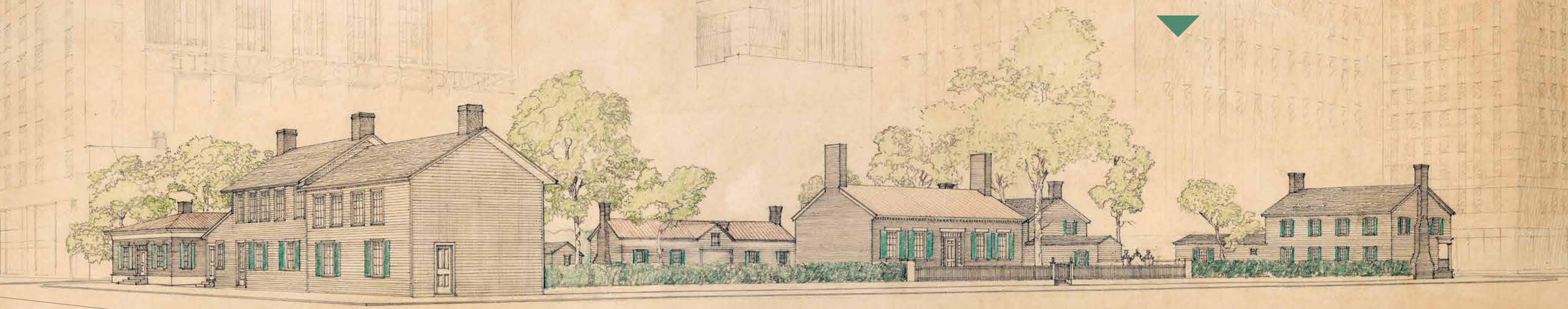
Streamlined City of the Future. Max Mayer. 1938

AS THE HISTORIC ARKANSAS MUSEUM FÊTES ITS 75TH YEAR, A LOOK AT THE TWO INDIVIDUALS WHO'VE SHAPED ITS COURSE AND ENSURED ITS FUTURE: FOUNDER LOUISE LOUGHBOROUGH AND LONGTIME EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR BILL WORTHEN



MAKING HISTORY

FOUNDERS, KEEPERS

VISITORS MAY HAVE NOTICED THE LIKENESS OF AN OLDER WOMAN, CAPTURED IN OILS AND PHOTOGRAPHS, KEEPING VIGIL OVER THE ROOMS AND HALLS OF THE HISTORIC ARKANSAS MUSEUM. FOR THOSE UNFAMILIAR, HER NAME IS **LOUISE LOUGHBOROUGH**, FOUNDER OF THE MUSEUM. AND IT'S ALL BECAUSE OF HER

BY MARIAM MAKATSARIA

Louise Loughborough wasn't very tall. Or so I'm told by the three women I'm sitting with near the soaring windows on the upper level of the Historic Arkansas Museum. In an effort to learn as much about its founder as possible, I've decided to meet Elizabeth Reha and Tricia Spione, two historical re-enactors who have, at one point or another, portrayed Louise. Both Elizabeth and Tricia are charming, the kind of women who make jokes, laugh heartily and externalize everything. Neither bear any resemblance to Louise. Not physically, at least. To their right is Felicia Richardson, the museum's living-history coordinator who uses news clippings, letters and photographs to piece together the actresses' monologues—and who does a little acting on the side, too. "And all of us are tall women," Tricia says, every inch of her face expressive.

Despite what the tall women tell me, I can't think of Louise as being a particularly short lady. In a black-and-white photo displayed in an exhibit celebrating the museum's 75th anniversary, she cuts an imposing figure, with birdlike features. She's sitting in a floral chintz chair, her left elbow resting on its arm, her right hand loosely gripping an *Antiques* magazine. She's not smiling. Rather, she has a preoccupied look on her face, eyes narrowed as if someone's asked her something that took her by surprise, and she hasn't yet thought of a proper answer. And you can tell, even by the way she's positioned in her seat, that there's an eagerness about her, a kind of toughness that made a giant of her—despite her diminutive stature.

