

HISTORIC ARKANSAS MUSEUM COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
April 19, 2024

Commissioners Present:

James Warren, Chair
John Greer, Vice Chair
Gordon Rather, Secretary
Frances Mitchell Ross, Chair Emerita
Rex Nelson
Vanessa Norton McKuin
Tracey Hendren

Commissioners Absent:

Kyle Wilson
Ann Jennings Shackelford
Marshall Butler

Historic Arkansas Museum Staff Present:

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

Visitors:

Marty Ryall, Division of Arkansas Heritage Director
The Honorable Joyce Williams Warren

Call to Order:

Commission Chair James Warren called the meeting to order at 12:00pm. The meeting was held via Zoom and in-person.

Approval of Minutes:

Commission Chair James Warren requested a motion to approve the minutes of the March 15, 2024, meeting as distributed. Commissioner Rex Nelson moved to approve the minutes, Commissioner John Greer seconded, and the motion passed.

Financial Report:

Museum Director Stephanie Wade reported on the balance of state funds. As of April 11, 2024, the Historic Arkansas Museum state balance was \$1,034,567.92 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:

Director Wade first welcomed Judge Warren and Director Ryall. Since the last meeting, Everett Bandy with the Quapaw Nation and T.J. Redcorn with the Osage Nation visited the museum, along with three staff from the Musee du Quai Branly-Jacques Chirac in Paris, France. Ms. Paz Nunez-Regueiro, Senior Curator of the Americas Heritage and Collections Department, was among the group. Three Quapaw Robes (animal skin hides painted with scenes) from the mid-1700s given to the French by the Quapaw at Arkansas Post are housed at the Branly Museum. The Quapaw Nation would like to display these robes again sometime soon, as two of these robes were on display at the Historic Arkansas Museum in 1995. The group toured the grounds and galleries and, of course, spent a significant time in the Cromwell Native American Gallery. Director Wade has let Mr. Bandy know that the museum would like to participate in any way possible regarding the robes. Director Wade mentioned that a staff tour was held at Mount Holly Cemetery to learn more about the many connections between Historic Arkansas Museum and those buried at the cemetery. Thank you to Matilda Buchanan for the guided tour. The museum won an award at the Arkansas Museums Association annual conference held in Fort Smith at the end of March. It was for Volunteer of the Year 2024, Robin Loucks! Mrs. Loucks won the award in recognition of her 70 years of service to HAM. We are so proud and grateful for all that Ms. Loucks has contributed.

Assistant Director Joleen Linson reported that the visitation numbers for March 2024 totaled 6899 and the museum store sales for the month came to \$6,200.00.

Regarding the Site and Facilities update, Ms. Linson reported that ADT is now called Everon, and they will take over the monitoring of our fire and burglar alarms now that they have been installed by Interface. Commissioner Gordon Rather asked who receives notification when an alarm sounds. Ms. Linson stated that HAM Site Manager Jason Kahler, DAH Site Manager Greg Roberts and Donna Uptigrove receive the notifications. Ms. Linson reiterated that this is an enormous upgrade to the old, obsolete systems with more sophisticated technology. ADT also did the security camera upgrades, which will count visitors more accurately than the system by Density currently in use. Commissioner Rather asked that an ADT representative attend an upcoming Commission meeting to answer questions and provide further details concerning our new systems. Commissioner Rather also asked for updates regarding insurance. Curator Victoria Chandler added that Jennifer Carman is still working on evaluating the top ten items in the collection. As far as insurance coverage for the historic homes, museum building and collections, Director Wade has these reports and will send them to the Commissioners for review. As a state museum, HAM is immune from liability for injuries suffered by a visitor for a slip and fall accident, for example. Director Marty Ryall added that a visitor can go to the Small Claims Commission for a

settlement if they have a valid claim. Ms. Linson stated that a Hinderliter pre-construction meeting was held with architect Aaron Ruby, Wagner Construction, DBA inspector, and others. The next steps were discussed, and construction will begin around August 2024 as they want to start 3 months prior to the arrival of the roof tiles. Commission Chair James Warren asked about “Mr. Hinderbiter,” the small gator that hung above the fireplace in the Hinderliter. Ms. Chandler replied that we have requested another “Mr. Hinderbiter” from Game & Fish, as the old one is damaged.

