



# News from the Prairie

## WINTER 2025

*PRESERVING OUR GRAND PRAIRIE REGION'S HISTORY*

## Historical Society Kicks Off 2025 with Presentation on Stuttgart Airbase

Grand Prairie Historical Society started off the new year with our winter quarterly meeting on Thursday, January 16 at the Museum of the Arkansas Grand Prairie. We were welcomed by our hosts Fara Foster, Suzanne Kizzire, and Makena Munger. Our hospitality committee came through as usual with a nice array of dessert items during the social period before the meeting. Around fifty people attended, in addition to several more who joined in via Zoom. An interesting and informative program on the World War II-era Stuttgart Army Airfield was presented by Museum Exhibit and Artifact Coordinator Makena Munger (photo). She explained the historical timeline of the early years of our Air Force, from its beginnings in World War I as the Army Air Corps, and later as the Army Air Forces. The selection of the Grand Prairie as a site for one of several Arkansas Delta locations for airfields was described. The various training programs at Stuttgart AAF were detailed and included glider training as well as twin-engine pilot instruction. Munger emphasized the economic and social impacts on the surrounding region by having an Army Airfield that employed a great many people, some of whom returned to the area and operated businesses.

After the program, the quarterly business meeting was conducted by President Linda Fischer. Jessie Walsh read the minutes from the previous meeting in October and Raeann Braithwaite delivered the treasurer's report. In old business, Barbara Menard reported that the historical marker commemorating Lloyd Burke and Gilbert Collier, Medal of Honor recipients from Tichnor, is expected to arrive by March. The Society plans to hold a dedication of the marker on the afternoon of our April 17 meeting in DeWitt. President Fischer called for new business. A donation will be presented to the Arkansas County Records Preservation Committee at our April meeting. We are honored to take part in this continuing effort to protect some of the oldest such records west of the Mississippi, right here in our county. Our sponsorship of the Arkansas Historical Association was renewed, in support of their work in interpreting and preserving our state's many-faceted and diverse heritage.

In our effort to increase membership, Treasurer Braithwaite reported that she and Glenn Mosenthin designed a postcard featuring a vintage rice growing scene, which was mailed to over 300 present and past members of the organization with a message inviting their continued investment in our efforts. A





recommendation from the board of directors was read by Mosenthin, to use leftover funds from the Medal of Honor marker donations for another marker, to be installed at Stuttgart Airport to commemorate the former Army Airfield. Our social media outreach now includes 8,011 Facebook followers, 1,758 webpage visitors, and 343 email recipients. Our next meeting will be held April 17 at the Arkansas County Courthouse in DeWitt, with a program by Circuit Clerk Sarah Merchant, who will speak on county record book restoration efforts. The public are always welcome to attend our meetings.

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Stuttgart Army Airfield on a wintry day during WW2, showing Piper Cubs, Waco Hadrian gliders, and a review of enlisted personnel.

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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 Ashli Ahrens, Raeann Braithwaite, and Glenn Mosenthin, Facebook administrators
Parliamentarian	Raeann Braithwaite
Audiovisual	Paul Braithwaite



# Slovaktown Project

By Deah Partak, UpRooted Media, Portland, Oregon

Slovaktown was founded in 1894 by Slovak immigrants seeking land where they could live close to the earth and honor their agrarian roots. Yet, the unfamiliar land and intense weather conditions in this corner of Arkansas were a far cry from the life they had known in their Central European homeland. Still, the community persevered, its spirit resilient, blending the vibrant traditions of Slovak heritage with the unique rhythms of Southern life. Over the past 140 years, Slovaktown's residents have quietly worked to preserve their cultural identity, stories, and history—efforts that have now captivated UpRooted Media's mission. Through their upcoming documentary, UpRooted aims to illuminate the remarkable journey of this small, yet steadfast community, revealing a forgotten chapter of American and Slovak history that deserves to be remembered.

