



# NEWS FROM THE PRAIRIE

## SPRING 2021

*PRESERVING OUR REGION'S HISTORY*

## GPHS Makes Donation to Records Preservation Group



Grand Prairie Historical Society presented a \$2,000 donation to Arkansas County Circuit Clerk Sarah Merchant on March 31 at the DeWitt courthouse. She accepted the donation on behalf of the Arkansas County Records Preservation Committee. GPHS has been making ongoing contributions to this effort for around thirty years. Shown from left to right are: Glenn Mosenthin, Sarah Merchant, GPHS President Raeann Braithwaite, Glenda Fread, and Gena Seidenschwarz. Arkansas County holds some of the very earliest record books west of the Mississippi River, dating back to the 1790s. The preservation process spares these valuable books from further deterioration and insures their viability for many generations to come.

## Message from our President



Dear Friends,

Greetings and Happy Spring! I hope each of you are doing well. We held our first in-person meeting on April 17<sup>th</sup> at our beautiful Arkansas Post National Memorial, and it was so great to see those members that could attend. I'm looking forward to July with the hope that we can return to some normalcy. Be on the lookout for an email with details as the time nears, and please make plans to attend. Guests are always welcome. We are working on revamping our website and I hope you'll like the result. Give us a couple weeks and check it out. You won't want to miss the new items we have for sale. *Gillett, Arkansas: Celebrating 100 years 1906-2006*, compiled and edited by John and Linda Cover for the Gillett Centennial celebration, has been reprinted and is available for \$25.

Also, we are now offering our fully indexed complete collection of the *Historical Bulletin* in flash drive format at the same price as the DVD, \$40. Both items can also be purchased by sending a request and payment to our Treasurer Carol Roberson, PO Box 3621, Little Rock, AR 72203. We have a new option for receiving our *Historical Bulletin*; you may now choose to receive it digitally via email, in lieu of a printed version via mail. Please email us if you'd prefer the digital option. Speaking of the *Bulletin*, the April 2021 edition is in the mail. Don't miss it! If you haven't paid your dues, please get them in the mail to our Treasurer Carol Roberson. Following is a report I gave at our April meeting and I wanted to share it. I deeply appreciate each of you. Take care and I hope to see you soon!

We're coming out of a dark year in our history and into a new year of uncertainty and change, but also a renewal of patience, empathy, gratitude and flexibility. I'm grateful that we have organizations like GPHS to share a common bond with all of you as we work towards our goal of preserving our area history. I'm thankful for our extraordinary officers and board of directors and our members. Whether you were visible on Zoom or not, your support was felt. Together, we've achieved a perhaps surprising list of accomplishments that I'd like to share with you.

- We missed holding a regular meeting for the first time in our 67-year history when we were forced to cancel our April 2020 meeting.
- We held our first ever virtual meeting in July 2020 with 19 participants.
- With the help of Parliamentarian Glendda Fread, we updated our bylaws to allow virtual meetings.
- Programs included "Stuttgart in Arkansas History" by Glenn Mosenthin; "Epidemic, Pandemic, Endemic or Outbreak" by Glendda Fread; and "Stuttgart's Economic Development Report & Downtown Restoration Projects" by civic leader David Leech.
- As a long overdue accolade for his generous and unwavering support of the Society and for sharing his unmatched scholarship about our beloved Arkansas Post, we awarded Judge Morris Arnold a lifetime membership.
- We designed and installed a historically accurate replacement marker at Crocketts Bluff.
- We made plans to participate in a future planned dedication ceremony for the recently placed historical markers at Bayou Meto United Methodist Church and cemetery, and Eddie and Pat Lumsden's Bayou Meto Schoolhouse Lodge.
- We worked with the Arkansas Dept, of Transportation to get "historical marker ahead" signs installed at several area markers lacking them.
- We made plans to repaint the St. Charles and Arkansas Post battle historical markers.
- We established a writing contest open to 15–18-year-olds, with the first winner to be selected by January 2022.

- We submitted around 60 names of Grand Prairie physicians for the Country Doctor Museum’s Hall of Honor in Lincoln, AR.
- We created a committee to begin work on a brochure of a driving tour of area historical markers.
- We donated \$2000 to the Arkansas County Records Preservation Committee.
- We continued to have award-winning content in our *Historical Bulletin* with Glenn Mosenthin winning the Arkansas Historical Association’s Walter L. Brown Award for best biography in a county or local journal for his article entitled “Jess Orval Dockery: Stuttgart’s Pioneering Aviator.”
- Thanks to Jim Prange and John Cover’s excellent handling of our Facebook page, we have added 702 followers. We added around twenty people to our newsletter mailing list, and our membership count continues to remain fairly consistent with the pre-pandemic numbers.
- Speaking of membership, we’re off to a great start with offering different membership levels, with 13 supporting and 25 contributing.
- We began offering our fully indexed complete collection of the *Historical Bulletin* in flash drive format.
- Thanks to Glenn Mosenthin, Bill Conine’s wonderful “Grand Prairie Historical Society’s Half-Century of Service” piece was brought up to date to our present 67-year history, and is included on the DVD and flash drives. And let me tell you, that walk down memory lane is worth the price of the drive.
- We began offering the option to receive the *Historical Bulletin* in digital format via email, in lieu of a printed version via mail.
- We reprinted and are offering for sale John and Linda Cover’s *Gillett, Arkansas: Celebrating 100 Years 1906–2006*.

