



# News from the Prairie

SPRING 2025

*PRESERVING OUR GRAND PRAIRIE REGION'S HISTORY*

## Spring Meeting Features Courthouse History

The Grand Prairie Historical Society's spring quarterly meeting was held at the Arkansas County Courthouse Annex on DeWitt's square the evening of April 17. Our host was County Circuit Clerk Sarah Merchant, (below left) who gave an interesting program on the past and present court buildings in DeWitt. A nice meal was provided for some 35 attendees. Following the reading of the previous meeting's minutes and the financial report, museum reports were given. Ron Fields of Arkansas Post National Memorial invited the public to attend their Hot Rock Cooking Day event on May 17 at the Memorial. Fara Foster reported for the Museum of the Arkansas Grand Prairie, which is holding a Founders Fest and Prairie Pedaler Bike Ride May 3 in honor of the museum's golden anniversary. Claudia Ahrens reported on the Arkansas Historical Association's 84th annual conference in Fort Smith April 10-12, which was attended by no fewer than seven GPHS members.

The Society presented our annual donation to the Arkansas County Record Book Restoration Committee. This ongoing project ensures the proper curation of some of the oldest county records west of the Mississippi River. We also made a donation to the Museum of the Arkansas Grand Prairie to cover a grant which was not received due to priority changes of the government. This money will provide for much needed upgrades to the museum's conservatory. We will soon publicize a dedication date for the historical marker commemorating Medal of Honor recipients Sgt. Gilbert Collier and Col. Lloyd Burke, both of whom spent parts of their youth in the Tichnor community. Burke was a 1943 graduate of Stuttgart High School.





## Historical Bulletin Receives Two Awards from the State Association

Our Historical Society was the recipient of two of the Arkansas Historical Association's Walter Brown Awards for County and Local Journals published in 2024. The Association, which is based at UA-Fayetteville, annually recognizes outstanding work by the state's heritage organizations, ranging from articles to overall composition. At the annual conference in Fort Smith on April 11, GPHS received Brown Awards for Honorable Mention for Best County or Local Historical Journal, and for Best Edited Document Published in a Journal. The latter award was for Glenn Mosenthin's article "Excerpts from the 1809–1810 Scull & Morgan Mercantile Store Ledger." AHA President Rachel Patton presented the awards to Mosenthin, who accepted them on behalf of GPHS. The Society has now won 31 Brown Awards since the Association began the program. Present at the awards banquet in the United States Marshals Museum were members Ashli and Claudia Ahrens, Shelly and Billy Churchwell, Maylon Rice, Sonny Rhodes, and Mosenthin. The three-day event featured a genealogy workshop, 34 twenty-minute sessions on topics relating to the conference theme, "Law and Justice in Arkansas," the annual business meeting, two luncheons with keynote addresses, two tours of historical sites in Fort Smith and Van Buren, and the awards banquet. Around 150 persons attended the AHA's 84th annual conference.



Above: GPHS members Sonny Rhodes, Glenn Mosenthin and Claudia Ahrens with the two Brown Awards for journalism in 2024.



Right: AHA leaders Renwick Hudson, Rachel Patton, Tim Nutt, Tom Wing, Lisa Speer, Scott Tomlin, and Patrick Williams.

Below: Glenn Mosenthin with incoming AHA Trustees Donna Shelton, Sonny Rhodes, and AHA President Rachel Patton.





# Arkansas Historical Association

By vote of the Committee on Awards, the Arkansas Historical Association presents

## Honorable Mention

for the

Walter L. Brown Award for Best County or Local Historical Journal

to the

## Grand Prairie Historical Society

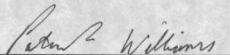
for its publication the

### Historical Bulletin

Glenn Mosenthin, Editor

April 11, 2025

Fort Smith, Arkansas

  
Patrick Williams  
Secretary-Treasurer



  
Rachel Patton  
President

# Arkansas Historical Association

By vote of the Committee on Awards, the Arkansas Historical Association presents the

## Walter L. Brown Award for Best Edited Document

Published in a County of Local Historical Journal

to

## Glenn Mosenthin

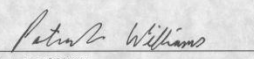
for his article

"Excerpts from the 1809-1810 Scull & Morgan Mercantile Store Ledger"

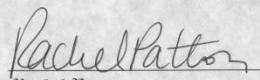
Published in the *Historical Bulletin*  
of the Grand Prairie Historical Society

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Fort Smith, Arkansas

  
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## Grand Prairie Chosen for Annual Mid-Century Modern Tour