UpRooted Media, born in 2023, was created by a group of Slovak descendants and their supportive families, driven by a shared longing to uncover the hidden history of Slovaktown, Arkansas. The idea for the documentary sparked when UpRooted's Deah Partak's close friend and "adopted" grandfather, Al Bednar, spoke of his deep, unbroken ties to Slovaktown. Al's roots in this unique settlement ran deep, and his story ignited a passion in Deah and her team to bring the town's remarkable legacy to life. Their journey truly took shape after a heartfelt meeting with Al's relatives, Joe and Virginia Lisko, and together they set out to preserve this often-overlooked piece of American history.

UpRooted Media's journey to bring Slovaktown's story to the screen has been met with overwhelming support from the local community, as well as from organizations far beyond Arkansas. Not only is Amanda Villamil Saranie, great-granddaughter of the founder of Slovaktown's famed Oyster Supper, one of the film's directors, but the residents of Slovaktown have been instrumental in helping gather materials, share personal memories, and offer their deep knowledge of the town's history. With support from others who recognize Slovaktown's importance in American multiculturalism, including Milan Čupka, Slovakia's best-selling author of *What is Huncút?* (which features Slovaktown), Ashley Sides of Arkansas Historical Preservation Program, and Fara Foster of the Museum of the Arkansas Grand Prairie, invaluable resources have been shared and research has been collaborated on to ensure the documentary reflects the town's authentic past. Furthermore, the Slovak government has shown its dedication to preserving this important piece of cultural history, lending its support and encouragement for the project. With such a strong network of backing, UpRooted Media is poised to honor the resilience and enduring spirit of Slovaktown, ensuring its legacy is remembered for generations to come.

The progress on the Slovaktown documentary has been steadily advancing, with key milestones already achieved. In 2024, the team completed the main filming trips, capturing compelling interviews, stunning visuals, and rich historical details that will bring Slovaktown's story to life. Currently, they are deep into the editing phase, meticulously piecing together the footage to craft a narrative that honors the community's resilience and unique cultural heritage. Once editing is completed, UpRooted's James Mayer will head into the studio to work with a talented group of Slovak-American musicians to create the film's soundtrack. The music will feature Slovak folk songs, thoughtfully rearranged to blend the rhythms and melodies of both Slovak and Southern traditions, reflecting the fusion of cultures that defines Slovaktown. This soundtrack promises to be a captivating, multicultural mix that beautifully complements the town's history and the film's storytelling, further enriching the experience for viewers.

Originally, the goal was to present the completed documentary to the town of Slovaktown during their Heritage Day on March 2nd, 2025. However, as is often the case with large, complex projects, unforeseen complications have arisen, requiring a slight delay in the film's release. While this setback means the premiere won't happen as planned, the team remains committed to releasing the documentary later in 2025. After the film's official release, UpRooted Media will be setting up screenings across Arkansas, the United States, and even in Slovakia, bringing the story of Slovaktown to a global audience. The team is excited to share this powerful, multicultural narrative with as many people as possible, and the journey to completion continues with great anticipation.



For those eager to learn more about Slovaktown before the documentary's release, UpRooted Media will be present at the town's Slovak Heritage Day on March 2nd, 2025. At this event, the team will share the official trailer of the upcoming documentary, offering a sneak peek into the rich history and vibrant legacy of the community. Additionally, attendees will have the opportunity to embark on a self-guided walking tour of the historical core of Slovaktown, which centers around the iconic Sts. Cyril and Methodius Catholic Church. This church, a cornerstone of the community's cultural and spiritual life, serves as a living testament to Slovaktown's heritage. Families from the area will also be in attendance, showcasing exhibits that highlight the town's fascinating past, allowing visitors to connect with personal stories and artifacts from the community's early days. It's a unique chance to experience the heart of Slovaktown firsthand.

