HISTORY OF THE

ARKANSAS VALLEY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

and the

POPE COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

The story of the Pope County Historical Association, formerly the Arkansas Valley Historical Society, is an interesting account of a struggle by men and women to discover, to promote, and to preserve our local history and at the same time to keep a record of our contimporary accomplishments. Many individuals have made contributions which have been vital to the success and the continuity of the Association.

The Arkansas Valley Historical Society was organized October 10, 1948 when a small group of interested persons met and approved a constitution. Mention is made of James S. Long, a veteran U. S. Forest Service employee of this particular area; of Thomas Alfred DuLaney, Proffessor of History and Political Science at Arkansas Polytechnic College from 1928 until 1956; and Neil H. Bell, a public school administrator, who devoted a lifetime of endeavor toward the improvement of elementary and secondary public education in Pope County, all taking part in the planning of the Association. Women were also an active part of the Association, as a list of Charter Members shows that two-thirds of the original membership were women. Miss Mattie Brown, who taught History 21 years and was Principal 12 years in Russellville High School, made the first parliamentary motion which was seconded by Mrs. R. R. Cooper and the Constitution for the Arkansas Valley Historical Society was adopted.

The first elected officers were: James S. Long, President; Fred Croom, 1st Vice-President; Mrs. John Page, 2nd Vice-president; Mrs. Floyd Henry, Secretary; Neil H. Bell, Treasurer; and a program committee was appointed, which included: Miss Mattie Brown, Prof. J. A. Dulaney, and Fred Croom.

It is interesting to not that the Arkansas Valley Historical group held regular consecutive meetings for a period of two years, but during the period from August 1950 until April 1952, no meetings were held. The fact that the group came back in 1952, reorganized and continued to meet without further interruptions indicates something of the character and determination of its members to hold together, to grow, and to publish local history.

The third individual to serve a two-year term as President of the Arkansas Valley Historical group was George Ruford Turrentine who spent 45 of his 79 years of life as an employee of Arkansas Tech, first, as Dean and Head of the Education Department, as Registrar when it became a four-year college, and finally as Alumni Executive Secretary. Mr. Turrentine was no ordinary individual. He became the Editor of the Arkansas Valley Historical Papers, the official publication of the Society. A wealth of interesting historical material was published from 1954 to 1966. Those who participated

in the publication of the historical and genealogical material were many, but certainly George R. Turrentine did his share of research and publication and he did not stop until his health in 1966 forced him to give up his position as Editor of the Arkansas Valley Historical Papers.

Mrs. Forrest E. Gardner, for 31 years Junior High Principal in the Russellville public school system, became President of the organization in the fall of 1965 and served as President for two years. Effective December 1966, the name of the organization was changed to POPE COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION and the publication became the "Quarterly". Mrs. Vara T. Dodd, wife of Harry W. Dodd, and Arkansas Valley newspaper publisher, served as Editor of the Quarterly untilearly 1967 when Mrs. Elaine Weir Cia became the Editor and is presently serving her eleventh year in that position. While Mrs. Cia is a native of Pope County, she resides in Little Rock but attends most all the meetings in the County and since becoming editor of the Pope County Historical Quarterly, she has been a vital factor in the success of the organization. She has shown a deep interest in both local history and genealogy and has, in addition to encouraging others to do research, conducted a huge amount of individual research. She presently is also, the Editor of "THE ARKANSAS FAMILY HISTORIAN", the official publication of the Arkansas Genealogical Society, Inc.

One of the early goals of the Association was the securing of 300 members. While that goal has not yet been attained, the growth in membership during recent years gives assurance that it soon will be. The increase in membership has been due in a large measure to the fact that historical and genealogical information found in the Quarterly is in demand in many states outside of Arkansas.

A small group of Pope County Historical Association members organized the Pope County Genealogical Group in the late 1960's. One of the early projects of this Group was locating the cemeteries of Pope County and then recording the information on the headstones, and later publishing the information in four volumes. Some of those who took part in this activity were: Elvin "Bob" Tripp, Marguerite Tripp, Mary Lois Tripp, Mario B. Cia, Sr., Elaine Weir Cia, M. B. Cia, Jr., Anna Page Fields, J. B. Lemley, Mary Ellen Lempley, Mr. & Mrs. Bill Jones & daughter Kathy, Mrs. Viva Turrentine Moore, Mrs. Janett Wilson, Mrs. Jeannette Haney, & Emmett M. Gray. Many of this same Group with the help of Laura Shull, Hallene V. Tucker, M. C. Tucker copied from micro-film and published the 1870 and the 1880 Census records of Pope County, Arkansas. The Group arranged for old copies of Pope County newspapers to be placed on micro-film. Other publications are anticipated.