Preserve Arkansas's Mid Mod Arkansas tour, held each year, highlights significant Mid-Century Modern architecture in cities throughout the state to raise awareness and encourage appreciation for these buildings. This year, the tour featured Arkansas's Grand Prairie region on Saturday, April 5 for a tour of private homes and churches at Stuttgart, Slovak, and Lonoke. Attendees were treated to a catered lunch sponsored by the Museum of the Arkansas Grand Prairie and the Grand Prairie Historical Society. Attendees enjoyed guided tours researched by architectural historian Mason Toms at the following properties: The Paul and Ella Buerkle House at Stuttgart, designed by Frank L. Doughty, 1968-69; Holy Rosary Catholic Church at Stuttgart, by Erhart, Eichenbaum, and Rauch, 1955; Sts. Cyril and Methodius Catholic Church at Slovak, by Weaver and Hiegel, 1961; and the Richard and Johnnie Carolyn Bransford House at Lonoke, by F. Eugene Withrow, 1961.

Preserve Arkansas has a year-round commitment to preservation education, advocacy, and assistance. We advocate for preservation-friendly policies at all levels of government and serve as an information clearing-house for anyone interested in historic preservation or seeking assistance with preservation incentives like grants and historic tax credits.

—Rachel Patton, Executive Director



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### Grand Prairie Historical Society officers, directors, and staff for 2025:

President	Linda Fischer, Stuttgart
Vice-president	Gay Hampton Rusk, Stuttgart
Secretary	Jessie Walsh, Stuttgart
Treasurer	Raeann Braithwaite, Almyra
Directors	Claudia Haller Ahrens, Glenn Mosenthin, Bill Shrum, Tommy Strabala, Travis Trice, and Dr. Richard Wilson
Editorial staff	Glenn Mosenthin, journal and newsletter editor Makena Munger, associate editor Ashli Ahrens, Raeann Braithwaite, and Glenn Mosenthin, Facebook administrators



## Society Takes Part in National Historic Marker Weekend

National Historic Marker Weekend, April 25–27, focused on the caring for and cleaning of historical markers across the nation. The event was created by the William G. Pomeroy Foundation, a national organization committed to supporting the celebration and preservation of community history. Currently, there are around 210,000 historical markers in the United States. Grand Prairie Historical Society directors Travis Trice and Glenn Mosenthin visited several of Arkansas County's markers and cleaned them, including the Crocketts Bluff and Battle of Arkansas Post markers (pictured).



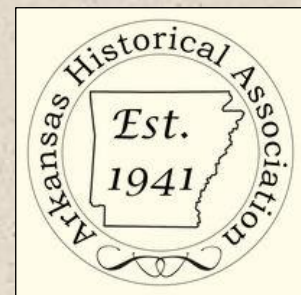
### The Arkansas Historical Association invites your membership!

Our mission is to promote the preservation, understanding, writing, publishing, and teaching of Arkansas's rich history. Membership includes four annual issues of our Arkansas Historical Quarterly journal. Annual dues are:

- 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 may be paid securely online at [www.arkansashistoricalassociation.org](http://www.arkansashistoricalassociation.org).



# **| MUSEUM OF THE ARKANSAS GRAND PRAIRIE**

*PRESENTED TO THE GRAND PRAIRIE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, APRIL 17, 2025*

## **2025 AT-A-GLANCE:**

The first two months of the year were dedicated to completing the inventory of our conservatory. While we are still accessioning some items, we are so glad to have a system in place by which we can find and, more importantly, utilize and exhibit our collections.

Part of that project included several needed items that were to have been paid for by a grant through Arkansas Humanities. Unfortunately, the grant we were awarded in November has since been cancelled due to more recent changes with funding through the National Endowment for the Arts. This leaves the Museum needing to raise an additional \$2,000 to cover items purchased for conservatory storage and organization.

Our "Curator" series of historical presentations returned March 7 with "Thomas Leslie - The Great Promoter of the Grand Prairie." Mr. Leslie and his family moved to the Arkansas Grand Prairie from Illinois in 1881, settling first near what we now know as Gillett before moving to Stuttgart. He was instrumental in the founding of Gillett as well as the development of Stuttgart, Almyra, and Olena, such that streets in several communities were named for him or his family members. While he made positive and lasting impacts on various communities, he also experienced crippling losses, including buildings destroyed in the fire of 1889, several banks and a railroad he founded, as well as the life of his youngest son in a tragic railroad accident. This well-known and well-respected man was also tried for the murder after killing his brother-in-law. The story is as fascinating as it is tragic and we were glad to be able to share it with several of his descendants both during and after our presentation. We even learned more about him from them.

