
Preserve Our Past

2014 5th/6th Grade Essay Winners

What is the Preserve Our Past Invitational?

The 23rd annual *Preserve Our Past Art and Essay Invitational* celebrates National Historic Preservation Month and Arkansas Heritage Month. The purpose of the invitational is to teach students about local and state history, and to foster an interest in preserving historic places. Winning entries are exhibited at Department of Arkansas Heritage museums in Little Rock. In 2014, student work will be exhibited at the Mosaic Templars Cultural Center during May. The contest is open to all Arkansas 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th graders. Submissions must relate to a historic Arkansas property that is 50 years old or older.

The 2014 contest attracted 326 entries from 19 schools across Arkansas. Winning entries will be on display at the Mosaic Templars Cultural Center museum from May 2 to June 4.

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Healing Springs of Siloam Springs: Preserving Historic Waters

By Duncan Gwinn, Siloam Springs, First Place

Water is life. Without it, we would not exist. We depend on water, our planet is the only one with water. Life began with water, even the small town of Siloam Springs.

In the land that surrounds what is now Siloam Springs, Native Americans used springs to heal all sorts of injuries and illnesses such as malaria, asthma or tuberculosis. Rumors spread to settlers about a “magical” healing spring used by the Native People. Settlers flooded into the area to recover from their ailments. One of the first to exploit the springs was a doctor, Simon Sager, who came in the 1830s to use the water as a medical cure. He started a plantation and an enterprise. The creek running through downtown is named after him. The chance to start again enticed many settlers. As tourism grew, the people in the area established a town named Hico, meaning “clean water” in Cherokee.

The Civil War took its toll on the area. Pro-Union guerilla soldiers stormed into Simon Sager’s household and, at the end of the brawl, Sager was dead. Towards the end of the Civil War, over 3,000 injured soldiers from the battles of Pea Ridge, Prairie Grove and Fayetteville journeyed to recover there.

In 1880, it was renamed Siloam Springs after a local spring. The spring known as Siloam was named after the Pools of Siloam in the Bible. Resort hotels sprung up around the town. Washtubs were filled with heated spring water. Hotel pools were filled with people sporting in the water. Some were similar to the Greek Revival hotels. Many had elaborate ballrooms, stores and clubs. The washing in the water was a prelude to drinking, gambling and dancing.

The water was healing but it could be reckless and destructive. Major floods in 1898 caused \$20,000 worth of property damage. Three people died in the disaster. The location of the town made it prone to flash floods. The creek, fueled by springs, caused most of the problems. The last major flood happened in 1974. The shocking death of loved ones led some to flee their homes and to leave for somewhere else, while others had the guts to stay in the treacherous area. Then the beloved springs fell into a forgotten part of the history of Siloam Springs.

As I walked around downtown to Sager Creek, I spotted a basin with trickling water. It was barred up and the stairs leading down to it had worn with time. Trash was thrown carelessly to the bottom. A wind-worn kiosk led me to the conclusion that this was one of the “magical healing springs.”

The springs have done so much for our community, and they should continue onwards. They should be educators to our people, who need something to remind them of their past. The springs need to be preserved so future generations can learn about the people of their town’s past. They are a direct link to our history and we need to preserve that link.

Pea Ridge

By Dooley C. Huff, Greenbrier Westside Elementary, Second Place

Pea Ridge is a historic location that contains a Civil War battlefield, 2 miles of the Trail of Tears, and much more. It received its name from the abundance of peas that grow on the ridges there. The 4.1 square mile battlefield of Pea Ridge played an important role in securing Missouri for the Union and helped open Arkansas for Union population. During the Civil War in 1862, Union and Confederate troops fought on the 7th and 8th of March in 1862. It was a two day battle also named the Battle of Elkhorn Tavern. The generals were Earl Van Dorn, who led 16,000 Confederate troops, and Samuel R. Curtis, who led 10,500 Union troops. It was a shocking victory for the Union because they were outnumbered by 5,500 troops. There were approximately 2,000 casualties for the Confederates and the 1,384 casualties for the Union.

