

GC Historical Society: History from Home

Dear Friends,

We've put something fun on our website for you to see from your homes since our April 21 program at the Garland County Library has had to be cancelled. Go to our website (garlandcountyhistoricalsociety.com) and click on the "Special" button on the site's toolbar. You'll find President Clyde Covington's light-hearted look at Hot Springs' furred, feathered, and scaly friends of the past. And in the coming weeks we'll continue to provide glimpses of the past on the "Special" website page.

Here's a couple of the interesting animals Clyde discovered:



Black Diamond, a star of the Ostrich Farm on Whittington Avenue, was supposedly the most famous ostrich in America and the most photographed ostrich in the world. So popular was the 350-375 pound, nine-foot-tall bird that his obituary was printed in the Hot Springs Sentinel-Record when he died in 1924 at the age of fifty-nine. Besides taking visitors for a spin, he often raced other ostriches on the farm's one-fourth mile track.



A canine survivor of the September 5, 1913 fire that destroyed 60 city blocks stands in front of the ruins of Hot Springs High School on Oak Street. Image donated by Beau Durbin.

Please join us on Facebook! Facebook manager Toma Whitlock continues to provide fascinating historic photographs and a chance to chat about them. People are sharing great memories on this recent post:



The Sunset Drive-in was opened by Mrs. Jessie Howe in 1950 in the 3300 block of Central

Avenue, when Central Ave was a narrow two-lane road and the location was "out of town."

Chuck Cunning (former GCHS President) described visiting the Sunset in the mid-1960s: "The whole place breathed excitement: drivers scurrying for the perfect parking spot, quick testing of window speakers, laughing teenagers emerging from car trunks, trips to the concession stand, where several people sat in folding chairs—visiting more than watching, kids shouting as they flew through the night air on swings, young couples moving close. And the air was thick with the aroma of honeysuckle, hamburgers sizzling on the grill, buttered popcorn, citronella oil, Marlboros and contraband beer."

By 1985 Central was four-lane; the Sunset property was valuable, and drive-in theaters were not as popular as they once were. It was sold.

Who remembers the Sunset? Did you arrive in the trunk of your friend's car? Did you ever drive off with a speaker, apologize, and turn it in at the concession? Share your memories.

Here are some other ways to enjoy history from home:

1. Visit the excellent Hot Springs National Park Facebook page.
2. Take the advice of Charlie Moore of The Arkansas Highlands Folk Project and get up and dance! Here's a message from Charlie:

If you attended the AHFP programs at the GC Library, you know we aggressively encouraged dancing . . . Without overwhelming success, I might add. So, now is a great time to have some fun at home, get some exercise and show off at our next live program.

These videos will introduce the basic, simple steps involved. And that's all that's required to do it. There's really not a wrong way of doing it, and you don't need a partner. Dancing along with our virtual stay-at-home concerts will be a fun way to practice.

Our next stay-at-home concert will be coming soon.

<https://youtu.be/BALVCWmn9o8>

<https://youtu.be/YTHFR20CYuM>

<https://youtu.be/xyqcHMPa1O8>

3. Want to go on video tours? See online exhibits? Play Arkansas Time Traveler Trivia? See King Biscuit Time Live? Read the email from the Division of Arkansas Heritage that I'm forwarding to you to find links to these and many more great online history features offered by the Arkansas Arts Council, Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission, Arkansas State Archives, Delta Cultural Center, Historic Arkansas Museum, Mosaic Templars Cultural Center, and Old State House Museum.
4. You can help preserve the history that is taking place right now by taking photos with your phones of any scene that shows what Hot Springs is like during the pandemic.

Email them to gchs@hotsprings.net. Let's make a visual record of the stores, streets, and sights of this remarkable time in our history.

Although the archives is closed to the public now, we're still fulfilling online and letter book orders; answering phone, email, and letter research requests; working on *The Record 2020* and other projects; and making our history available online.

Thanks to technology, we can keep our historical community strong and active.

Thank you for your support—we need it now more than ever!

Stay very safe!

Liz

Liz Robbins, Executive Director
Garland County Historical Society
328 Quapaw (71901)
PO Box 21335 (71903)
501.321.2159

Leave a legacy. Please remember GCHS in your estate planning.