

**HISTORIC ARKANSAS MUSEUM COMMISSION**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
**April 21, 2023**

**Commissioners Present:**

James Warren, Chair  
John Greer, Vice Chair  
Gordon Rather, Secretary  
Frances Mitchell Ross, Chair Emerita  
Ann Jennings Shackelford  
Kyle Wilson  
Marshall Butler  
Tracey Hendren

**Commissioners Absent:**

Rex Nelson  
Vanessa Norton McKuin

**Historic Arkansas Museum Staff Present:**

Stephanie Haught Wade, Executive Director  
Joleen Linson, Assistant Director  
Ellen Korenblat, Community Engagement Director  
Victoria Chandler, Curator of Collections  
Ian Beard, Education Director  
Mark Mourier, Accounting

**Visitors:**

Jimmy Bryant, Director, Division of Arkansas Heritage  
Elaine Lienhart, Executive Assistant, Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism

**Call to Order:**

Commission Chair James Warren called the meeting to order at 12:00pm. The meeting was held via Zoom with an in-person meeting option as well.

**Approval of Minutes:**

Commission Chair James Warren requested a motion to approve the minutes of the March 17, 2023, meeting as distributed. Commissioner John Greer moved to approve the minutes, Commissioner Kyle Wilson seconded, and the motion passed.

**Financial Report:**

Museum Director Stephanie Wade reported on the balance of state funds. As of April 4, 2023, the Historic Arkansas Museum state funds balance was \$986,979.85 and the financial reports show that everything is in good standing. Ms. Wade sent additional March budgets for the Conservation Tax fund and the Arkansas Natural and Cultural Resources Council fund to the Commissioners for review.

These two funds reflect the majority of money available in the museum budget.

**Museum Update:**

Museum Director Stephanie Wade shared the March 2023 visitation numbers which totaled 3,031. Museum store sales for March 2023 totaled \$7,993.

Ms. Wade stated that several new employees have been hired to fill vacant positions: Jake Hicks, Store Manager; Ron Stager, Museum Store Assistant; Jason Kahler, Site Manager; Harrison Mitchell, Registrar. Staff enjoyed an informative presentation by Kim Williams with Arkansas Tourism regarding the upcoming solar eclipse on April 8, 2024. The museum plans to get creative with eclipse programming and store items, as the other two documented total solar eclipses in Arkansas took place in 1918 and 1834. The museum will interpret the 1834 event. The Arkansas Museums Association annual conference was held March 27 – 29, 2023. HAM was a conference host and many of the museum staff led the presentations and workshops. Thank you again to the Commission for contributing to the catering costs for the welcome reception, held in the museum atrium on Monday, March 27, 2023. Over the next several months, the museum will continue to highlight the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversaries of the Mary Worthen Herb Garden, Territorial Fair, Museum Store and Trinity Gallery. On Friday, April 14, 2023, KATV filmed *Good Morning Arkansas* live from the museum grounds to showcase the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversaries. Director Wade, Carey Voss, Ellen Korenblat, and Ian Beard were interviewed, as well as a member of the Herb Society, Arkansas Unit.

Museum Assistant Director Joleen Linson reported on site and facilities. New accessibility ramps have been ordered for the Brownlee House, Brownlee Kitchen, McVicar House, and Woodruff Print Shop to better fit the doorways and provide improved stability. The museum building's Classroom counter is being reworked, and the hallway water fountains are being replaced to provide needed updates. All of these improvements are ADA compliant.

Education Director Ian Beard stated that Spring Break, March 21 – 25, 2023, admissions totaled 181. The theme was "Ho for the Diggings!" which explored the popularity of the California Gold Rush in Arkansas. The Living History Saturday admissions for March brought in an additional 277 admissions. School Fair was held April 5 and 6, 2023 and the response was tremendous – over 200 school children attended. Daily school tours are completely booked through May 2023. The Living History Saturday theme for April is "Sisterhood and the Fabric of Society," as the focus of programming through June will be women in antebellum Arkansas. The May theme will be "Marriage and Motherhood" and the June theme will be "Women's Work." Education staff members Casey Marshall, Leon Tidwell, Morgan Weithman, Amy Armstrong and Ian Beard were presenters at the Arkansas Museums Association annual conference. Work continues on the Camp Historic Arkansas (formerly known as Pioneer Day Camp), and there are 7 children registered so far. Commissioner Gordon Rather has offered to cover 3 scholarships. Director Wade will let Commissioner Rather know as those spots are filled so payment can be handled. Mr. Beard has actively pursued contact with various schools to secure the scholarship positions, but no applicants have yet applied. A full set of historical type has been secured for the print shop, and Casey Marshall has recently made fireplace tools in the blacksmith shop. Commissioner Rather inquired if there is in-house follow up regarding each of the museum's events to determine success of the events, possible changes, and the like. Director Wade and other staff confirmed that event review/assessment is regularly implemented, and discussions are always ongoing. Commissioner James Warren asked

about covering transportation costs to assist those children attending Camp Historic Arkansas. Commissioner Rather suggested the Loughborough Trust could cover such costs if necessary. Commissioner Kyle Wilson added that a third-party commercial provider be considered to make sure insurance and liability concerns are taken care of regarding any transportation of the children involved.