Education Director Ian Beard stated that March Living Craft Saturday and “Spring Break on the Grounds,” which were the week of March 18, 2024, were both very successful. The Gold Rush theme, used for both events, is always popular. The Spring School Fair (427 attendees total) on April 2 and 3, 2024 and the special Saturday eclipse programming (393 attendees total) held on April 6, 2024, were great events highlighting the 1834 Eclipse. The museum was open on April 8, 2024, which was the actual day of the total solar eclipse and visitation was light. However, the days following the eclipse, the museum enjoyed large crowds of visitors. Commissioner Warren asked if eclipse glasses were supplied, and Mr. Beard confirmed that free HAM branded glasses were given to visitors and school groups. The March Living Craft workshop, held March 30, 2024, showcased chair caning as taught by Will Darr. The April Living Craft workshop, held on April 13, featured watercolor painting using foraged rocks and minerals. This class was taught by Madison Woods of *Wild Ozark*. Both workshops were sold out. Workshops will be once a month for \$25/person (including lunch) thanks to support from the Living Craft Fund established from the 2022 Gala. This month’s Living Craft Saturday programming will be tomorrow, April 20, 2024, and the theme will be Commerce & Transportation and its impact on daily life in historic Arkansas. Mr. Beard shared that several cuts of meat have been in the smoke house for months now and will hopefully be fully cured by the Fall. Commissioner Warren asked what kind of wood is used for smoking meat; Mr. Beard replied that it is hickory and is sometimes combined with a mix of oak to get the fire started.

Curator of Collections Victoria Chandler remarked the upcoming *Collecting Arkansas Made* exhibit will open in Cabe Gallery on May 10, 2024, which is a 2nd Friday Art Night. The exhibit will be multi-year with a rotation of collection items (paintings, furniture, pottery, ceramics, quilts, etc.) particularly with an emphasis on acquisitions from 2018-2023. Ms. Chandler again thanked the Commissioners for their support of the exhibit. She then shared a piece from the Cravens Estate that will be in the new exhibit. It was of Judge Jesse Turner painted by Patrick Henry Davenport (1839). Commissioner Warren commented on the beauty of the painting and asked if we use plexiglass covers to protect works such as these while on exhibit. Ms. Chandler said we do not; however, stanchions are used in certain cases to provide protection. Ms. Chandler recently visited with Edwin Brewer’s daughter to acquire some of his works.

Ellen Korenblat, Community Engagement Director, stated that the Southeast Travel Writers Association was in town, and Tricia Spione, HAM Membership and Volunteer Director, attended a dinner to visit with the journalists and share our wonderful museum happenings. The April 2nd Friday Art Night was held April 12, 2024 and featured music by Brian Nahlen, beer from Norfolk Brewing, and activities by the Herb Society out by the herb garden. The May art night will be fantastic with the opening of the exhibit, the *Jellies* will play music, and the education department will serve a mint cordial from the historic

cookbook, *The Virginia House-Wife*. The museum store had eclipse related items that sold very well, including mugs by artist Soyoon Ahn and jewelry by *Bang Up Betty*. Ms. Korenblat was able to pull the eclipse visitors' locations from store and tickets sales and there were people here from 5 countries and 28 states! The new Point of Sale system for the museum store has a go-live date of April 24, 2024.