Storms impacted the Mid Mod Arkansas architecture tour conducted by Preserve Arkansas. However, we were thrilled to see 24 of the 34 ticketed guests able to attend. The tour started at our museum before touring the Paul and Ella Buerkle home and Holy Rosary Catholic Church in Stuttgart. Guests returned to the museum for lunch, co-sponsored by GPHS along with us, before touring Sts. Cyril & Methodius in Slovak and a home in Lonoke.

We are now working on the final plans for our 50th anniversary celebration. Founder's Fest will take place Saturday, May 3, starting with a competitive bike race at 9am. The race will depart the museum and travel to DeWitt, then reverse course back to Stuttgart. The final leg will go west on Lennox Road to Main Street and go through Stuttgart's Historic Downtown Commercial District before finishing back at the museum. We will have vendor and game booths open from 11am - 5pm, competitive games from 1pm - 4pm, a beverage tent, and food sales. Live music including the Stuttgart High School Jazz Band, the Stuttgart Community Choir, Southside Baptist Youth Praise Band, ARM 180 Band, and local musician Anna Brinker performing on our grounds. Bring your picnic blankets and lawn chairs to enjoy the entertainment throughout the afternoon.

Volunteers are currently needed to help both during Founder's Fest as well as at our front desk for a few hours each day leading up to the event.

Lastly, we are being gifted with the Stuttgart One Tractor. This artifact is one of great importance to both our local history as well as agricultural history in general. While it is a huge gift, it will also take a huge effort to prepare our space to house it. This will take the better part of our staff's time and efforts for the remainder of the year, canceling our normal events until this is done.



Dr. Emily Bartz of the University of Arkansas Pine Bluff and the Arkansas Archeological Survey

## Hot Rock Cooking DAY

When: Saturday, May 17, 2025

### ARKANSAS POST NATIONAL MEMORIAL



**Dr. Emily Bartz, from the Arkansas Archeological Survey rocks!**  
**Cooking that is. Gather around a traditionally made earthen vessel and fire hearth and see how one can cook with hot rocks. Learn tried and true techniques people used to prepare food.**

**It's great to rock an earthenware crock.**

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**Event Runs from:  
10:00 AM-1:00 PM**

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**Where?  
Arkansas  
Arkansas Post National Memorial  
Visitor Center**

**Arkansas Post National Memorial  
1741 Old Post Road  
Gillett, Arkansas 72055**





## 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 by the public. Hours: Monday—Friday and the 1st and 3rd Saturdays of each month, 9–12 and 1–4. Phone: 501-682-6900.  
<https://www.arkansasheritage.com/arkansasstatearchives/home>

*Arkansas Colonials 1686–1804: A Collection of French and Spanish Records Listing Early Europeans in Arkansas*, compiled by Morris S. Arnold and Dorothy Jones Core, is available from GPHS for \$25 postpaid. This 104-page book was published by the Society in 1986 and includes censuses, militia, and other civil records from Arkansas Post in the French and Spanish periods. The book is indexed by surnames.

### Arkansas Colonials

1686 – 1804



*Abstract of the Catholic Register of Arkansas 1764–1858*, compiled by Dorothy Jones Core, is available from GPHS for \$25 postpaid. This 100-page book is an abstract of baptisms, marriages, and burials by Catholic priests in the Parish of Arkansas, including the only records kept during the Spanish era. Accurate translations by language professor Nicole Wable Hatfield. Originally published in 1976, this indexed reference was long out of print. To order these reprinted editions, send payment to P.O. Box 15, Almyra, AR 72003 or order online at [www.grandprairiehistory.org](http://www.grandprairiehistory.org).

ABSTRACT  
of the  
CATHOLIC REGISTER  
of  
ARKANSAS  
(1764–1858)



Join us for our annual potluck dinner and summer quarterly meeting July 17 at DeWitt!

## 2025 Grand Prairie Historical Society meeting dates/places:

January 16, 2025, Museum of the Arkansas Grand Prairie, Stuttgart; April 17, County Courthouse, DeWitt; July 17, Phillips Community College, DeWitt; October 16, Arts Center of the Grand Prairie, Stuttgart.

GPHS household membership levels: Basic, \$25.00; Contributing, \$50.00; Supporting, \$100.00.

Grand Prairie Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization dedicated to promoting preservation and education of the heritage of Arkansas's Grand Prairie region.

### Grand Prairie Historical Society

P. O. Box 15  
Almyra, AR 72003  
870-830-1425  
[www.grandprairiehistory.org](http://www.grandprairiehistory.org)

### Officers

President – Linda Fischer  
Vice-President – Gay Rusk  
Secretary – Jessie Walsh  
Treasurer – Raeann Braithwaite

### Newsletter Editor

Glenn Mosenthin  
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grandprairiehistory](https://www.facebook.com/grandprairiehistory)