Pea Ridge was the biggest Civil War battle in Arkansas and was the largest Civil War engagement west of the Mississippi River. Movement of military units through the area caused raiders called “Bushwackers” to freely raid and pillage homes. This made these times in Pea Ridge very dangerous, frightening, and frustrating for farmers and homeowners. A family still has a chest with the blade of a weapon from a Bushwacker raid.

Pea Ridge is also home to something known as the Skirmish at Big Sugar Creek on February 16, 1862. It consisted of Major General Samuel R. Curtis, who led the first Missouri Cavalry for the Union, and Major General Sterling Price, who led the First Missouri Cavalry for the Confederates. It ended in a Union victory with one killed and five wounded for the Union, and 16 killed and an unknown number wounded for the Confederates. It was not a very large victory for the Union, however it did help for the Battle of Pea Ridge coming up. This skirmish was also known as Action at Pott’s Hill.

Another thing Pea Ridge is home to would be the Pea Ridge Academy. It was organized in 1874. It played a significant role in advancing education in Benton County. Even though it was never a very large school, it sent many graduates as business leaders and teachers for area schools. The school provided public learning for elementary through high school grades, while still continuing to operate as a private trustee-governed academy offering college level courses. Through 1874 and 1879, Professor John Roberts’s sister, Nancy E. Roberts taught the first five grades while he taught the higher grades. Due to competition from larger state-supported colleges, and other factors, the school was forced to shut down in 1916.

Pea Ridge is one of the best historic locations in Arkansas and is really interesting. I hope you have enjoyed reading about it and possibly learned a few things from this essay.

Little Rock Central High

By Hayden Ray, Greenbrier Westside Elementary, Third Place

Why is a high school in Arkansas so important? Have you ever wondered what happened in the halls of the nationally known school, Little Rock Central High? No one will ever know exactly how everyone felt about the school's experience, but I intend to tell you the story.

In 1954, the Supreme Court officially banned segregation in all schools. Many southern states, angry with the new law, rebelled, and did not allow blacks to go to an all-white school. But that all changed in the fall of 1957 in Little Rock, Arkansas.

9 African-American kids went to Little Rock Central High, an all-white school, with the will to be educated. The first day proved to be challenging. September 4, 1957, Governor Orval Faubus of Arkansas sent the state's National Guard to block the students' entry to the school. Many people agreed with the governor's actions on segregation. Many, not all. The current president of the United States, Dwight D. Eisenhower, wanted the now known Little Rock 9 to attend Central High. President Eisenhower sent in federal soldiers to escort the brave 9 students into the school. There were mobs of angry whites, all of which wanted the Little Rock 9 gone. Governor Faubus appeared on television later in the day to announce that Arkansas was "now an occupied territory." Arkansas was in turmoil.

The 9 African-Americans fought for desegregation throughout the school year. Their efforts paid off in the year of 1958, when Ernest Green graduated from Little Rock Central High and became the first African-American to graduate from an all-white school in Arkansas. The others graduated later. The Little Rock 9 broke through a color barrier and foiled Governor Faubus's plans. Because of their efforts, Arkansas was able to become the desegregated school they are today.

Hot Springs's History

By Georgia Harrell, Greenbrier Westside Elementary, Honorable Mention

Hot Springs has a very rich history. Hot Springs's history goes all the way back to the Native Americans. After the United States of America bought the Louisiana Purchase from France, Hot Springs's history unfolded even more. Hot Springs has also been a hot spot for organized crime. After the Gangster era, there were even more things yet to come.

When the Native Americans were the only ones in North America, they used the hot springs and hot water in Hot Springs in many ways. They quarried for novaculite on top of the mountain overlooking the hot springs. Instead of calling the area Hot Springs, the Native Americans called the area "the valley of vapors." Spanish and French settlers started claiming the land in the mid-1500s. Hernando de Soto (the Spanish conquistador) has a claim to fame in Hot Springs. In 1541, he became the first European to see Hot Springs.