There's a reason why, whenever Louise's name is mentioned, it's always preceded by the words "pioneer" or "leader." She accomplished something that was nothing short of extraordinary during the dysfunctional Great Depression era: She founded the Arkansas Territorial Restoration, or what is now the Historic Arkansas Museum, saving a half block of houses from condemnation at a time when historic preservation was still a novel idea—a time when women struggled with the burdens of domesticity, and the country with a great economic malaise.

"It was because of that powerhouse aspect of her," Elizabeth chimes in, enunciating every word, the way stage actresses do to project their voices in an auditorium. "Here's this little person making things happen for Little Rock and for Arkansas. She was one smart cookie, because she knew what she wanted."

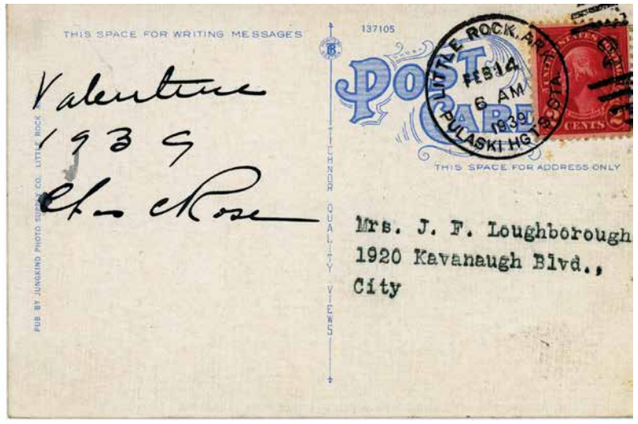
The other two women nod in agreement. At this point, the sun is low enough that it briefly blinds me, and I shift in my seat to get a proper view of Elizabeth without having to squint, listening as they begin to tell the story.

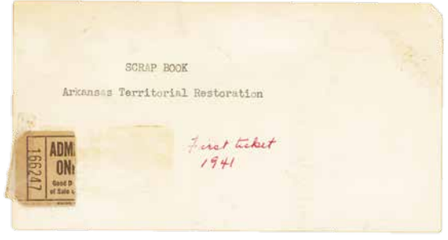
We talk about how Louise, who desperately wanted to save the half block of dilapidated houses between Markham and Cumberland, made an appointment with the Little Rock branch of the Work Progress Administration—an ambitious New Deal agency that aimed to conquer unemployment by supporting infrastructure projects. As the women speak, I learn not only that Louise had a soft spot for historic preservation, but that there was also something nostalgic for her about the buildings.

As a child, she'd stroll down across Third Street on her way home from school, and every once in a while, she'd make a loop around Cumberland to a pay a visit to a candy store she was particularly fond of. As a young girl looking around the neighborhood, she could see nothing but magic. Sure, the houses were a little shabby, even by standards of the time. But they offered a quiet link to the past, to the stories she'd heard from family members. This house was where Scottish stonemason Robert Brownlee lived with his family and two slaves. That house was where William Woodruff turned out the territory's first newspaper. In the 1880s, the block had been all but stripped of its virtue, surrendered to a cluster of brothels and transformed into an unruly slum. "The ladies of the night," as Louise called the prostitutes living in the notorious red-light district, were plaguing an area that became known more for its squalor than the grandeur she'd heard of.

And that's how Louise came to meet a man by the name of Floyd Sharp, the administrator of the WPA, who was less than convinced the undertaking would be something of interest to the administration. But Louise was blessed with the fluttery charm and gracious manners of a true Southern lady, and Floyd couldn't quite bring himself to say no. To subdue her, or perhaps curb her ambitions, he cooked up the near unfathomable sum of $30,000 that would need to be raised before the WPA would even consider lifting a finger to help fund site acquisition and restoration. The compelling-needs statement (a proposal explaining why the project mattered and needed to exist) she was asked to turn in was meant to make the task close to impossible. For the project to become remotely appealing to the WPA, Louise had to do her fair share of what we would now call lobbying. After all, the structures she was trying to save—with the exception of the William Woodruff print shop—hadn't really housed people of great importance or prominence.