While significant progress has been made on the Slovaktown documentary, there is still much to be done, and UpRooted Media continues to seek the support of generous donors and sponsors to bring this important project to completion. Contributions are essential to covering remaining production costs, including final editing, soundtrack creation, and promotional efforts. Donations can be made by mailing a check to the provided address or through the UpRooted Media website, where a secure online donation portal is available. Every contribution, no matter the size, will help ensure that Slovaktown's unique story is shared with the world and preserved for future generations. Your support is crucial to bringing this vibrant piece of American and Slovak history to life.

Uprooted Media, 6339 NE 33rd Ave., Portland, Oregon 97211 Website: [www.uprooted-media.com](http://www.uprooted-media.com)



Slovak's general store, as operated by Minnie Ahrens in the 1970s, bore the Slovakian phrase *Pratelski lude ve Slovaktown*, meaning "Friendly people in Slovaktown."



December 15, 2024

To our supporters at the Grand Prairie Historical Society,

I'm excited to share some great news from UpRooted: **Our team is growing!** I am pleased to announce that **Ms. Andie Solar has joined us as our Marketing Advisor.**

Andie attended the UpRooted presentation, *History of Slovak Value Creators*, hosted by Slovak PRO-Seattle, an organization dedicated to supporting the Slovak professional community in North America. Inspired by the presentation on Slovaktown and the unique role of Slovak descendants as a multicultural group, Andie reached out to offer her help.

Her timing couldn't be better. After reflecting on feedback from supporters and team members, I realized that to continue our work effectively, I need to share my enthusiasm and delegate more. **I'm deeply grateful for those who have expressed concern and encouraged me to expand our team.**

In addition to Andie, we're also seeing greater involvement from our current members. **Jen Hopkins, a long-time board member, is now taking the lead on funding outreach and network building.** Her efforts, including connecting with Slovak PRO, are already yielding results, and we're excited for the new partnerships she will help forge within the Slovak American and historical communities.

**These changes are all part of our effort to strengthen our connections with supporters** and allow for Amanda, Pete, James, and me to focus on documentary editing as we aim to release the Slovaktown Documentary in 2025.

As an Associate Sponsor, y'all at the Grand Prairie Historical Society may hear from Andie and/or Jen as they take the reins on marketing, funding, and networking. You can learn more about them both in our "About Us" section of our website: [www.uprooted-media.com/about-us](http://www.uprooted-media.com/about-us) **I am excited everyone at the Grand Prairie Historical Society to form a great working relationship with them as we make this documentary come to life!**

All the love,

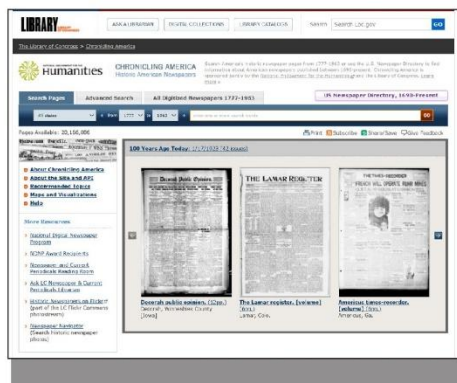


Deah Partak, LCSW

UpRooted Media President

# Quick Guide to the Library of Congress's **Chronicling America**

Go to <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/> to start searching historic Arkansas newspapers.

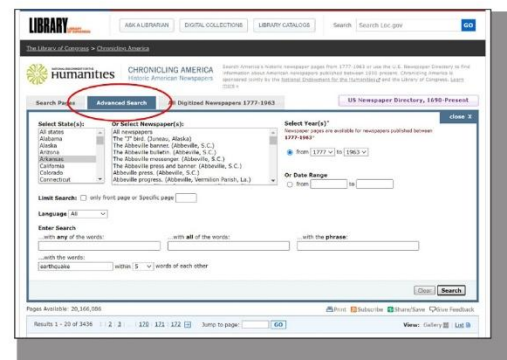


## Basic word or phrase search in Arkansas newspapers

- Click the "All states" drop down menu to select "Arkansas" and select a date range to search within.
- Type the words or phrase to search for in the text box and click "GO". (You do not need to use "and" between keywords or use quotation marks (") around a phrase.) The best way to narrow your focus is to choose one or two unique words or phrases, rather than a longer phrase. Keep in mind terminology for people, places, and things has changed over the years, so adjust search words as needed (ex. search for Indian rather than Native American).
- Filter your search results using the drop down "sort by" menu to view results by relevance, state, title or date.