From the little society that could...take that, global pandemic!! In all seriousness, none of this would have been accomplished without the dedication of each of you. Thank you all.

Respectfully,

*Raeann Braithwaite*

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### Grand Prairie Historical Society on Social Media

We email our *News from the Prairie* newsletter to around 320 members and friends of our Society. Feel free to submit your comments, articles and/or photographs to us at [grandprairiehistory@gmail.com](mailto:grandprairiehistory@gmail.com). We welcome your input. Invite your friends to join our mailing list by emailing us, or signing up directly from our website at [www.grandprairiehistory.org](http://www.grandprairiehistory.org). Since our website was launched, we have received over 139,000 views. There are many photos and articles available for viewing, along with a wealth of additional information. We feature the ability to pay your dues (to join or renew) online via PayPal. Currently, there are over 6,300 people from almost every state and several foreign countries following us on Facebook.

Please make plans to join us at our remaining 2021 meetings—July 15 in DeWitt (details to follow), featuring a presentation on DeWitt’s history; and October 21 at Holman Community Center in Stuttgart, with a program on the facility’s history and outreach.

Visit our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/grandprairiehistory](http://www.facebook.com/grandprairiehistory).

Check out our newly-updated website at [www.grandprairiehistory.org](http://www.grandprairiehistory.org)

## Spring Quarterly Meeting Held at Arkansas Post

Grand Prairie Historical Society met in the picnic area pavilion at Arkansas Post National Memorial at 2 p.m. Saturday, April 17, 2021. Eighteen were in attendance, with pandemic guidelines followed. This was the first in-person meeting of the Society since January 2020. President Raeann Braithwaite called the meeting to order and asked Glenn Mosenthin to read minutes of the January 2021 virtual meeting. These were approved as read. Carol Roberson read the treasury report, which was filed for audit. In unfinished business, Pres. Braithwaite reviewed our potential involvement in the county quilt trail program, as well as creation of a county marker tour brochure. These topics were tabled until the July meeting.

Under new business, Braithwaite presented the newly reprinted *Gillett, Arkansas: Celebrating 100 Years 1906–2006*, originally published in 2006. The Society had fifty copies printed and have already sold several. She announced that the all-time index and scans of back Bulletin issues, available since 2011 on disk, are now offered on flash drive for the same \$40. A short program was given by acting Memorial Sup't. Kirby McCallie and Ranger Teresa Donaldson, outlining recent improvements such as replacement of water trail signs, planting of a native-mix flower garden (partially based on Thomas Nuttall's observations), and measures taken to control feral hogs at the Osotouy unit. Recent public outreaches have included school programs, field trips, and reading to children at Gillett Library. Future plans at the Post include a "soft" visitor center reopening under Covid-19 guidelines, the resumption of canoeing programs, and a fishing derby in June. The visitor center is slated to be remodeled in a few years. Riverbank restoration will eventually be needed near the visitor center.

Mosenthin reported that all exhibits are open during regular hours at Arkansas Post Museum State Park, with tours available on Fridays and Saturdays. An exhibit on the 50th anniversary of the Wayne Hampton Bridge at Pendleton will go on display in July. Pres. Braithwaite reviewed the Society's many accomplishments during the pandemic. Judge Morris Arnold gave a brief description of the Colbert Raid, the westernmost action of the American Revolution. It so happened that this day was the 238th anniversary of the Raid. With no further business, Larry Fortune moved to adjourn, Judge Arnold seconded, and the meeting was adjourned. We will meet again July 15 at DeWitt, with Terry Rasco presenting an interesting program on the town's history, with sports emphasis. It was very gratifying to be able to safely meet in person after fifteen months. We were treated to a pleasant April day at Arkansas Post, in keeping with our long tradition of meeting there each spring.