"I think she was also aware of what she needed to [say] in order to get the Legislature to help her out, so she focused on the important, higher-up people," Felicia says matter-





of-factly, and that's followed by a wave of Elizabeth's and Tricia's bobbing heads. Take the Hinderliter house, for example, which was perhaps best known for being a working-class bar. But Louise knew what to emphasize—the story of this log house being where the last Territorial Legislature met in 1835, where powerful lawmakers congregated after working hours over a drink or two. And that alone, Louise proposed, made the house an invaluable structure.

In addition to being charismatic, however, Louise had clout. Her earnestness and intellectual curiosity can be traced back to her lineage, which included the likes of Arkansas Supreme Court Justice George Claiborne Watkins and William Savin Fulton, Arkansas' last territorial governor who later became a senator. What's more, a life of civic activity had provided her with the tools necessary to get what she wanted. In addition to her husband's connections—a well-known attorney, he had more than a few acquaintances in the state's General Assembly—Louise had spent years developing her own. She'd been involved in the preservation of the Old State House, and active in the National Society of Colonial Dames. She was the vice regent of the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, which owns and maintains George Washington's estate. In 1936, for example, the *Arkansas Gazette* noted that she spent 10 days at Mount Vernon, where she picked peonies and white iris from the president's garden and used them to adorn tables for an afternoon-tea event, then spent the day with the Roosevelts on the veranda, overlooking the Potomac River.

The challenge Floyd threw her way was merely a hurdle. Louise's plan of attack was simple. She tugged on the legislators' coat lapels and asked them for 30 seconds of their time, to which, once again, they couldn't say no.Ultimately, the General Assembly was convinced. The next time she waltzed into Floyd's office, Louise had $30,000 in hand. Despite his shock and reluctance, Floyd kept his promise.

Being a vanguard for historic preservation, the ladies tell me, Louise had a vision. But it wasn't just about saving old buildings. It was important that the block's present be very much a product of its past—a relic of early Arkansas, its founding fathers and their "courage and fineness." To her, the misuse of the houses by the "ladies of the night" was a personal offense. In that sense, she wanted to strip the block of its gritty reality—and who better than architect Max Mayer to make that vision come true? After all, Max had studied in Paris, snagged the then-prestigious Prix de Rome and spent some years learning and designing in Italy. With Max's help, Louise restored the structures to their Colonial-era greatness. She went so far as to add boxwood cuttings from Mount Vernon to the Brownlee House's garden—because there's nothing more telling of the founding of the country than living things cut from the living things that once flourished where George Washington roamed. It was a connection she deeply cherished, and she wanted us to feel the same way. And in the summer of 1941, the Arkansas Territorial Restoration opened with the sole mission of restoring the historic structures. Louise served as its chairwoman—a position she held for 20 years until she fell ill in 1961.

"We're here because of her, essentially, because of her vision, so we love those stories," says Tricia. "Man, it was the '30s, and she went to the Legislature and said, 'Excuse me.'" Tricia's voice thins into a flutelike tone, then softens into a whisper. "I love that she tugged on their collar or something and had her little note cards."

Peering over Elizabeth's head, I catch a glimpse of the brick chimney and white wood of the Hinderliter House, and the realization hits me: Louise had once stared at these buildings, walked these grounds many, many years ago. Surely, the structures themselves are the same, but I know they are somehow different. In looking at photographs, the befores and afters, it's easy to see. The buildings are now neater, the square is tighter, almost like a freshly made bed. By the Hinderliter House, there's a tree that now stands 40-some feet tall, tipping to the left like a drunkard. I remember stopping by it during a tour I'd taken a few weeks before, overwhelmed by the tree's size and my smallness in comparison. The trees I've seen in photos of the museum's early days—like the one in the picture of two ladies at the opening of the Arkansas Territorial Restoration, which stands near the museum's glass doors with a space for visitors to stick in their grinning, camera-ready faces—are young and humble, with dainty limbs and a smattering of leaves. I think, so much of this place has changed. Grown up. Moved on, but still looking back.