J. B. Lemley, a past president of both the Pope County Historical Association and the Pope County Genealogical Group, has produced a number of articles for the Quarterly and in addition has

published at least three books. His book, "Ephraim Lemley Family of Pope County, Arkansas" is a valuable aid to genealogy. Since publishing that book in 1975, he has published two volumes of newspaper obituaries covering the period from 1875 thru 1886, as well as the period from February 1973 through December 1973. J. B. Lemley was appointed Official Historian for Pope County by County Judge Emil Grant in 1974.

David L. Vance, a young business man and present 1st Vice-President of the Pope County Historical Association, arranged in 1968 for the reprinting of two early books on Pope County History. One of these books was: D. Porter West's "Early History of Pope County", and the other was: "The Pope County Militia War", originally published by Thomas J. Reynolds in 1908. In addition, Mr. Vance published an "Early History of Pope County" which contains a large number of illustrations which add a great deal to the effectiveness of the publication.

Dr. T. C. "Piney" Page, who retired as Dean of the College of Education, Western Knetucky University in 1973, returned to Pope County to reside. He wrote "The Voices of Moccasin Creek", a history of the Page and Tate Families who came to north Pope County during the 19th century. Dr. Page's history carries the families into the 20th century. To quote Leland DuVall of the Arkansas Gazette, "Piney Page literally has spanned history from the ox-cart to space travel". Dr. Page was admitted to Arkansas Tech's "Hall of Distinction for Outstanding Alumni" in 1965. He, an avid student of local history, has appeared many times as a speaker at Pope County Historical Association meetings. Dr. Page is actively collecting and recording local history with the zeal that only a highly motivated historian can demonstrate.

S. C. Tucker, Jr. a Danville public school administrator, who has furnished the Association meetings several programs, published in 1976 a history of the Arkansas River Valley, entitled "To Sell A Good Bull".

In checking the publications of the Association over the period of its 30 years of activity, one is impressed with the continued emphasis upon genealogy and family history. While many excellent articles on local history have been published and continue to be published, the demand both from out-of-state and local subscribers, is strong for genealogical information. It may be that as time passes, the publication of history will surpass the publication of genealogy and family history but at present the race is about even between the two.

Various centennial and bicentennial celebrations within Pope County during the 1970's have served to emphasize the importance of history within local communities. In 1970 the city of Russellville celebrated 100 years of incorporation with a "From Arrows to Atoms" theme linking Indian heritage of the 19th century with nuclear-fueled power being brought into use by Arkansas Power and Light Company.

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Dover conducted a three-day centennial celebration in 1970 highlighted by an historical pageant, the script written by Miss Marguerite Turner.

With the nation-wide Bicentennial of 1976, communities, towns and churches throughout the County put on programs emphasizing our American heritage. The city of London, in depicting the part that Scotia, Georgetown, Haddoxburg and London played in Pope County history managed to have addresses by three of its more distinguished products from the same platform on the same day; June 5, 1976.

Former 5th District Congressman Brooks Hays, Dr. Erwin McDonald, former editor of the Kentucky and the Arkansas Baptist magazines, and Leonard Price, an edducator with varied experiences, all made addresses that were taped and published in the September 1976 issue of the Pope County Historical Quarterly.

Recognizing the historical significance of old Galley Rock as an early settlement in east Pope County and its replacement by Atkins when the railroad came to the valley, the "Galley Rock Historical Association" was organized in September of 1971 with its first objective to restore the Galley Rock Cemetery. Officers of the Association were: John Stroud, President; John Wiley, Secretary; and David Griffin, Treasurer. As the Cemetery was being restored, historical articles by President Stroud, Van A. Tyson, and Amye Johnson McGraw appeared in print providing more information on the early settlement on the Arkansas River, and incidentally bringing on more historical information concerning Atkins and its early citizens.

One of the stated aims of the Association was to encourage interest in history through contests in research or writing, conducted within the public schools. Possibly this aim has not been pursed as diligently as it should have been, but, some efforts have been made. In 1950 the Arkansas Valley Historical essay contest was conducted through the public schools of the area and as a result the winner, Miss Phylis Ann Petty of Paris High School received a scholarship to Arkansas Tech.

In 1975, in cooperation with the Corps of Engineers, the Association conducted a contest to find a suitable name for the new Park located near the Dardanelle Dam. Miss Jody Williams, a Gardner Junior High School student, won a $50.00 savings bond, with the name "Old Post Road Park".

Another aim of the Association has been to place Historical Markers to indicate points of major historical interest within the County. While it may seem that the Pope County Historical Association is moving too slowly in this endeavor, the Association is making steady progress toward the goal of properly designating and marking those places.

Assisted by efforts of the Pope County Historical Association, the state Publicity and Parks Commission erected two markers north of the Marina Restaurant marking the probable burial site of Major

Lovely served as an Agent to the Cherokee Nation and the site where he lived near the Illinois Bayou west of the present site of Russellville was considered the Capitol of that Cherokee Nation. Major Lovely, who died in 1817, made land purchases in 1816 making possible the movement of the Cherokee Nation into the north-eastern part of Oklahoma. Of the two markers, one is in honor of Lovely's service of four years as Agent to the Cherokee Nation and his burial place. Mr. Orren Hays, a member of the Marker Committee, prepared the wording for this marker. The second marker is in honor of Major Lovely's service to his country, in the Revolutionary War. Dr. John L. Ferguson, Executive Secretary of the State History Commission, came to Russellville and made the dedicatory address in July of 1967.