## Advanced search options in Arkansas newspapers

- Search within just one or a few newspapers by selecting the newspaper name under "Select Newspaper(s)".
- Search within a specific date range by selecting the "Date Range" option and type in the dates you want to search or select the dates on the drop down calendar. This can be used to search specific date ranges like May to July in one year or for one day only (by setting the date range in the "from" and "to" dates to the same date).



## To customize how the words are searched:

- Typing in the "with any of the words" search box will show results for either of the words, not necessarily all the words together.
- Typing in the "with all of the words" search box will ensure that all the words you are searching will be on the page, though not in any order.
- Typing in the "with the phrase" search box will only show results of the exact phrase in order. This is the only search box that will show an exact phrase.

## To view all Arkansas newspapers and browse the issues:

- Click the "All Digitized Newspapers 1777-1963" tab and select "Arkansas" on the drop-down menu. To search for papers from a single ethnicity or language, select those from the drop-down menus. Then click "GO" on the right to see the results.
- The papers are listed in alphabetical order by title. Click a newspaper title to learn more about that paper and browse the issues.
- To browse by year and date, click the "Calendar View" link. In calendar view, you can change the year shown on the left under "Issues for." To view an issue, click on one of the days that have a date highlighted in blue on the calendar.



For more tips, tricks, and tools for seaching Chronicling America, download our comprehensive research guide.



The National Digital Newspaper Program (NDNP) is a partnership between the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the Library of Congress. The Arkansas State Archives is a state partner for the NDNP. Content digitized as part of NDNP is freely available to the public at [chroniclingamerica.loc.gov](https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/). Don't see a newspaper? Get in touch at [statearchives@arkansas.gov](mailto:statearchives@arkansas.gov).



# Arkansas Historical Association

Founded 1941

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, as well as our newsletter. Annual dues are:

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

Annual corporate/business memberships:

Sponsor, \$120; Patron, \$500; Benefactor, \$1,000

Renewal and new memberships may be paid securely online by visiting our website at [arkansashistoricalassociation.org](http://arkansashistoricalassociation.org).



# MUSEUM OF THE ARKANSAS GRAND PRAIRIE

## DIRECTOR'S REPORT BY FARA FOSTER, JANUARY 22, 2024

### Attendance and Public Relations

• Attendance	<u>2024</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2019</u>
January	221	384	94	84	126	271
February	182	147	93	47	229	137
March	245	153	224	85	96	458
April	156	260	149	63	30	305
May	303	225	246	198	78	199
June	291	328	185	97	40	379
July	252	230	317	205	36	282
August	195	224	195	137	66	244
September	182	206	212	182	49	177
October	253	444	158	137	80	257
November	246	492	206	139	91	334
December	<u>464</u>	<u>201</u>	<u>345</u>	<u>89</u>	<u>42</u>	<u>348</u>
	<b>2990</b>	<b>3294</b>	<b>2424</b>	<b>1463</b>	<b>963</b>	<b>3345</b>

YTD totals were down 9.23% from 2023 but still 23% higher than 2022.

• Harvest Host Guests:	<u>2024</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2021</u>
January	3	2	2	
February	2	1		
March	6	5	7	1
April	20	15	8	9
May	6	10	4	9
June	1	4	4	4
July	1	1	2	8
August	3	1	4	5
September	6	5	7	6
October	4	4	8	9
November	3	7	2	<u>8</u>
December	<u>2</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>1</u>	
	<b>57</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>54</b>

NOTE: Two guests left without staying overnight due to feeling unsafe between June and October.