This museum center where I we're sitting didn't even exist until 2001. Louise wouldn't have recognized the theater space, certainly not the exhibits boasting the many artists who came long after she died in 1962, and definitely not the hashtags painted on the museum's walls. But even though she's not here to see how far the place has come, she was there to ensure its birth. And in being a steward for that legacy, she made a place for herself. After all, there's a reason why these three women are so involved in keeping her spirit alive, and there's a reason why, even when talking about themselves, the conversation somehow ricochets from acting back to the woman they've been charged with bringing to life.

"It's the confidence. It's the way you hold yourself. It's the standing up straight. It's the looking in the eye," says Tricia, suddenly sitting up straight. It brings us back to Louise, who, as the women pontificate, always carried herself with certainty and poise. There is no way of knowing what was crossing the founder's mind, of course, and all these little mannerisms the actresses assume to be Louise's—our exchanges are peppered with "Louise must have" or "should have" or "probably did." But there are things that we do know. Louise Loughborough might not have been a tall woman, but she certainly stood well above the fray.

AN OBJECT LESSON

SINCE 1972, THE HISTORIC ARKANSAS MUSEUM HAS BEEN IN ONE MAN'S (EXTREMELY CAPABLE) HANDS. AS **BILL WORTHEN** PREPARES TO RETIRE LATER THIS YEAR, HE OFFERS A UNIQUE PERSPECTIVE ON THE INSTITUTION HE'S NURTURED THESE PAST 44 YEARS: ITS HISTORY AS TOLD THROUGH THE MUSEUM HOLDINGS HE MOST ADMIRES

AS TOLD TO KATIE BRIDGES | PHOTOGRAPHY BY RETT PEEK

"This is just absolutely fun for me," says longtime Historic Arkansas Museum Director Bill Worthen, pulling open the door of the museum's 1,500-square-foot on-site storage space. "This is the kind of thing I just *love* to do."

He flicks a switch, and the fluorescent lights overhead begin to blink to life. And though I'm not sure what to expect—this is, after all, my first time in the belly of a museum—I've got to say it's not what I'm seeing as the shadows filling the cinder-block-walled space begin to take shape. Which is this: furniture everywhere, arranged in neat aisles of kempt antiques. A hodgepodge of cane chairs and wooden clocks and end tables. Orderly racks of shotguns; racks of fine art. I mean, it's like the prop department for an inflated-budget film titled *Arkansas: The Movie*. Or like your grandmother's mysteriously overstuffed basement—if your grandmother is, you know, *Arkansas*.

"And this isn't all of it," Bill says, noticing my wide-eyed stupor. "We've got 4,000 square feet off-site."

As we walk through the space, I realize the man who's been helming Arkansas' foremost historic museum for more than four decades is, at heart, a consummate tour guide, a guy with more Arkansas facts and figures on the tip of his tongue than most of us could hope to muster in a lifetime. "Now, I don't want to shock you, but I will show you the one antebellum nude we know was done in Arkansas. I'm gonna cover my eyes," he says, pulling out a sliding pegboard rack dotted with framed portraits, landscapes, sketches—a gallery in miniature. "He was so proud, he actually signed it: *Henry Byrd*. He rarely signed his work."

Bill has stories for the other works, too—one of the very few antebellum oil paintings to include an African-American; a painting by George Catlin (who documented Native Americans on canvas) of Mrs. John Drennen (the wife of the man who oversaw their removal from the territory). In fact, everywhere we look, there's a story. There's the Edward Durrell Stone-designed children's furniture—"very modern, er, *moderne*?" says Bill—and the early-20th-century clocks made in Texarkana. ("Who'd've guessed that such nice clocks could be made there?") There are the baskets and the Bowie knives and the hand-carved walking sticks. And while he's effusive with stories of the objects' provenances, bubbling over with that enthusiasm reserved for folks who are living their life's work, he never mentions the one thing they all have in common—the antebellum nudes, the *moderne* chifferobes, the silver-plated shotguns, the what-have-yous.

They're all here because of *him*.