Curator of Collections Victoria Chandler presented the Exhibits, Collections and Arkansas Made report. Ms. Chandler stated that there will be no exhibit opening in May 2023 as it will be the last month to view the Longhua Xu exhibit, *Soul of Arkansas*, in the Cabe Gallery. One of Longhua Xu's painting was acquired for the collection. The gallery will be repainted in preparation for the traveling exhibit from the American Folk Art Museum called *Mystery & Benevolence: Symbolic Expressions of the Masons and Odd Fellows* which will open in August 2023. Curatorial is also working on a 50th Anniversary exhibit in the Trinity Gallery which will open June 9, 2023 at 2nd Friday Art Night. The exhibit will showcase some of the artists who displayed their works in the Trinity Gallery over the past 50 years. The refurbished Knife Gallery will open on Saturday, June 17, 2023, and will be a full day of family-friendly activities, speakers, and related events. Master bladesmith Lin Rhea will be honored that evening in the HAM Theater with the Arkansas Living Treasure award. A commissioned knife by Arkansan master bladesmith Daniel Casey was recently received and will be in the new exhibit. The dagger is hand forged with a native Arkansas oak burl handle and mounted with an Arkansas diamond at the top. Curatorial staff will participate in the James Black Festival at Historic Washington tomorrow, April 21, 2023, to display (and educate about!) the Bowie No. 1 knife and Carrigan knife at the event. Ms. Chandler is very pleased to have Harrison Mitchell as the new Registrar. Mr. Mitchell was part time historical researcher in the department prior to his promotion. Photographer Rett Peek is scheduled to take photos of the historic houses and contents in May 2023. Several pieces of Niloak pottery were loaned to Historic Cane Hill for an exhibit there from May 7 – July 8, 2023. Ms. Chandler shared a recently acquired work by Arkansas artist Jenny Deloney. The watercolor was exhibited in 1928 at the National Arts Club in New York City. The art is in its original frame and from a time period when she had her Little Rock studio on Scott Street.

Museum Community Engagement Director Ellen Korenblat reported that 2nd Friday Art Night on April 14, 2023 had a great turnout with music by MarQuis Hunt and his band MOOD. A huge crowd came to hear his jazz performance. Also, Lauren Muney, silhouette artist, was fully booked cutting silhouettes for visitors. The May 2<sup>nd</sup> Friday Art Night will celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Mary Worthen Herb Garden with the herb society stationed by the garden serving their herb punch. In addition, Ballet Arkansas will have a dancer performing by the herb garden. Kat Robinson will also be here signing her new book, *The Great Arkansas Pie Book*, and there will be samples of pie for visitors to enjoy. Flyway Brewery and music will also be part of this fun evening. Store manager Jake Hicks has been training the new assistant, Ron Stager. The store is making product preparations for the upcoming Territorial Fair on Sunday, May 7, 2023. Ms. Korenblat, Tricia Spione and Jake Hicks will attend the American Alliance of Museums annual conference in Denver, Colorado on May 18 – 22, 2023. Mr. Hicks will participate in the portion of the conference specific to museum store management. Ms. Korenblat has been working on plans to celebrate the renaming of the Worthen Arkansas Made Gallery. A small reception will be held to unveil the new signage. Bill Worthen is excited about this honor and is working on a guest list with invitations to follow. Ms. Korenblat asked if the Loughborough Trust would consider covering the cost of the signage which is less than \$200. Commissioner Frances Ross suggested a presentation be given

on the proposed request for the Trust to cover the expenses. Director Jimmy Bryant then offered to pay for the signage. Ms. Korenblat and Director Wade thanked him for his kind contribution.

**Historic Arkansas Museum Foundation:**

Ms. Korenblat reported that the membership program brought in \$3,245 since the last Commission meeting. It was shared that former Foundation Board President Lori L. Burrows recently passed away after a lengthy illness. The Board voted to name the Pie Party after her, which is a nice gesture as the pie party was her favorite event.

**Other Business:**

Commissioner James Warren asked that the Commission consider plans for the city green space closest to the museum on Cumberland Street after the interstate ramp was removed. Mr. Warren would like to inquire with the city or state to see if a portion of that land can be acquired by the Historic Arkansas Museum. The land is believed to be state owned, but the City of Little Rock will manage it. Commissioner John Greer commented that other citizens have concerns on what will become of this land as everyone wants to see improvements there. Commissioner Gordon Rather stated that Commissioner Rex Nelson has some ideas about that area as well. It is everyone's hope that a park-like development will occur there. Moreover, Commissioner Greer thinks the chance of acquiring any of that land is a slim prospect.

Commissioner James Warren proposed further discussion on the idea of a crosswalk to be placed mid-block on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street in front of the museum entrance, as visitors primarily cross the street there from the visitor parking lot. Commissioner John Greer said a crosswalk in the middle of the block is typically not approved and there must be ADA access at either end. Director Wade also spoke with Bill Henry, City of Little Rock Traffic Engineering Manager, and he said such a crosswalk is not allowed. Mr. Henry stated there are crosswalks at the corner signals at Cumberland and at Scott Streets, and it is dangerous for pedestrians to cross mid-block.

Commissioner Frances Ross encouraged the other Commissioners to start attending the meetings in person.

Commissioner James Warren complimented Casey Marshall, School Programs Coordinator, on his recent interview in the Woodruff Print Shop. An outstanding job!

**Next Meeting Date:**

The next meeting of the Historic Arkansas Museum Commission will be held Friday, May 19, 2023, at 12:00pm via Zoom. Museum Director Stephanie Wade will send instructions to join the meeting. Lunch will be provided in the Loughborough Conference Room.

**Adjournment:**

With no other business to discuss, Commission Chair James Warren adjourned the meeting at 12:54 pm.

**Gordon S. Rather, Jr. Secretary**