

ALHA

ARKANSAS LIVING HISTORY ASSOCIATION

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Summer 2015

Report by ALHFAM Scholarship Recipient

In June, I had the good fortune to attend the Association of Living History, Farm, and Agriculture Museum's annual conference in Williamsburg, Virginia. The theme of the conference was Doing and Telling: A Living History Toolbox, with an emphasis on what tools we use to create dynamic living history experiences. The weather was steamy, but it didn't stop me from returning with an overflowing toolbox of exciting new ideas.

One tool I've already adopted is a new educational vocabulary. Jay Templin, Sally Stook, and Brian Beckley from the Jamestown -Yorktown Foundation discussed how they've incorporated STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) topics into their programs without sacrificing the history. All three emphasized that they only incorporate STEM where it's a natural fit and that the topics were already there – they just needed to point it out using appropriate vocabulary. I got to see this in action at the Jamestown Settlement, where visiting kids were able to use pulleys and ropes to load barrels onto one of the replica 1607 ships after an interpreter explained how the tools worked. With their example, for inspiration, we've started consciously incorporating more STEM topics into drop spindles, and by discussing how the wheel works, why sheep's wool is greasy, and the invention of tools to spin we cover a lot of

STEM ground in a short program.

During the conference, I spent about two and half days exploring Colonial Williamsburg, in particular the trade's buildings, and saw a myriad of traditional tools in use. We get a lot of questions from students about how people made and used tools, particularly during our settlers program. For example, in our new settling the Ozarks exhibit we have a shaving horse that always catches kids' eyes. Now that I've seen a shaving horse in use by the cooper, I'll be better able to help kids create their own mental image and answer their questions. Exploring Colonial Williamsburg, I found answers to many of my questions, but I probably came up with about as many new ones to research. The Anderson's Blacksmith Shop and Public Armory were using a bloomer, an early clay furnace to smelt iron, but during the conference it was noted that colonial blacksmiths really wouldn't be smelting iron. They would have a source of iron for use in repairing tools, which raised the question of what blacksmithing was like in the Ozarks in the 19th and early 20th centuries (a question I'm still researching the answer to, so if you have answers or leads let me know!).

But Colonial Williamsburg wasn't just watching. The Spinning and Weaving House hosted an open house just for ALHFAM attendees and I had an opportunity to try out one of their floor looms and their great wheel. I'm a budding fiber enthusiast and I enjoyed getting to spend time with experienced spinners and weavers, picking up new ideas on how to present these topics to the public. In the brickyard, brick makers were molding bricks for firing this fall. I joined a few other visitors in the treading pit, where we worked to mix the clay and water with our feet. Everyone was slipping and sliding while commenting on how tough it was to lift their feet and how the clay felt between their toes. It was a good reminder that sometimes the best tool is the one that visitors get to try out themselves.

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

September 12, 2015 10 am - 2 pm

Skillets, Griddles and Fireside Cooking Series

Location: 1874 Courthouse

Historic Washington State Park

Washington, Arkansas

Dutch ovens are only one of the many options available when it comes to cast iron cooking. Join the staff of Historic Washington State Park to explore the world of cast iron and challenge your culinary skills, preparing recipes from the past and present. Space is limited and registration is required. Each class is different so please call the park for what's cookin'. All types of cast iron cookware is always available for sale in the gift shop.

Call [\(870\) 983-2684](tel:870-983-2684) for more information.

Admission: \$25

Email: HistoricWashington@arkansas.com

Website:

<http://www.HistoricWashingtonStatePark.com>

September 12, 2015, 7 pm - 10 pm

Dancing with the Stars "Washington Style"

Historic Washington State Park - WPA Gymnasium

Dance experience is not required for this fun evening of dance and fellowship! Join the staff of Historic Washington for an exciting class that will leave you with unforgettable memories. Throughout history, dance has been not only an art form but also a way to socialize and make new friends. Come alone or with a partner and you will leave with new friends and new knowledge of dances such as the Virginia Reel, and many more. Refreshments will be served and fun will be had by all. Casual dress or period dress as you like. To reserve your spot call [\(870\) 983-2684](tel:870-983-2684).