To understand this, you've got to rewind the tapes about 44 years. It's 1972, and Bill, then a young history teacher, has just assumed the mantle of the Arkansas Territorial Restoration, "more of a historic-preservation project than a museum," as he says, with a staff of six. The ATR is moving into its third decade at a time when the idea of what a museum could be is beginning to mature—moving beyond the preservation of historic homes and into a more visitor-friendly experience—and Bill sees potential everywhere. His first task? Seek accreditation for the museum. His second? To bring those standards of professionalism to the houses on the grounds. "We no longer had Ms. Loughborough's taste and vision, so we had to fall back on something," Bill says. "So we fell back on research."

For the next few decades, Bill and his team devoted themselves to researching the state's artisan tradition, first in an effort to fill the museum houses with period-relevant, Arkansas-made pieces, and later, once they'd learned of the many treasures out there begging to be preserved, to understand and celebrate a century and a half of Arkansas creatives. In the 1980s, the museum created the "Arkansas Made" program, dedicating itself to procuring and preserving for perpetuity Arkansas artisan goods—"decorative, mechanical and fine art"—made in the past 200 years. (In 2001, the expanded museum changed from the Arkansas Territorial Restoration to the Historic Arkansas Museum, further honoring that commitment.) These days, though it's hard for Bill to pin down an exact number, the museum's holdings now number some 75,000.

"It's so much fun to show people something about their home state that they didn't know," he says. "You know, Arkansas used to have a bit of an inferiority complex. I don't think it has that now, but there's still a residue of that *We don't have any great artists*, whatever. Well, we *do*. In a lot of ways, we have as good of an artisan tradition as anybody—and how much fun is it to open that to folks here in the state? That's what I love about this."

Which is what brought me here. A few months ago, as Bill began to wind down toward his retirement (which coincides with the 75th anniversary of the institution he's shaped and guided these past 44 years—picking up where Louise left off, filling in the gaps), I'd come to him with a question: Would he be willing to share the 10 museum holdings he holds most dear? Or would that be too hard?

"It actually didn't take me all that long," he says as we sit down to chat about those 10 things in his conference room, where a striking oil portrait of Louise silently takes stock of our conversation. "To tell the story, these are the objects."

FANCY DANCE BUSTLE

PAINTING OF DON JOSEPH

FANCY DANCE BUSTLE

Mickey Mouse Beaded Dance Bustle; hawk feathers, beads; Quapaw, 20th century; on loan to the Historic Arkansas Museum from Ardina Moore

"OUR PERMANENT EXHIBIT *We Walk in Two Worlds: The Caddo, Osage & Quapaw in Arkansas* chronicles the Native American presence here. We invited three nations—the Osage, the Caddo and the Quapaw—to come here and work with us. And all of them were eager to come. I was naively thinking, *Oh, well, we'll just tell one story. It'll be the Indian story and the white man's story*. No, no, no. You have *three* stories. You have three different nations, and each one has a distinctive history and a very clear, different language, different mythology, values.

"They really came up with the title, which has a lot of different implications: It's the historical world and the present world, it's a world of whites and Indians, and it's a world, even within themselves, of the values that are sort of pulling them apart in a lot of ways. But it's also a world of coming together. And the object that best describes this concept for me in the whole exhibit is this dance bustle. It was made by Ardina Moore, who was one of the elders we were working with. She's the granddaughter of the principal chief of the Quapaw. Her grandson became a fancy dancer, dancing in competitions—just an expression of Native American artistry. So she made this fancy-dance bustle that he'd wear on his back. Well, he loved Mickey Mouse. And so, you know, the combination of the two worlds this represents is just such a beautiful statement of, *We're making the best of these two worlds*. It's one of my favorites."

PAINTING OF DON JOSEPH

Capt. Joseph Bernard Valliere d'Hauterive (1747-1797); oil on canvas; attributed to the artist Jose

BOWIE NO. 1

THE CARRIGAN KNIFE

Francisco Xavier De SalazarY Mendoza (1750-1802), New Orleans and Louisiana Territory, 1790-1795; 47 by 39 ¾ inches; gift of Mr. and Mrs. A. Howard Stebbins III

"THIS PORTRAIT is of the commandant of Arkansas Post, Don Joseph Bernard Valliere d'Hauterive. He was French, but at the time, Louisiana was owned by the Spanish. They sort of contracted out with the French, who knew the local area better. This was painted by Jose de Salazar, who was a very well-known New Orleans painter. It could have been painted in New Orleans, but artists were notorious for traveling to wherever they could get a good commission. If you had two or three people you were going to paint, it would make the trip worthwhile.