### Operations & Fundraising

- Staffing & Volunteers
  - Director's Weekly Work Schedule
- "Arrest in Jest" - Netted \$7,510.54 (after \$67.46 in credit card fees)
- AR Humanities Museum Collections & Resource Grant:
  - Received notice grant was approved 11/28; awaiting receipt of funds
- Spaghetti with Santa - Netted \$1,215.74
  - Sold 157 Tickets (85 adults; 72 children)
  - 2023: Sold 151 Tickets, netted \$1,161

### Facilities and Exhibits

- Needed Facility Repairs:
  - Prairie Cabin:
    - Roof repairs (due to sagging beams over kitchen)



- Reroof porch
    - 2024 estimate for materials only (shake shingles): \$1,275
- Chapel:
  - Replace siding near bottom of both east and west exterior walls
  - Repaint entire exterior
- Gazebo: Reroof
- Firehouse:
  - Double-doors in front of firetruck need to be replaced
    - Possible Option: Divided Light Overhead Door to allow for visibility from outdoors
  - Sign above double-doors needs to be repainted
  - Would like to replace the wall material or at least paint the walls and raise wall height on interior walls to hide storage area
- Main Building:
  - Conservatory Exit (north side of building) – Flashing issue above the door causing leaking during heavy rains; replace door frame
    - Contacted RW Manufacturing about an awning to divert water
  - Waterfowl Wing / Arkansas Waterfowler Hall of Fame
    - Lighting controls and computer are both down in the hunting experience
      - Jim Ronquest is exploring options for a new exhibit
        - Kevin Kegley believes he *may* have a work-around; looking at \$1500 for Kevin's time plus a few lights/parts to determine IF it will work
- Barn Quilts – Need assistance installing on building / grounds
- Garland Garden / Seed Library
  - Still lack flowering prairie grasses for planting
  - Pavers arrived in early Sept.; still awaiting installation by Andrew Griffin
- Main Museum Building - Called Pierce & Co. in July to request estimated costs to add square footage to building and repaint the building. No returned call to date.
- Tree(s): Trees throughout property need to be trimmed

