



News from the Prairie

SUMMER 2025

PRESERVING OUR GRAND PRAIRIE REGION'S HISTORY

Medal of Honor Marker Dedicated at Summer Meeting

Around seventy members and guests of the Society gathered in Tichnor for our summer quarterly meeting, the annual potluck dinner, and a marker dedication. The event took place at Tichnor's Volunteer Fire Department on the evening of Thursday, July 17. The festivities began with the dinner, organized by hospitality committee members Vicky Wilson, Gay Rusk, and Travis Trice. President Linda Fischer welcomed members and guests and introduced our Society officers and directors. She presented Tichnor VFD firefighters Jason Grantham and Keith Long with an honorarium for the firehouse. Fischer thanked the hospitality committee for their excellent arrangements, and Donnie and Bonnie Shepherd for their assistance in locating an appropriate placement for the commemorative marker, which is dedicated to two Medal of Honor recipients from Tichnor—Gilbert G. Collier and Lloyd L. "Scooter" Burke.

The Medal of Honor is the United States Armed Forces' highest military decoration and is awarded to recognize American military personnel from all branches who have distinguished themselves by acts of valor. There is most likely no other community of Tichnor's size that has produced two Medal recipients. There have been 3,536 Medals of Honor awarded since its inception during the Civil War. A total of 29 Arkansans have received it. Director Claudia Ahrens read the Medal of Honor citations for recipients Burke and Collier, after which the attendees met outside by the marker for the unveiling and to hear further remarks about the two men who spent parts of their childhood at Tichnor. Ahrens said "The late Congressman Marion Berry probably summed it up best when he said, 'Never has anyone been awarded the Medal of Honor who was more deserving of this great tribute than these two Arkansas County men.'"

Marker project originator Barbara Menard expressed gratitude for the assistance of the following citizens by thanking "Donnie and Bonnie Shepherd for their help with our location for the marker and their willingness to maintain the grounds. Also those two, along with Bonnie Wilbanks, for setting up tables and decor both inside and outside. Mrs. Nina Ruth Selig and family for so graciously allowing their property for the placement of the marker. John David Cover and Buzz Menard for installing the post. John David and Claudette Cover for their donation of materials. Walt Sullivan for the use of his tractor and auger to dig the post hole. John David and Buzz had a big smile on their faces for receiving that help! Sam Place and his dad Seth, Bradley Haynes, Josh Haynes, and Gage Lay for carrying and lifting the marker plaque into position and securing it to the post. And lastly, Tichnor Fire Chief Chris Turner for the use of their facility for our meeting, and firefighters Jason Grantham and Keith Long for their hospitality on the dedication day." Our organization is very grateful to the Menards for spearheading the marker project, and to Avery Hampton for her considerable role in fundraising.

The attendees returned to the fire station for a program by Dr. John House, retired station archeologist at UAPB. He spoke on "What's New in Archaeology in the Menard Mound Locality." Dr. House has conducted extensive fieldwork at the Menard-Hodges Native Mound and the Wallace Bottom/Lake Dumond sites. President Fischer conducted the business meeting and announced the ordering of a historical marker to commemorate the former Stuttgart Army Airfield, to be placed near the airport's terminal building in 2026. A dedication is planned and will be publicized beforehand. The Society also paid for a sponsorship to the Arkansas Genealogical Society for their annual conference, to be conducted via the internet on October 18. The summer meeting was adjourned.



The patriotic-themed Medal of Honor marker dedication ceremony was well prepared for by Barbara Menard, with the assistance of many local citizens from Gillett and Tichnor. The recipients' family members who were in attendance for the event are pictured on the following page.



Burke family members David Lorince, Diane Relyea, Burke Lorince, Kathy Lorince, and David Relyea. Below: Collier descendant Corrine Branham and her husband Clayton.





GPHS Director Claudia Ahrens presents an appreciation certificate to Buzz and Barbara Menard for spearheading the project. Right: The Menards with the MOH marker. It is located along Ark. Hwy. 44 in Tichnor, south of the fire department and grain dryer. Photos courtesy of Raeann Braithwaite, Ashli Ahrens, Bill Shrum, Jessie Walsh, and manufacturer Sewah Studios.



Sewah Studios, founded in 1927 by E. M. Hawes (Sewah in reverse), is located in Marietta, Ohio. The company manufactures the familiar cast aluminum historical markers we see along roadsides virtually everywhere. The firm produces more than 1200 markers annually. The owners are Arkansans Brad and LeeAndra (White) Smith. LeeAndra grew up in Stuttgart! We are proud to do business with the Smiths—people we have a connection to. On the following page are the official citations for both Medal of Honor recipients.