Admission: \$18 couples, \$10 singles

Saturday, September 19, 2015

Prairie Harvest Day

The Museum of the Arkansas Grand Prairie

The Museum of the Arkansas Grand Prairie in Stuttgart is celebrating Prairie Harvest Day on Saturday, September 19, 2015. We are inviting anyone who would like to be here sharing "living history". We will learn about our heritage with a 100+ year old corn grinder, candle maker and weaver. We'll harvest rice by hand with everyone getting a chance to be really hands-on with that. Please consider spending your day with us sharing your area of expertise and period costume.

Contact Gena Seidenschwarz

seidenschwarzgena@yahoo.com

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Both Williamsburg and Historic Jamestown provided inspiration for new tools to get visitors engaged with history. Trish Balderson and Christina Westenberger, both from the Art Museums of Colonial Williamsburg, led a great session on how to create hands-on activities inspired by objects in your collection. Their ideas provided fresh inspiration on how to get visitors and students engaged with objects that have to stay behind glass or out of reach, such as using graph paper to design a cross-stitch pattern inspired by an object. Historic Jamestown presented a different way to give visitors a hands-on experience while preserving objects – 3D printers. During the keynote, Dr. James Horn, President of the Jamestown Rediscovery Foundation, talked about artifacts from the starving time in Jamestown – the assorted bones of animals that were butchered and the discovery of "Jane," whose remains provided evidence of cannibalism. At Historic Jamestown's Ed Shed, they had 3D printed copies of dog bones that you could handle, feeling the cut marks from butchering. After exploring the Ed Shed, I went inside the Archaearium and saw Jane's remains; seeing her skull with cut marks after I'd felt the cut marks on the dog bones took the entire experience to the next level. It was a great reminder to keep connecting and building experiences for visitors.

Overall, the conference was a great way to refresh my living history toolkit, both literal and metaphorical tools. I came away with a renewed enthusiasm for living history and an abundance of new friends and projects to help keep that fervor going.

Submitted by Carly Squyres

HEAR YE! HEAR YE!

Please send any articles, Events, or
Pictures that you
would like to submit for the
Spring Newsletter to the Communications
Director no later than December 15, 2015

ALHAccommunications@gmail.com

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Calendar of Events

October 2 2015 9 am - 4 pm Frontier Day for Homeschools Historic Washington State Park

Interpretive staff will provide a special experience for homeschool groups. Students will engage in hands on activities representing 19th century life on the frontier to gain a greater understanding of early Arkansas. Programming will be designed to correlate with state curriculum requirements and can be used to prompt unit studies. Contact the park for further details and reservations.

Email Leita Spears Leita.spears@Arkansas.gov
Admission: \$5.50 Plus tax
Phone: (870) 983-2684
Email: HistoricWashington@arkansas.com

On October 3, 2015, Historic Washington State Park makes a special effort to reach out to those in the neighborhood to help them gain and practice hands-on experience in many areas related to frontier life. It is a great opportunity for living historians to join staff at the park to help with any type of demonstration of a skill that was common in 1820-1850.

**If you want to demonstrate or assist one of the park staff, email Leita Spears at Leita.spears@Arkansas.gov
Location: 1874 Courthouse
Phone: (870) 983-2684
Email: HistoricWashington@arkansas.com
Web: <http://www.HistoricWashingtonStatePark.com>**

Gardening Basics for Fall 10 am - 2 pm Historic Washington State Park Washington, Arkansas

Just because winter is almost here, doesn't mean you must put your gardening tools away. Some of your favorite plants come from a healthy fall/winter garden. Join our historic gardener in a hands-on workshop geared towards fall and winter gardens and learn how to properly care for you plant beds over the winter. Fee includes a noon meal at our historic Williams' Tavern Restaurant. Space is limited to 15 participants; reserve your spot early.

Admission: \$20
Email: HistoricWashington@arkansas.com
Web: <http://www.HistoricWashingtonStatePark.com>
Phone: 870-983-2684

Report from 2015 ALHA Scholarship Recipient

Gardening is a wonderful hobby with many benefits. The process of planting and tending to different herbs and vegetables is relaxing and there is a distinct sense of satisfaction to be had when the vast array of produce is laid out for all to see. It also promotes a healthier lifestyle in a culture of deep fried fast food and big screen televisions. The benefits do not end there, though. Gardens are also utilized by living history sites as an excellent educational tool. These sites use gardens in some of their programs to show the public just what went in to the daily lives of the people who came before us. How did people get most of their food when they could not go to a grocery store? What kind of foods did they eat and how did they get them? It did not matter whether the gardener was a wife and mother of 5 living in Little Rock, AR, or a slave on a Cherokee plantation across the river, gardens were an important source of food medicine, or items for barter or sale and just about everyone had one.