### Other Planning / Events

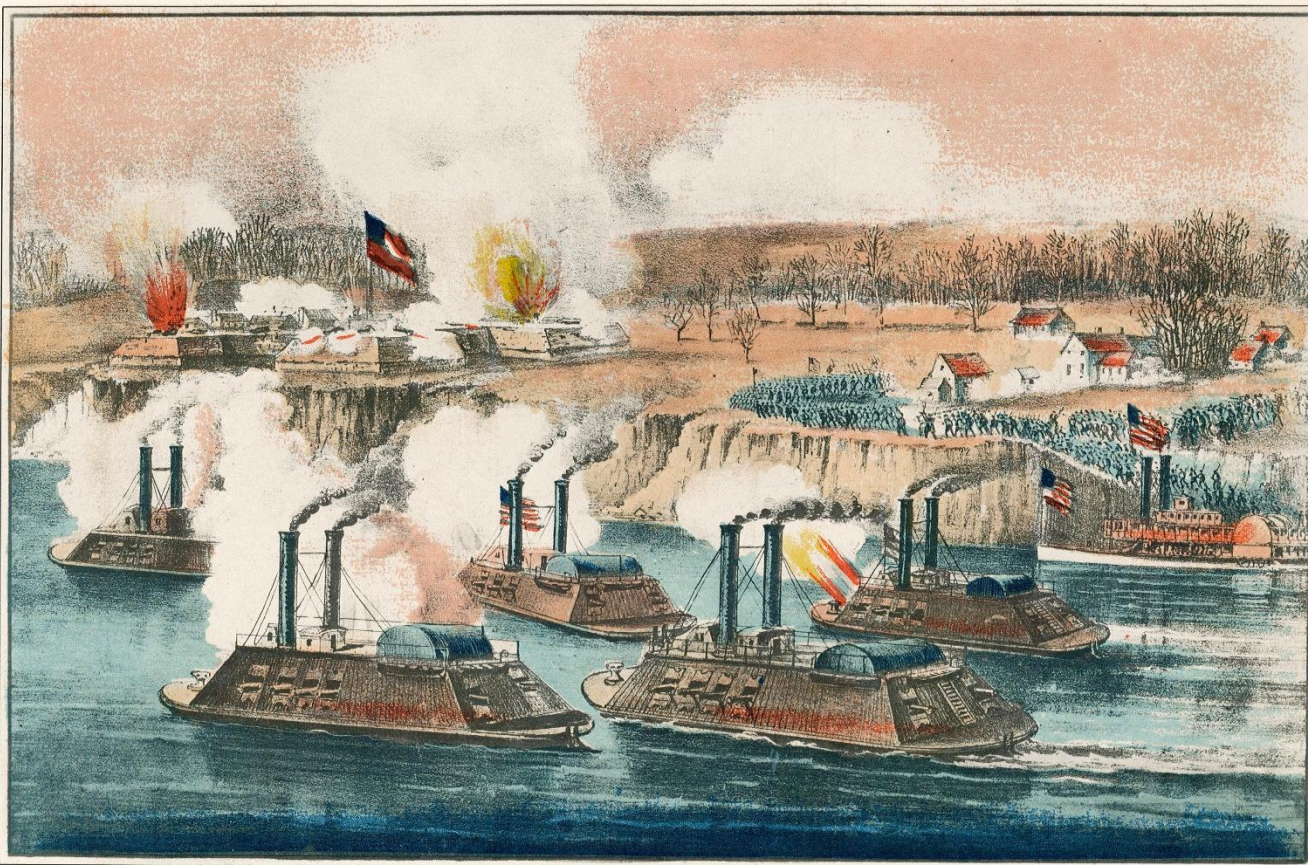
- UPCOMING:
  - Delta Waterfowl Banquet - January 31
    - With the Grand Prairie Center and the Stuttgart Chamber of Commerce
  - Coffee with the Curator (10am) / Evening with the Curator (6pm) - February 13
    - Topic: Thomas Leslie
  - Slovak Heritage Day - March 1
  - Preserve Arkansas's Mid-Century Modern Architecture Tour - April 5
  - Museum Founder's Fest - May 3
  - Uprooted Media is screening their Slovaktown documentary - date to be announced

### Proposed Operational Changes

- Event Rentals
- Mission Statement
- Fundraising Committee
- Facilities Committee

Thanks to the generosity of our donors, ADMISSION is always FREE  
 VISIT US: Wednesday - Friday: 8am - 4pm  
 Saturday: 10am - 4pm  
 921 E. 4th St., Stuttgart, AR 72160  
 870-673-7001





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152 NASSAU ST. NEW YORK.

### THE BOMBARDMENT AND CAPTURE OF FORT HINDMAN, ARKANSAS POST, ARK. JAN. 11<sup>TH</sup> 1863.

*By the Gun-boats, commanded by Rear-Admiral D.D. Porter, and the Union troops under Maj. Gen. M. C. Cleland; the number of Prisoners taken was 7000, being more than all the Federal forces in action, also 20 Guns, 8000 Stand of small arms and 200 army wagons, with herds of horses and mules.*

Currier and Ives print of the Battle of Arkansas Post.

### 2025 GPHS meeting dates/places:

April 17, 7:00 p.m., Arkansas County Courthouse, DeWitt; July 17, 6:00, Phillips Community College - DeWitt (annual potluck precedes general meeting); and October 16, 7:00, 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-Pres: Gay Hampton Rusk  
Secretary: Jessie Walsh  
Treasurer: Raeann Braithwaite

### Newsletter Editor

Glenn Mosenthin

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