Lloyd Leslie “Scooter” Burke

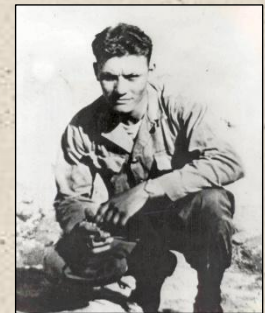
Born September 29, 1924, Tichnor, Ark., died June 1, 1999, Hot Springs, Ark.
Company G, 2d Battalion, 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, US Army.
Action date/place October 28, 1951, Chong-dong, Korea.
Presentation date April 11, 1952, by President Harry S. Truman.
Medal of Honor Citation:



First Lt. Burke distinguished himself by conspicuous gallantry and outstanding courage above and beyond the call of duty in action against the enemy. Intense enemy fire had pinned down leading elements of his company committed to secure commanding ground when 1st Lt. Burke left the command post to rally and urge the men to follow him toward three bunkers impeding the advance. Dashing to an exposed vantage point he threw several grenades at the bunkers, then, returning for an M1 rifle and adapter, he made a lone assault, wiping out the position and killing the crew. Closing on the center bunker he lobbed grenades through the opening and, with his pistol, killed three of its occupants attempting to surround him. Ordering his men forward he charged the third emplacement, catching several grenades in midair and hurling them back at the enemy. Inspired by his display of valor his men stormed forward, overran the hostile position, but were again pinned down by increased fire. Securing a light machine gun and three boxes of ammunition, 1st Lt. Burke dashed through the impact area to an open knoll, set up his gun, and poured a crippling fire into the ranks of the enemy, killing approximately 75. Although wounded, he ordered more ammunition, reloading and destroying two mortar emplacements and a machine-gun position with his accurate fire. Cradling the weapon in his arms he then led his men forward, killing some 25 more of the retreating enemy and securing the objective. First Lt. Burke's heroic action and daring exploits inspired his small force of 35 troops. His unflinching courage and outstanding leadership reflect the highest credit upon himself, the infantry, and the U.S. Army.

Gilbert George Collier

Born December 30, 1930, Hunter, Ark., died July 22, 1953, Tutayon, Korea.
Company F, 223d Infantry Regiment, 40th Infantry Division, US Army.
Action date/place July 19, 1953, Tutayon, Kangwŏn-do, Korea.
Presentation at the Pentagon, to his widow Peggy Collier.
Medal of Honor Citation:

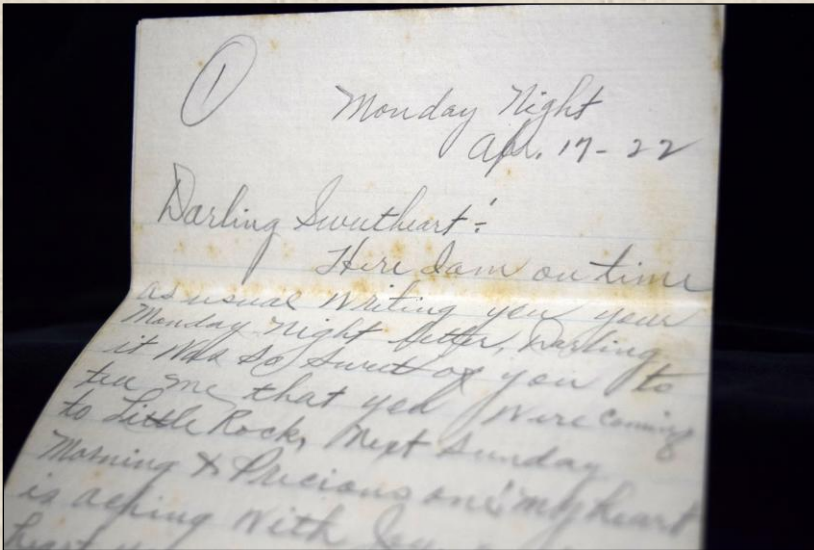


Sgt. Collier, a member of Company F, distinguished himself by conspicuous gallantry and indomitable courage above and beyond the call of duty in action against the enemy. Sgt. Collier was point man and assistant leader of a combat patrol committed to make contact with the enemy. As the patrol moved forward through the darkness, he and his commanding officer slipped and fell from a steep, 60-foot cliff and were injured. Incapacitated by a badly sprained ankle which prevented immediate movement, the officer ordered the patrol to return to the safety of friendly lines. Although suffering from a painful back injury, Sgt. Collier elected to remain with his leader, and before daylight they managed to crawl back up and over the mountainous terrain to the opposite valley, where they concealed themselves in the brush until nightfall, then edged toward their company positions. Shortly after leaving the daylight retreat they were ambushed and, in the ensuing firefight, Sgt. Collier killed two hostile soldiers, received painful wounds, and was separated from his companion. Then, ammunition expended, he closed in hand-to-hand combat with four attacking hostile infantrymen, killing, wounding, and routing the foe with his bayonet. He was mortally wounded during this action, but made a valiant attempt to reach and assist his leader in a desperate effort to save his comrade's life without regard for his own personal safety. Sgt. Collier's unflinching courage, consummate devotion to duty, and gallant self-sacrifice reflect lasting glory upon himself and uphold the noble traditions of the military service.

Courtesy of the Congressional Medal of Honor Society.

1922 Letter from John T. Stillwell to Lettie McGehee

Transcribed by Makena Munger



Letter from John to Lettie a year before they got married, 1922.



Lettie's photo of John, 1917.