Historic Arkansas Museum Foundation:

Ms. Korenblat noted that the membership program brought in \$2,690.00 since the last Commission meeting and there are 302 memberships to date. New board member, Ms. Tiara King, has joined. Ms. King is employed at Wright, Lindsey & Jennings. Commissioner Rather thinks very highly of her. The Gala will be held November 2, 2024 and Commissioner Rex Nelson will emcee and Jim Harris will assist as auctioneer. The theme is *Arkansas Made: From the Hunt to the Harvest* and funds will be raised for the Arkansas Made fund. There will be a Live Auction but no Silent Auction this year. A bottle of 15-year Pappy Van Winkle, as well as Arkansas turquoise jewelry, will be raffled. A caterer is being selected. It has been recently decided to honor Robin Loucks at this year's Gala for her devotion to HAM as a long time Foundation Board member and volunteer extraordinaire. Board members Laura Davis, Katharine Adams and Robin Loucks have rolled off recently. Ms. Korenblat and Ms. Tricia Spione will be attending the American Alliance of Museums annual conference in Baltimore from May 16 – 19, 2024.

Other Business:

Director Wade mentioned that next Tuesday, April 23, 2024 in the theater at 6:00pm, Professor John Deak from Notre Dame will be here to present a talk on a WWI topic. This talk is in conjunction with the UA Little Rock History Department. All are welcome.

On Friday, April 26, 2024 Congressman French Hill's congressional art award reception will be held in the atrium and theater to announce the winners of the contest. Congressman Hill will be in attendance. Commissioner Gordon Rather asked if this would be a Public Use exception. Director Wade confirmed yes, although she assumed that Congressman Hill is welcome to use the museum facilities at any time. Commissioner Rather moved that the Commission grant Congressman French Hill a public use exception for his congressional art award reception. Commissioner Rex Nelson seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Director Wade encouraged the Commission to attend not only the 2nd Friday Art Night exhibit opening on May 10, 2024 but also the 51st Annual Territorial Fair which will be Sunday, May 5 from 12:00-4:00pm. There will be lots of Spring themed activities, music groups such as *Lark in the Morning*, *Sugar on the Floor*, Ricky Russell, and singing by Artists United. Rocky Clements will have his magic show in the theater, and there will be ice cream from Loblolly.

The national Association of Living History, Farm and Agricultural Museums conference will be held at Howell Living History Farm in Titusville, New Jersey from June 7 – 10, 2024. Joleen Linson, Ian Beard and Amy Armstrong will attend, as Joleen and Ian are on the 2025 conference committee and Amy is presenting a session. The 2025 national conference will be held here in Little Rock, and Historic Arkansas Museum and Old State House are co-hosting. Director Wade explained that there are no

monies left in the state travel fund to send them to the conference. She asked if the Loughborough Trust would consider covering the cost. Total for 3 persons to attend, including conference fees, meals, airfare, etc. will be \$5250.00. Commissioner Rather stated that this can be voted on in the Loughborough Trustees meeting following the Commission meeting.

Commissioner Warren mentioned that Judge Joyce Warren and Commissioner Frances Ross serve on the Arkansas Supreme Court Historical Society and thanked them for their long commitment to this group. He also remarked that the museum should consider showing the history of the still, moonshine, and historic brewing as an important part of our state's history. Mr. Beard advised that he has already looked into this, and we can be approved to demonstrate a still for educational purposes for a site like ours. Many of the stills are punctured at the bottom so they cannot be used. Commissioner Vanessa McKuin mentioned that Bray Sheet Metal could create something for us. Director Marty Ryall said that he would investigate the legalities.

Commissioner Rather remarked that the visitor parking lot was completely full today. Director Wade explained that those are cars of parents with today's school group as well as trucks of construction workers who are here to do repairs. Commissioner Rather would like more prominent signage for the lot since we do not use gates to control the entrance for parking.

Next Meeting Date:

The next meeting of the Historic Arkansas Museum Commission will be held Friday, May 17, 2024, at 12:00pm in person and via Zoom. Museum Director Stephanie Wade will send instructions to join the Zoom meeting. Lunch will be provided in the Loughborough Conference Room for those attending in person.

Adjournment:

With no other business to discuss, Commission Chair James Warren adjourned the meeting at 1:18pm.

***Loughborough Trustees Meeting:** The Trustees of the Loughborough Trust approved up to \$6000.00 to cover the cost of sending Joleen Linson, Ian Beard and Amy Armstrong to the national Association of Living History, Farm and Agricultural Museums conference in New Jersey in June 2024.

Gordon S. Rather, Jr. Secretary