curator: July 7

This summer brought the return of our annual “Victorian Luncheon.” After a three year-hiatus, we hosted forty guests for a plated lunch and a program highlighting summer brides. Grand Prairie native, faculty emeritus of the Department of Rhetoric and Writing UALR, and immediate past Regent of the Grand Prairie DAR Chapter in Stuttgart, Dr. Allison Denman Holland was our featured speaker. She gave a presentation titled, “Something Old, Something New. Inventing the American Wedding.” Melody Stackhouse, a local wedding coordinator and daughter of former Museum director, Pat Peacock, also shared current wedding trends with our guests on the 20th anniversary of the Museum’s last wedding display headed by her mother. Jessie Walsh concluded the program with an introduction to our seasonal exhibit of vintage wedding dresses. Our “June Brides of the Prairie” exhibit, featuring eight dresses worn between the 1890s–1960s, was open for public viewing June 16–July 9.

We hosted our first “Coffee with the Curator” on July 7. Planned as a monthly program, this 20- to 30-minute historical presentation also invites guests to share information and memories. Our inaugural topic was “Bygone Buildings of Downtown Stuttgart” and highlighted five buildings and the entities each housed around the turn of the 20th century that, unfortunately, no longer exist. Our next event on August 4 will highlight early area schools. Plans are underway for a completely new event/fundraiser this fall. Modeled after the “Ghosts of the Past” at Arkansas Post, our event will feature character enactments of 10-15 people who shaped Grand Prairie history. Local thespians of all ages will be invited to assist in the writing, production, and performance. Lastly, we began an extensive inventory, cataloging, and digitizing project of all artifacts on July 5. We expect this project to take a minimum of two to three years to complete. Submitted by Museum Director Fara Foster.

Grand Prairie Historical Society

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