John Thomas Stillwell, born May 12, 1896, to James Stillwell and Sarah "Annie" Simpson, lived in the Bayou Meto area of Arkansas County throughout his childhood. Roughly 40 miles south from the Stillwell residence, a young girl named Lettie Rebecca McGehee, born July 19, 1898, lived in the quaint, yet developing, town of Pine Bluff. After John enlisted in World War I on July 18, 1917, he and Lettie begin exchanging telegraph messages and letters. Most notable are their letters from 1922, a few years after John was discharged from the Army and just one year before they would get married. John was working in Little Rock, and Lettie was still living in Pine Bluff.

"Monday Night

Apr. 17-22

Darling Sweetheart:

Here I am on time as usual writing you your Monday night letter. Darling, it was so sweet of you to tell me that you were coming to Little Rock next Sunday morning and, Precious one, my heart is aching with joy. And Sweetheart you won't believe it but it is true. Last night I was home at 4:45 in the evening and was to bed about 8:30 and I just simply could not sleep at all and rolled and tossed about and finally I arose to see what time it was, and it was 2 o'clock in the morning. So I sat up and decided I would get some of your letters and read them, and I sat there until 4 o'clock reading, and finally I fell back fast asleep, and was sleeping sound this morning when the whistle woke me. Surely the comfort I received from reading and absorbing every word of those dear letters was the reason I slept so sound. Sweetheart, I don't know if I can hardly stand it 'till next Sunday to see you. I sometimes feel like if I could just see you for a moment then I would be satisfied until Sunday.

I surely enjoyed the Easter Programme at the First Methodist Church Sunday, and, Darling, I only wish that you could have been there, but anyway, I know that service at the Lakeside Church was good. Sweetheart, sometimes I feel ashamed that I have not attended church more at the Lakeside. But, sweetheart, I believe I will

have my church letter removed to either the First M.E. Church or to another M.E. Church in Little Rock for you know I am so far away from Lakeside I can hardly ever attend.

How was Miss Edith Jackman and Mr. Shelby? I hope both are improving. Darling, my Little Roadster is all shined and in good trim for our trip, and I trust that our Heavenly Father will bless us with a beautiful day Sunday.

Oh! I am so glad that you are playing tennis now, for especially it will be so healthful, as you know the exercise that tennis gives is very beneficial to the upbuilding of strong and robust bodies. I should like to see you real fat and plump. Although, don't understand me to say that I think you would be any sweeter, for that could not be according to my estimation. Only wish I was near enough to play with you every morning and then give thirty minutes setting up exercises. Wouldn't that be grand.

Oh! Say, Darling, I will meet you at the union station Sunday morning and, for your convenience, I went to the ticket office yesterday and found out the time that the train would leave Pine Bluff. It leaves P.B. at 4:45 o'clock and arrives at L.R. 6:45. So I will be there Johnnie on the Spot, and then oh joy for the great day that is coming.

Well, my Little Darling, as I am very tired and [unintelligible] and all alone but for the thoughts of you to refresh me, I will close this poorly penciled letter and trusting that I may get a long, sweet letter from you soon.

I am as ever most affectionately and faithfully yours.

John T. Stillwell"



Undated photo of Jacob and Isabell Simmermacher's Shoe Repair, Fourth & College Streets in Stuttgart. *Courtesy of the Museum of the Arkansas Grand Prairie.*

WELCOME TO DeWITT THE SPORTSMAN'S MECCA

ARKANSAS COUNTY, ARKANSAS



DeWITT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

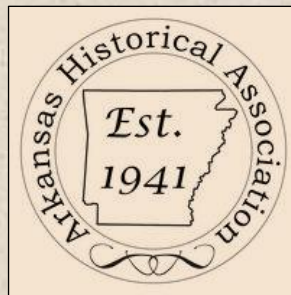
From a 1950s publication. *Courtesy of H. Terry Rasco.*

Calling All Ghosts of the Past!

Arkansas Post National Memorial is in the process of putting together a list of guides and participants for the Ghosts of the Past event at Arkansas Post National Memorial. It will take place on Saturday, October 18th, 3pm–7pm. For those unfamiliar with this event, we explore several eras of Arkansas Post history by creating historic stations and leading visitors on a guided walk around the lake by the Visitor Center. In previous years, people have portrayed individuals who shaped the history and culture here. This includes soldiers, fur traders and trappers, tradespeople like carpenters and blacksmiths, and various entrepreneurs.

Last year, the Quapaw Nation discussed leadership and preservation of language and traditions, and we have again extended an invitation to them. We need volunteer participants and guides at this time. Please respond if there is a role you would like to take on. Additionally, if there are friends or neighbors who you think might be willing to help us, please spread the word. Thank you!

David Albert, Park Ranger
Arkansas Post National Memorial
(870) 548-2207 x307
David_Albert@nps.gov



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 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.

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



2025-2026 Grand Prairie Historical Society meeting dates/places:

October 16, 2025 – Humphrey (details to be announced).
January 15, 2026
April 16, 2026
July 16, 2026
October 15, 2026

GPHS household membership levels are: 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

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