

---

---

# ALHA

---

---

ARKANSAS LIVING HISTORY ASSOCIATION

Volume 6, Issue 2

Winter 2012

---

## Johnny Cash Live!

**Moriah Istre**

2012 ALHA Conference Scholarship Winner

Dyess Colony, an agricultural resettlement community located in Northeast Arkansas, was established in 1934 as part of a New Deal program that gave impoverished farmers a way to make a new life for themselves. The government selected 500 colonist families to live in newly-built houses and work the land, with the understanding that they would make payments toward owning the land within five years. For most families, it was the first time they had ever lived in a painted house, and they were thrilled.

What makes the history of Dyess additionally significant is the fact that the Cash family was one of Dyess' original colony families. Johnny, or "J.R." as he was known throughout his childhood, was only three years old when his family moved to Dyess from Kingsland, Arkansas. Like many other destitute families, the Cashes viewed Dyess as "the Promised Land."

Growing up in Dyess greatly influenced the young boy that the world later would come to revere as the legendary "Man in Black." As a child, J.R. and his friends went swimming in the Blue Hole, located in the Tyronza River. They also went fishing, played in the cotton gin's loft, and shot turtles and snakes



*(L-R) Moriah Istre, Joanne Cash-Yates, Tommy Cash, and Elista Istre at Johnny Cash's 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday Tribute at Dyess, AR.*

from the twin bridges. J.R.'s boyhood chums, A.J. Henson and J.E. Huff, remembered that when they got older, they would ride their tractor into the next town in order to pick up girls.

J.R. served as class president his senior year at Dyess High School in 1950. Like many other farm boys who wanted to escape the cotton fields, Cash signed up to serve Uncle Sam shortly after graduation. The Air Force required him to enlist with a first name instead of the initials "J.R." As a result, he wrote "John R. Cash" on his application. Later on, Sun Records would dub him "Johnny Cash," and the moniker stuck.

Cash's overnight stardom kept him on the road constantly and although he never returned to live in Dyess, he did occasionally go back to visit friends and family. Cash frequently referenced his Arkansas upbringing in concerts and interviews and kept a cotton boll in his personal vault to remind him of home.

Arkansas State University has partnered with the City of Dyess and the Cash family in order to save several historically significant structures in Dyess. ASU's goal is to make *Historic Dyess Colony: Boyhood Home of Johnny Cash* an international tourism destination and education center. The master plan calls for restoring and furnishing the original Cash home to the period when Johnny lived there (1935-1950), as well as rebuilding several outbuildings such

### Table of Contents

- 2 Visions of the Conference
- 2 Calendar of Events
- 4 Who's Who
- 5 2011 Living History Awards
- 5 ALHA Officers
- 6 ALHA Membership Application

*See "Cash" on page 3*

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### **Saturdays in April; 10am – 4:30pm**

Old State House Museum

*Join us for special Arkansas history programs on Saturdays during the month of March. Admission is free. Call (501) 324-9685 for more information.*

*Admission: Free.*

**CONTACT:**

*Ian Beard*

*300 W. Markham, Little Rock, AR 72201*

*501-324-8642*

*[ian@arkansasheritage.org](mailto:ian@arkansasheritage.org)*

### **April 19, 2012; 12pm – 1pm**

Brown Bag Lecture - Grandiose Schemes, Harsh

Realities: The Civil War in Arkansas in 1862

Old State House Museum

*Professor Thomas A. DeBlack will provide an overview the Civil War in Arkansas during 1862. DeBlack is a professor of history at Arkansas Tech University in Russellville, Arkansas. He is a graduate of Nashville (Arkansas) High School and holds a B.A. from Southern Methodist University (Dallas, TX), an M.S.E. from Ouachita Baptist University, and a Ph.D. from the University of Arkansas. He is co-author of *Arkansas: A Narrative History* (University of Arkansas Press, 2002), and author of *With Fire and Sword: Arkansas 1861-1874* (University of Arkansas Press, 2003). DeBlack is currently working on a book on Lakeport Plantation in Chicot County and on a history of Arkansas Tech University for the school's centennial.*

*Admission: Free.*

**CONTACT:**

*Ian Beard*

*300 W. Markham, Little Rock, AR 72201*

*501-324-8642*

*[ian@arkansasheritage.org](mailto:ian@arkansasheritage.org)*

### **April 26-27, 2012; 9am – 3pm**

Civil War School Days

Hot Springs National Park

*Find out how the Civil War affected everyone who lived in Arkansas. Living historians will present characters involved in these trying times.*

*Admission: FREE*

**CONTACT:**

*Gail Sears*

*501-620-6715*

*[hosp\\_interpretation@nps.gov](mailto:hosp_interpretation@nps.gov)*

## **Visions of the Conference!**



*Ladies enjoy a formal tea as part of the Bonnet Making Workshop at the Headquarters House in downtown Fayetteville.*