In 1841, 300 years later, President Andrew Jackson designated Hot Springs as a national reservation. At one period in time, Hot Springs was a luxurious spa city. The first buildings were crude structures. The buildings were made of canvas and some lumber. The buildings were really just tents built over an individual spring or stream. Over time, the buildings were made better and better. Hot Springs was made a national park in 1921, eighty years after it was made a national reservation. Hot Springs is the oldest National Park in the United States of America.

Starting in the late 1800s and ending in the middle of the 1900s, Hot Springs became a hot spot for organized crime. Some examples were gambling, bootlegging, and prostitution. Law enforcement officials like judges, the mayor of Hot Springs, and police officers neglected to prosecute these criminal activities. This was because the officials were either being paid off or were taking place in the organized crime themselves. Some of the prominent criminals were the well-known Al Capone, Frank Costello, Bugs Moran, Lucky Luciano, and many other infamous people. When the organized crime started, two main families controlled the organized crime. Those two families were the Flynns and the Dorans. One of the most scandalous criminals was Owney (The Killer) Madden. Madden was usually called the "English Godfather." Madden is credited for putting "organized" in the phrase "organized crime."

Currently, the only bathhouse that still functions as a bathhouse is the Buckstaff Bathhouse. Others are used for shops, restaurants, and hotels. One of the bathhouses is used for the visitor center. Recently, one of the bathhouses formerly used as a hotel burned down. It was a devastating loss for the National Park.

Valley of vapors, playground for career criminals, fabulous vacation resort and spa—Hot Springs has been all of these and more. Hopefully its future will continue to be as rich as its past.

The Old Mill

By Lauren Drawbaugh, Greenbrier Westside Elementary, Honorable Mention

The Old Mill is a replica of a water-powered gristmill. Although it is called a “replica” it was not intended to copy any other mill. The Old Mill was dedicated to Arkansas Pioneers.

The mill was designed and contracted by Justin Matthews. He was a builder and developer. Matthews gave North Little Rock the Old Mill as a gift. He wanted the mill to look like it had been there since the 1800s. Justin was also trying to make the mill look abandoned or neglected. Matthews thought since he was building it in Arkansas it should look like it belonged in Arkansas. Matthews also picked a rough area to build in and made the mill to contour the area. The Old Mill was built in the Lakewood area of North Little Rock. The Old Mill was completed in 1933.

A German immigrant, Frank Carmean, was a worker for Matthews. He was a builder and an architect. Frank Carmean also helped to design the Old Mill. Matthews sent Carmean to tour the southwestern states to get inspiration for new and different architectural styles. While he was touring the southwestern states, he came across Senor Dionicio Rodriguez.

Senor Dionicio Rodriguez was a sculptor and artist. Senor Dionico Rodriquez was from Toluca, Mexico. He was responsible for every single little detail. He had no plans or blueprints. Rodriquez had to imagine what it looked like from what Matthews told him and his imagination. He hit spot on with what Matthews wanted and expected.

In 2007, Carlos Cortes renovated, or improved Senor Dionicio Rodriguez’s work at the Old Mill. Carlos Cortes was Rodriquez’s great nephew. Carlos Cortes was also Maximo Cortes’s son who was Rodriguez’s assistant.

A little while before the renovation, the Old Mill was nationally recognized in 1986 because it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. Also, the Old Mill was seen in an award-winning movie “Gone with the Wind.” “Gone with the Wind” was released in 1938. The Old Mill is known to be the only structure seen in the movie still to stand. On the fiftieth anniversary of the movie, it was honored. Stars from the movie have visited the mill before.

Many people still visit the Old Mill. Over 100,000 people tour the Old Mill a year coming from out of state, even! Over 200 weddings have been celebrated at the Old Mill and even more people are coming. Some schools and groups have their pictures done at the Old Mill because it is so beautiful.

The Old Mill could not stay so beautiful on its own! Someone has to take care of it, but who? Volunteers make sure the Old Mill is staying as beautiful as ever. Volunteers are so important to the mill because without them the mill would not be what it is today. They help with everything from structural improvements to seasonal planting and they keep it presentable. The volunteers have to keep up with a 70-year old mill while preserving the image of looking abandoned and neglected.