"The reason this painting is one of my favorites is because it was given by Elsie and Howard Stebbins. And they were sort of mentors in the business of collecting Arkansas. They started collecting Arkansas stuff in the 1940s and 1950s and were just terrific students of the past. "There was a direct descendant of Don Joseph who still owned the portrait. In 1955 or thereabouts, Mr. Stebbins came to terms with them—they could use the money, and Mr. Stebbins obviously wanted the painting. We lusted over this painting for years, and the Stebbinses finally decided they'd let us have it. And it really is one of the finest objects of early Arkansas."

RAMAGE PRESS

"WILLIAM E. WOODRUFF knew that as soon as Arkansas was named a territory, somebody would be named printer to the territory, and if you were the printer, you were responsible for all of the official government documents. You might make your living making a newspaper—a *tough* living—but if you had this government contract, you would have a leg up. He hustled a used Ramage press and brought it to Arkansas territory, landed at Arkansas Post and started the newspaper immediately upon getting here.

"We wanted to have the kind of press that was actually used in Arkansas Post and at this site, where he printed the *Arkansas Gazette* from 1824 to 1827. For three years, that building was the sort of nerve center, the information center of the entire territory. So we sent Andy Zawacki, our conservator, to do some research on the Ramage press. Turns out that Ramage presses did not have interchangeable parts—you made one press, you sent it away, you made another. They weren't uniform. So we said, *OK, we're going to need to make one*. John Horn, a local printing expert, helped us. He paid the expense for having two presses made—we got one, and he got the other. It's a precise replica of the one Woodruff brought here.

"Our restoration of the print shop was completed just a few years ago. She had some reasons for it, but Ms. Loughborough actually tore down what was left of the original two-story print shop in 1941. It had been changed somewhat—the wall had fallen in; there'd been a fire. There were enough differences that we cut her some slack, saying, *We understand why you made the mistake you made.*"

DWIGHT MISSION SAMPLER

DWIGHT MISSION SAMPLER

Rare Native American Sampler; silk crewels cross-stitched on linen support; made by Nancy Graves (b. 1817), Dwight Mission Cherokee settlement near present-day Russellville, Arkansas; dated 1828; 14 by 14 inches; Arkansas Natural and Cultural Resources Council Grant Purchase

"THE OSAGE CAPTIVE is a fairly well-known story in the Native American world. There was an Osage girl, Maria James, who was captured by the Cherokee and was put into the school at Dwight Mission, which was started near Russellville. The school was run by missionaries, and they taught students the social graces. The sampler was the sort of defining statement of the students' abilities in needlework, as it were. And these samplers can tell such a depth of story: the Native American and the white relationship, the education of women, the demonstration of competency in women's work, all of those kinds of things, and, you know, bringing Christianity to the 'heathens,' as these

ARKANSAS TRAVELER PRINT

Washbourne; lithograph on paper, hand-colored; Leopold Grozelier, lithographer; printed and published by J.H. Bufford's, Boston, 1859; 20 ¼ by 18 ¼ inches; gift of Parker Westbrook

missionaries were doing—that's in quotes, by the way.

"This sampler, made by Nancy Graves at Dwight Mission, is the oldest known Native American sampler. And the way we got it was so much fun, too. Our curator here—just another great person—is Swannee Bennett. As Swannee was bidding on this, he was on the phone. The Sotheby's operator who was bidding for him said, 'What's that going on in the background? Is that a shot?' Swannee said, 'Well, yes, I'm trying to kill some ducks here!' He was bidding on this from the duck blind. I think he killed his limit that day.

"It turned out that the other bidder was the Smithsonian. It would have been great in the National Museum of the American Indian, there's no question. But it's also great here, because it's an Arkansas story."