*Shiloh Museum volunteers enjoy a relaxed atmosphere after their hard work preparing for the conference.*



*Attendees of the conference enjoy the Saturday evening banquet and ball at Fayetteville Town Center.*

**April 28, 2012; 10am – 2pm**

Jenkins Ferry Day 2012  
Grant County Museum

*The day will feature re-enactments activities from the Battle of Jenkins Ferry fought April 29-30, 1864, in what is now Grant County, Arkansas.*

CONTACT:

D. J. Wallace  
521 Shackelford Road  
Sheridan, AR  
[museum4@windstream.net](mailto:museum4@windstream.net)

**Saturdays in May; 10am – 4:30pm**

Old State House Museum

*Join us for special Arkansas history programs on Saturdays during the month of March. Admission is free. Call (501) 324-9685 for more information.*

*Admission: Free.*

CONTACT:

Ian Beard  
300 W. Markham, Little Rock, AR 72201  
501-324-8642  
[ian@arkansasheritage.org](mailto:ian@arkansasheritage.org)

**May 5, 2012; 10am – 4pm**

Civil War Sesquicentennial: The Pea Ridge Campaign, Spring and Summer 1862  
Old State House Museum

*After the U.S. Army's victory at the battle of Pea Ridge, Arkansas is catapulted to the front lines of the Civil War during the spring and summer of 1862. As armies crisscross the state and ordinary citizens grapple with the realities of war, the government of Confederate Arkansas struggles to manage the crisis from the halls of the Old State House. Visitors will journey through this tumultuous period through a series of short living history programs addressing the many faces of the war in Arkansas. In contrast to past Civil War events at the Old State House, this one will not be characterized by singular large scale recreations throughout the day but by ongoing vignettes, allowing a visitor to travel through at their own speed and to interact with all the characters participating in the program without requiring a commitment of more than an hour or two. Come experience the Civil War in Arkansas first hand from the people who lived through it. This event will coincide with the opening of the Old State House's newest Civil War Sesquicentennial exhibit, "Wall of Fire." Living Historians needed.*

*Admission: Free.*

CONTACT:

Ian Beard  
300 W. Markham, Little Rock, AR 72201  
501-324-8642  
[ian@arkansasheritage.org](mailto:ian@arkansasheritage.org)

---

**"Cash" from page 1**

---

as smokehouse, chicken coop, outhouse, and barn. Cash's surviving siblings, Joanne Cash-Yates and Tommy Cash, have shared their memories about growing up in that house and would love to watch their childhood home come to life with living history programming.

The Dyess Colony Administration Building, located in the town's center, will house a permanent museum exhibit that tells the story the WPA community, as well as the Cash family's connection to it. Once restored, the Dyess Colony Theater will serve an ideal venue for featuring the museum complex's orientation film. Plans are underway to see this heritage site open to the public by the summer of 2013.

In order to raise funds to facilitate the restoration process, Arkansas State University hosted the inaugural Johnny Cash Music Festival on August 4, 2011. The concert was a sold-out success that raised over \$300,000. The PBS documentary of the concert will be released this spring.

On what would have been Cash's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, about 25 members of the Cash family gathered in Dyess to help launch the national fundraising campaign, "The Johnny Cash Boyhood Home Project." Although birthday tributes were hosted in honor of Cash all over the world, the family chose to be in Dyess.

To stay updated regarding the progress of *Historic Dyess Colony: Boyhood Home of Johnny Cash*, or to keep informed about this year's Johnny Cash Music Festival on October 5, simply log onto our website at [www.johnnycashmusicfest.com](http://www.johnnycashmusicfest.com).



~~~~~  
Elista  
Istre and  
Rosanne  
Cash in  
front of the  
Cash home  
at Dyess,  
Arkansas.  
~~~~~

**May 10-12, 2012; 9am – 5pm**

Living History Fair School Days

Parkin Archeological State Park

*Watch history unfold before your eyes as Conquistadores, French fur trappers, Sawmill workers and more go about their daily lives. Cost is \$2.00 per student (private schools, add tax) and \$2.97 for each adult, teachers and bus drivers are free. School groups are encouraged to reserve a spot early as slots fill quickly.*

CONTACT:

Ryan Smith

PO Box 1110, Parkin, AR 72373-1110

870-755-2500

[ryan.smith@arkansas.gov](mailto:ryan.smith@arkansas.gov)