Not all gardens are created equal, however, and the location of the site or the period of interpretation can dramatically change what an interpreter can plant in their garden and how they can tend to it. The staff at the Murrell Home in Park Hill, Oklahoma faced this challenge when we incorporated a kitchen garden into daily programming. We found that when working within a specific period, for us the mid-1800s, seed catalogues come in handy since they tell us what people ordered to plant in a given year. The gardening manuals of the time are also helpful because they deal with specific plants and their uses as well as how plant, tend and harvest the fruits and vegetables and what to do to preserve them. These resources give an excellent overview for gardening of the 19th century.

We also looked at diaries and journals written by people who lived in the area. They wrote about what they ate for dinner, what they saw others eating, what was being sold in area stores and how the planting was done which told us what produce was being grown in local gardens. Letters were another good source of information as people wrote to each other what they were planting in their gardens. Records from slave interviews tell more about what people were eating in this area and give an idea of the differences between "big house" gardens, slave gardens, and the gardens shared between them. Military documents from Fort Gibson, Oklahoma were another wealth of information as well since they kept record of what soldiers. If they were growing certain foods at the Fort, chances were they were growing it at the Murrell plantation. *Continued on page 5*

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2015 Membership Registration

Formatted: Centered, Space After: 12 pt

Name _____

Institution: _____

Position: _____

Street: _____

City, State, ZIP: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

FAX: _____ Web site _____

Type of Membership:

_____ Individual: \$12 - Any adult, 18 years of age or older.

The individual member shall have full voting privileges in the ALHA as a general member.

_____ Institutional: \$50. This fee includes 5 members with full voting privileges.

\$10 per additional member over the first 5.

_____ Number of Additional Members X \$10 = _____

Please list the 5 members to receive the newsletter and their email addresses:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Help us learn more about you.

Periods of Interest: _____

Areas of Interest: _____

What you would like to receive from ALHA: (this will help us develop training opportunities, meetings, workshops, etc.)

Please make Checks Payable to: ALHA

Please send Registration along with Payment to:

Joleen Linson ALHA Secretary

joleen@arkansasheritage.org

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These primary sources also explain how these plants were cared for before modern herbicides and pesticides to keep weeds and insects out of the squash and tomatoes. For example, past gardeners recommended spraying plants with tobacco water or soap water, and plowing just before an intense frost to rid themselves of garden pests. In order for people to eat, they had to be successful gardeners and were usually adept at keeping infestations to a minimum.

Period tools are another important aspect of accurate historical interpretation. No one wants to come to a wonderfully depicted 19th century garden complete with an appropriately dressed gardener and see a bright pink watering can or a plastic handled shovel. Archaeological surveys done in the region give us an insight into the kinds of shovels and hoes used in the 19th century. These items can be found nearly anywhere in the area because, again, if they were using it in Fort Gibson they were probably using it here. Newspaper advertisements for George Murrell's general store give lists of the types of tools being used during this period, also.

There are many ways to determine how a particular community of people were feeding themselves during any given period, though it does take research to find it. Whether we find the information in biographies, old newspapers, or diaries, it is worth the effort. That attention to detail helps visitors see how things were accomplished in the days before modern convenience. They are able to connect the present to the past in a way that makes that past come alive.

Submitted by Jennifer Frazee

A WORD FROM YOUR COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

Please send articles, calendar items, and anything else of interest to living historians to
ALHACommunications@gmail.com

This newsletter is membership driven and will become a tool for history activities, so keep sending articles and sound bites. One of the best things we can do to show support is by sending in article.

ALSO, BE THINKING ABOUT WHO WILL BE ON
YOUR GROUP OR INSTITUTION MEMBERSHIP
LIST IN 2016.

Kerry Spears
Communications Director

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