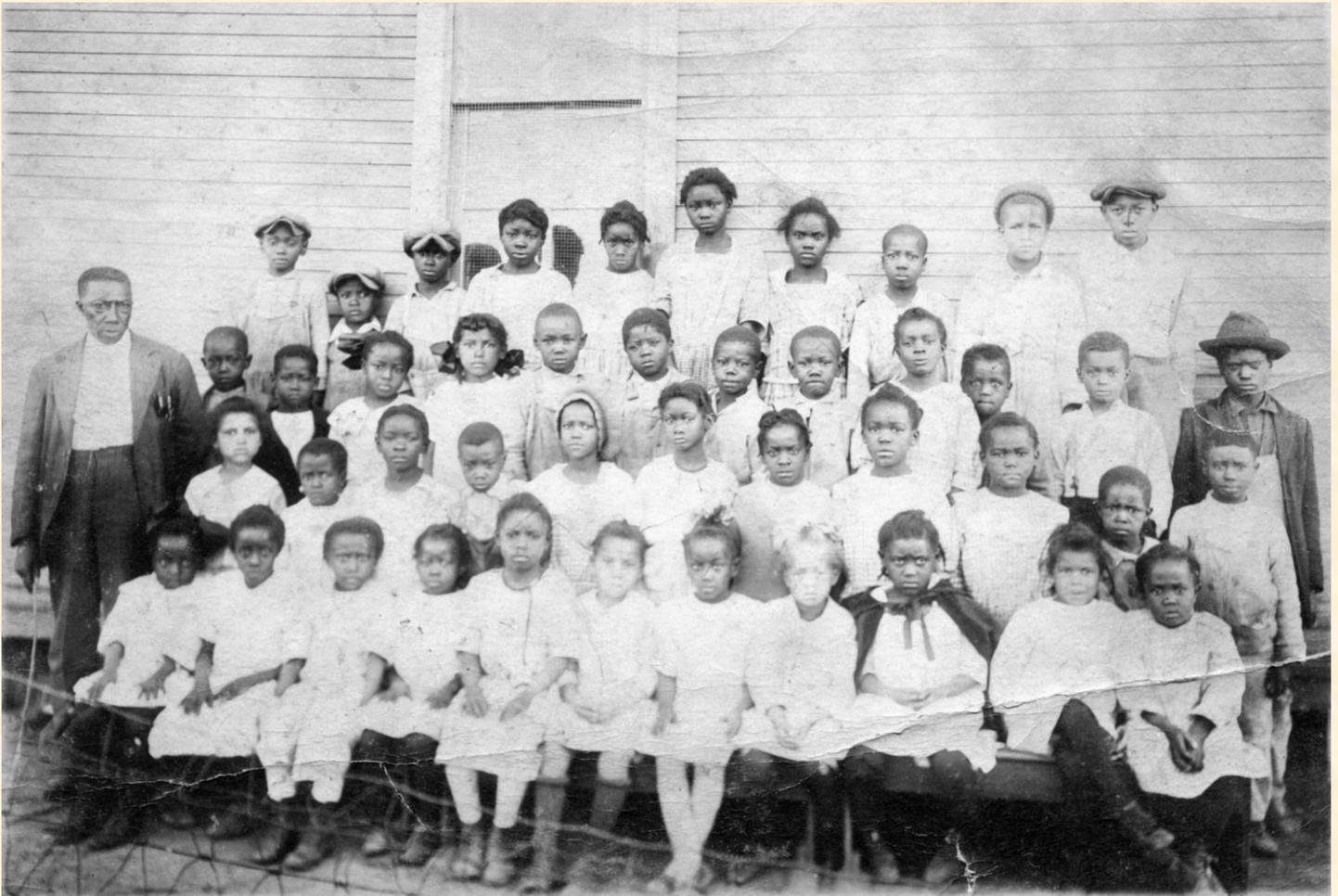
Mystery photo—GPHS member Ashli Ahrens submitted this century-old postcard marked "Must be Almyra, Ark." However, local historians have concluded that it is not that town. Does anyone recognize the location of this scene?



The band "Southern Accent" at the Pam-Pam Supper Club in Stuttgart, June 25, 1994. From left to right are Jimmy Black, Steve Stillwell, Eddie Griffie, Gary Pharis, and Eddie Lumsden. *Courtesy of Eddie Lumsden.*



L. to r.—Ledia Ware, Marguerite Simmermacher, Revillo Ware, Romey Lusby and his friend. *MAGP.*



Professor L. D. Holman with his students in an undated photo likely taken at the Stuttgart School (a Rosenwald School), located at 412 N. Porter. The building was later moved to 605 N. Buerkle Street, rebuilt, and later named for Prof. Holman. The brick building still standing on that site, now the Holman Community Center, was built in 1951. Leroy Davis Holman was born ca. 1865 in North Carolina. He began teaching black children in Stuttgart in 1907, upstairs in the Masonic Lodge at McKinley and Spring Streets. He passed away July 17, 1945, and is buried in Green Grove Cemetery. Holman and his wife Mattie had two sons, Floyd and Mayhew. He dedicated his life to over four decades of educating Stuttgart's black students. *Courtesy of Mrs. Booker T. Relford.*

Grand Prairie Historical Society now offers three membership levels. Basic memberships will cost \$25.00 per household. Also, two new premium membership levels are available for those wishing to donate to the Society's efforts: Contributing, \$50.00; and Supporting, \$100.00. Contributing and Supporting memberships will be recognized in the October *Historical Bulletin* each year. We accept and appreciate memorials and honorariums and will provide letters of acknowledgement for tax purposes. If you're not already a member, please join us by sending your dues to our treasurer Carol Roberson, PO Box 3621, Little Rock, AR 72203.

**Grand Prairie  
Historical Society**

P. O. Box 3621  
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[www.grandprairiehistory.org](http://www.grandprairiehistory.org)

**Officers**

President: Raeann Braithwaite  
Vice-Pres: Gay Hampton Rusk  
Secretary: Gena Seidenschwarz  
Treasurer: Carol Roberson

**Newsletter Editor**

Glenn Mosenthin

GPHS is a 501(c)(3)  
organization.