**May 19, 2012; 9am – 5pm**

Armed Forces Day at Washington

Historic Washington State Park

*The service and sacrifice of soldiers is timeless. This special day is set aside to remember the soldiers who fought in wars that have impacted our country since its founding, particularly the time periods interpreted here at the park. There will be exhibits and first person living history attractions related to the Revolutionary War, War of 1812, Texas Revolution, Mexican War, Civil War, Indian Wars, and World Wars I and II. Representatives of the current military will also be on hand. Help us to honor those that have fought for our freedom. Living Historians needed! Admission: Regular Tour Price*

CONTACT:

Billy Nations

PO Box 129, Washington, AR 71862

870-983-2860

[Billy.nations@arkansas.gov](mailto:Billy.nations@arkansas.gov)

**June 16, 2012; 10am – 4pm**

Arkansas Statehood 176: The Election of 1836

Historic Arkansas Museum (morning)

Old State House Museum (afternoon)

*Visit Arkansas at the time of statehood as living historians recreate both everyday and political life in the summer of 1836. Merchants, entertainers, politicians, lawyers, doctors, and assorted other characters from Arkansas past will be present to interact with in a historical setting.*

*Admission: Free.*

CONTACT:

Ian Beard

300 W. Markham, Little Rock, AR 72201

501-324-8642

[ian@arkansasheritage.org](mailto:ian@arkansasheritage.org)

**Put your event or program in the ALHA Calendar. Send your Summer Event submissions for the Spring newsletter by**

**May 1.**

# Who's Who!!!

## Leita Spears

### ALHA District IV Representative

Recently a new representative was made for District IV of the Arkansas Living History Association. Her name is Leita Spears. Leita has shown great interest in ALHA and the area of living history. For those of you though, that have not met her, below is brief biography of her. Make sure to get to know your Regional Representatives and express any events or programs you would like to see in your area of the state or part of ALHA.



Leita is currently the Park Historian at Historic Washington State Park located in southwest Arkansas in the town of Washington. She has been involved with living history through work in the museums at Fort Smith and Van Buren, Arkansas. She has been part of a living history organization known as "History Helpers." She has been a big supporter and volunteer of a cemetery living history program in Van Buren, Arkansas.

The time period she focuses on is the nineteenth century, although she enjoys many different types of living history. Leita is also a member of the National Association of Interpretation and is completing a masters degree in the area of interpretive studies.

Welcome to our new ALHA Region IV Rep!!!

# Congratulations!

## Outstanding Living History Event of 2011

“Lawn Social”  
George M. Murrell Home  
Park Hill, Oklahoma



## Outstanding Living History Character of 2011

Jeanie Frauenthal  
“Carrie N. Nation”  
Old State House Museum



# JOIN THE ALHA FACEBOOK PAGE!



## SEE PICTURES FROM THE RECENT 2012 ALHA CONFERENCE

POST YOUR OWN PICTURES OF  
THE CONFERENCE ON  
FACEBOOK AND BECOME A  
FRIEND!!!

## 2011 ALHA Officers

President	Kristyn Watts <a href="mailto:kristyn.watts@arkansas.gov">kristyn.watts@arkansas.gov</a>
Vice President	Barbara Ward <a href="mailto:barbara@arkansasheritage.org">barbara@arkansasheritage.org</a>
Secretary	Pody Gay <a href="mailto:pgay@springdalear.gov">pgay@springdalear.gov</a>
Treasure	Tess Kidd <a href="mailto:tesstucker@aol.com">tesstucker@aol.com</a>
Comm. Dir.	Josh Williams <a href="mailto:josh.williams@arkansas.gov">josh.williams@arkansas.gov</a>

## District Representatives

District 1	Ben Swadley <a href="mailto:ben.swadley@arkansas.gov">ben.swadley@arkansas.gov</a>
District 2	Ian Beard <a href="mailto:ian@arkansasheritage.org">ian@arkansasheritage.org</a>
District 3	Steve Dunlap <a href="mailto:sedunlap@agfc.state.ar.us">sedunlap@agfc.state.ar.us</a>
District 4	Leita Spears <a href="mailto:leita.spears@arkansas.gov">leita.spears@arkansas.gov</a>

# Arkansas Living History Association 2012 Membership Registration

---

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Institution: \_\_\_\_\_  
Position: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street: \_\_\_\_\_  
City, State, ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
FAX: \_\_\_\_\_ Web site: \_\_\_\_\_

---

## Type of Membership:

\_\_\_ **Individual: \$12** Any adult, 18 yrs of age or older. The member shall have full voting privileges in the ALHA as a general member.

\_\_\_ **Institutional: \$50** This 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:

Pody Gay, ALHA Secretary  
Shiloh Museum of Ozark History  
118 West Johnson Avenue  
Springdale. AR 72764

Visit us at [www.arkansaslivinghistory.org](http://www.arkansaslivinghistory.org) and find us on Facebook