On October 19, 1958, Mrs. Mark Craig, President of the Arkansas Valley Historical Association, presided at the dedication of the bronze tablet placed at Potts Inn, the site of a prominent Way Station for early travel through Pope County and the home of Kirkbride Potts, an early settler who built the house. During the late 1960's three groups joined together working to get the old Potts home declared an historic site, restored and made into a museum which would exhibit the life and activity of Arkansas and the South during the mid-1850's. Those groups included the Russellville Chamber of Commerce, the Arkansas Tech Parks and Recreation Department and the Pope County Historical Association. After correspondence between Governor Rockefeller, Dr. John L. Ferguson and The Association, a survey team visited the old Potts Inn and recommended that the building be restored. To provide a governing organization for Potts Inn, the Pope County Historical Foundation was formed with Mrs. Marjorie W. Crabaugh as Chairman in 1970. This organization has functioned well and Mrs. Crabaugh has furnished the excellent leadership needed. Federal matching funds were provided for the purchase of the property and for restoration, all of which has taken place. The Pope County Historical Association held its May meeting of 1977 at the Potts Inn, and enjoyed this fine facility.

In 1969 the Assocaition approved the placing of a marker three miles north of Dover on Highway 7 designating the site of a nearby cave as the place where the Pope County records were hidden for safekeeping from 1863 to 1865 while the Civil War was in progress and during the time that the Pope County Court House was destroyed by fire.

J. B. Lemley, President of the Association presided over the dedication of the marker on 31 October 1971. Van Brooks, whose grandparents owned the land at the time the County records were stored in the cave, gave the dedicatory address.

In December of 1977 the Pope County Historical Association placed a marker on the south side of Norman's Store, located at West Main Street and Commerce in Russellville. This marker indicates the spot where the first business was established in the city of Russellville. President, Lester Finley, installed this particular marker. Other markers are to be placed at the appropriate historical sites.

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NOTES

1. "Turning the Leaves" an article by Myrtle Roush, Chairman History Committee, Pope County Historical Association 1967. (Myrtle Roush was Librarian at Arkansas Tech for many years).

2. Notebook kept by History Committee, Historian and Reporter. (Contains newspaper clippings taken from Courier-Democrat, the Atkins Chronicle and occasionally a clipping from a state newspaper or from an adjoining county).

3. The Arkansas Valley Historical Papers, 1954-1966, 2 Vol. Russellville Public Library.

4. The Pope County Historical Quarterly, 1966-1977.

CHARTER MEMBERS OF ARKANSAS VALLEY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

1. Mrs. Neil H. Bell
2. Neil H. Bell
3. Miss Alta Brooks
4. Mrs. Walter Brooks
5. Miss Mattie Brown
6. Mrs. R. R. Cooper
7. Fred Croom
8. Mrs. T. A. DuLaney
9. T. A. DuLaney
10. Mrs. Floyd Henry
11. Floyd Henry
12. Mrs. R. B. Henry
13. R. B. Henry
14. Mrs. Floyd Hogins
15. Mrs. Emma Howard
16. Mrs. Ruby Livingston
17. Mrs. James S. Long
18. James S. Long
19. Mrs. A. W. Rye
20. Mrs. S. J. Rye
21. Mrs. Buford Smith, Sr.
22. Buford Smith, Jr.

Note: We saw one list which included Mr. & Mrs. Hugh Morton

ASSOCIATION PRESIDENTS

1948-1949	James S. Long	1964-1965	Neil H. Bell
1949-1950	James S. Long	1965-1966	Mrs. Guy Gardner
No meetings from Aug. 1950 to April 1952			
1952-1953	Dr. L. M. Hammand	1966-1967	Mrs. Guy Gardner
1953-1954	Dr. L. M. Hammand	1967-1968	E. B. Wilson
1954-1955	George R. Turrentine	1968-1969	E. B. Wilson
1955-1956	George R. Turrentine	1969-1970	Viva Turrentine Moore
1956-1957	Mrs. Mark Craig	1970-1971	Viva Turrentine Moore
1957-1958	Mrs. Mark Craig	1971-1972	J. B. Lemley
1958-1959	Mrs. Mark Craig	1972-1973	J. B. Lemley
1959-1960	Mrs. L. C. McCracken	1973-1974	J. B. Lemley
1960-1961	Mrs. L. C. McCracken	1974-1975	Milton C. Tucker
1961-1962	Mrs. E. E. Henson	1975-1976	Milton C. Tucker
1962-1963	Mrs. E. E. Henson	1976-1977	Lester Finley
1963-1964	Neill H. Bell	1977-1978	Lester Finley