ARKANSAS TRAVELER PRINT

The Arkansas Traveler, after the genre painting by Edward Payson

"THE ARKANSAS TRAVELER was a cultural phenomenon. It was a piece of music. Then it was a dialogue: *Where does this road go? It doesn't go anywhere. Why don't you fix the roof? Well, it's raining. Why don't you fix the roof when it's not raining? Well, it don't need fixin' then! Hee Haw* kind of stuff, but it's classic. Folklorists see it as one of the quintessential statements of regional folklore in America.

"Turns out that an Arkansas artist managed to capture it, a fellow by the name of Edward Payson Washbourne. He painted this picture of his acquaintance, Sandy Faulkner, who was the original Traveler—the guy who first told the story of being lost and going up to the squatter's cabin and trying to get directions, and the squatter just *would not* give him any information. All the while, the squatter's playing the first half of the tune. And then finally, the Traveler says, *Why don't you play the turn of the tune?*, and the squatter says, *Well that's all there is*. And the Traveler says, *Mind if I?* And he plays the second half. And then he's welcomed into the house, given all the whiskey that's left. The way Sandy Faulkner told the story, it was about the end of the frontier—class or economic level. And it was reconciliation through the magic of music. And I love that story.

"But unfortunately, when the story caught on all over the country, and when the people telling it were outside of Arkansas—when it wasn't Sandy Faulkner—it became a joke on the state. The last line of one of the most popular stories is: *He hasn't had the courage to visit Arkansas since*. All through the last half of the 19th century, people would complain about the damage the Traveler had done to our reputation. But one of things we've been able to do is to help re-establish the Arkansas Traveler as a great creation of Arkansas folklore. This print was the first Traveler print that came out, and it acknowledged the artist, who was an Arkansas boy, and it acknowledged Sandy Faulkner—an Arkansas boy, too—as the original Traveler. It's the most essential statement of the Arkansas Traveler image, and it was given by one of our beloved commission members, who died just last year, Parker Westbrook."

W.O. ROBERTSON RIFLE

JAMES BLACK KNIVES

The Carrigan Knife; James Black, Arkansas; c. 1830; steel, walnut scales, silver wrap, plated silver, tang and ricasso; guardless Bowie type; guardless coffin-shaped handle wrapped with silver; 10 1/4-inch overall length; gift of Mary Delia Carrigan Prather

Bowie No. 1; attributed to James Black, Arkansas; c. 1830-1836; black walnut with wood handle scales, silver-wrapped pommel, bolster and fluted tang, silver studs and escutcheon; clip-point blade with silver-wrapped ricasso and sharpened false edge; 18 1/2-inch overall length

"THE CARRIGAN KNIFE was given to us by the Prather family. Because of this knife and its lineage, we know who owned it from the time it left James Black's shop in Washington, Arkansas, until now. It's only been in the ownership of two different families, and it was documented in 1919—a photograph of it, a story about it. So we have a really strong legacy of that knife. And it sort of opened our eyes to the possibility of this other knife, the Bowie No. 1, which came up for auction in 1992. We had to sort of cobble together donations from here and there—$32,000 for one knife. Everyone agrees it's probably worth three times that.

"Now the Bowie No. 1 clearly came from the same shop. It was definitely made by the same person. It says Bowie No. 1 on the plate—an old, old marking. We don't know whether James Black did it or whether someone who owned it did it later, and then you ask yourself a question: If you had a knife that you knew was related to the Bowie family, and arguably the *first* Bowie knife, how would you mark it if you wanted to perpetuate the story of this knife? Probably "Bowie No. 1." So, we may have Jim Bowie's or his brother Rezin's knife down there, or not. And that's one of the great things about collecting: You never know for sure."

HINDERLITER HOUSE

"IT'S THE OLDEST HOUSE in the city. It's on its original site; it's forever been right there. It was a grog shop, a place for people getting together and being convivial. You know, what could be better than hanging around a bar in early Arkansas and having a little flask of grog and enjoying life with your friends?

"I have all sorts of fond memories of the Hinderliter House. On opening day of the Territorial Restoration in 1941, my mother was a volunteer tour guide in the house. And during our Christmas open house, we do country dancing in there. I am, oh, how many generations … Well, I'm old Arkansas from before the territorial period on my mother's side, and from the territorial period on my father's side. My dad taught us how to do the Virginia Reel to music that was actually being played on an old wind-up record player. That was part of our education. Now I lead the Virginia Reel. We have country dancers who really know what they're doing, and they're great, but they let me sit in and lead a couple of dances."

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AN OBJECT LESSON

Continued from page 77

ROBERTSON RIFLE

Half-Stock Percussion Rifle; steel, iron, copper, coin silver, walnut stock; made by W. O. Robertson, Pulaski County, Arkansas, 1870; 55-inch overall length; purchased with generous donations from David Crews, Mr. and Mrs. Adron Crews, Allen McKay, Nellie Mosley, Andy Edwards, Jim and Peggy Jones, Don Winton, Rush Harding, David Alexander, Fadjo Cravens Jr., Don Hamilton and Dr. Charles Haynie

"W.O. ROBERTSON made this rifle in Little Rock in 1870—a period when, really, most guns were being made in a factory. It had all the bells and whistles. I mean, little compartments, compression caps for firing, a place for powder, a sheath and a knife, silver decoration—just one of these statements of, *I am a gunsmith and I can make a gun that does anything*. Which is sort of sad, because it was right at the end of the artisan tradition.

"But one of the things about it that's so important to me is that this was one of the first objects we bought in auction after we really committed to the *Arkansas Made* thing. And I vividly remember, it was an auction over in Lonoke—Mac McCrary had died, and it was in his collection. We were bidding on it, and it was just so exciting. I think we got the gun for like $3,000—it's worth far more than that. But at the time, that was a formidable amount of money. And it represented the commitment of the museum to really, *seriously* go after Arkansas-made stuff: *This is the direction we want to go in; this is what we can show off to the state*."

GIVING VOICE MONUMENT

"AS A MUSEUM, we tell our stories through objects. But enslaved folks weren't able to leave a great material legacy behind because of the nature of their situation. We realized that in order to tell those stories, theater might be a good way. And that's when we latched onto a particularly gifted fellow named Curtis Tate. Curtis was an actor who grew up in the Children's Theater at the Arkansas Arts Center, and he was a creative entrepreneur in a lot of ways. We hired him to be our first full-time interpreter. He really sort of turned this institution around as far as our understanding of our African-American heritage is concerned.

"One of Curtis' dreams was to have every enslaved person connected to a property on the museum's grounds to be represented by some way in a monument. And it was one of those things where it was a nice sentiment, but how do you realize that? We knew we'd have to do a lot of research. Unfortunately, Curtis died tragically. But we were able to find a number of names, and a number of, just, *numbers*, basically—unnamed people who were only documented through numbers in the slave schedules of the census. You're talking about real people and, just, a *mark*. For the entire legacy of their life here.

"With the *Giving Voice* monument, the idea was that we might give those people a voice, even if it's a teeny-tiny voice. It was Curtis' vision, and we were finally able to dedicate it a few years ago. The monument's out there, and every single person our research could come up with is there—some of them full names, some of them one name, some of them just an enumeration."

HERB GARDEN

"THE HERB SOCIETY of America's Arkansas Unit has two other herb gardens in Little Rock. There's one at the Governor's Mansion and then one at the School for the Blind. My mother, Mary Fletcher Worthen, did the research for the one here and came up with a little booklet called *Frontier Pharmacy*, which details the herbal remedies early settlers and Native Americans used. Some of them definitely work; some of them are … questionable. We had to discourage my mother from wanting to put in opium poppies—she finally realized that being hauled away to the pokey was not what she really wanted to do. But she, you know, *really* wanted to be historically accurate.

"The Herb Society has been doing this for 40 years, and I'm so appreciative of volunteers like them. The Master Gardeners, the Herb Society, the Colonial Dames … these are all people who've stuck with us over the years. They make this place so much better than it would be without 'em." AL