

Shiloh Scrapbook

SHILOH MUSEUM OF OZARK HISTORY NEWSLETTER

Vol. 32, No. 3 December 2013

Carl Browne Erwin



Houseraising in the Hill Top community on Gaither Mountain in Boone County, 1913. Back row, from left: Ellsworth Hunt, Henry Schroeder, Henry Johnston, Jessie Rieff, Ancil Scott, Henry Rieff, Ed Pendley, Charles Johnston, Velin Reser, Dan Reser. Front row, from left: Henry Scott, Jim Moore, Walter Fearnside, Ray Reser, Bill Erwin, Carl Browne Erwin, John Robinson. *Steve Erwin Collection*

Steve Erwin

Volunteer

Note: Steve Erwin, a volunteer in our research library, has been regaling us with stories from his research into the life of his uncle, Carl Browne Erwin. Museum research librarian/photo archivist Marie Demeroukas suggested that Steve write some of his findings for a museum newsletter article and Steve cheerfully obliged.

The picture of the log house raising in the Hill Top community on Gaither Mountain in Boone County, Arkansas, was snapped in 1913. The bearded man, third from right

on the ground, is William Edward Erwin, known as Uncle Bill. The man to Uncle Bill's left is my uncle, Carl Browne Erwin, age nineteen.

The Erwin family Bible records that Carl Browne Erwin was born in 1894 to James and Lula Walker Erwin. Uncle Bill was James Erwin's bachelor brother who lived with James' family on their Gaither Mountain farm. Uncle Bill taught Carl Erwin and his younger brothers practical matters, such as use of hand tools, fire building, bee hunting, gardening,

care of livestock and other essential tasks useful around a farm. Uncle Bill owned a steam traction engine and a grain thresher/separator, and soon he and Carl ran a combination sawmill and wheat-threshing operation. Carl was fortunate to have Uncle Bill as his mentor and the two formed a successful team.

Carl Erwin's experience in the operation of sawmills came in very handy when the United States entered the Great War in 1917. Carl registered for the draft

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History museums are so much more than a collection of objects from the past. What brings museum objects, exhibits, and programs alive are the stories—not just the “what” and “when” information, but especially the background stories of people’s lives, the stories of how objects were used, the stories of what meaning an object, an event, or a building had for folks... the real “meat” of history that’s lived everyday, connects us to others, and helps us understand our world, however small or large.

Sometimes objects and stories arrive at the museum fully documented, but many times museum staff members have to dig down to find the background history and flesh out the meaning. For some folks, trying to discover the minutia of history is tiring and frustrating and often leads to dead ends. But for those of us who love to research, being able to find “the rest of the story” is exciting, captivating, and just plain fun.

Case in point: outreach coordinator Susan Young spent months tracking down the history of Springdale movie theaters in preparation for presenting our November “Shiloh Sandwiched-In” talk, “Going to the

DIRECTOR’S COLUMN



Allyn Lord

Picture Show.” Other staff members, longtime Springdale residents, and even Facebook friends lent a hand; it takes a village, after all, to engage fully in research. All manner of documents, online resources, newspapers, and photos were used. Facts were checked and double-checked.

I knew Susan was “following the path” on several occasions. I saw her spend hours upon hours late into the night, working at her computer and researching in our newspaper morgue. I heard other staff members bring her tidbits of information to fill in some gaps.

But I absolutely knew she was hitting research gold just ten minutes before her talk. Ellen Compton, who had come to listen to the

presentation, shared with Susan a small bit of information that she was privy to. I heard Susan gasp and ask more. This wee bit of data cleared up a discrepancy between two divergent stories Susan had heard about the Apollo statue which once graced Springdale’s historic Apollo Theater. Susan’s excitement and the palpable joy it brought her to have an accurate history were unmistakable and contagious.

That day, the museum audience was transfixed by Susan’s story, not only because tracing movie theater history is interesting, but also because Susan wore the clothes of both researcher and expert storyteller, unfolding layers of the story so expertly that the crowd, at various points in the story, laughed as one, gasped as one, and booed as one. And when she laid out that final piece of information Ellen had just told her, a clear sense of accomplishment was felt by the audience as well.

Good research, accompanied by accurate facts and buoyed by expert storytelling, is the foundation of history. Check our calendar for the next adventure!

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**deceased*

VOLUNTEERS (SEPTEMBER–NOVEMBER 2013)

Emma Artman, Jeff Baker, Madison Baker, Marty Benson, Ethna Billings, Linda Boyer, Frank Burke, Haley Calhoun, Karen Cordell, Grace Costello, Tom Duggan, Steve Erwin, Martha Estes, Regina Gabel, Martha Hamman, Abby Hutchins, Jennifer Hutchens, Molly Hutchens, Karen Jech, Margaret Johnson, Bill Jones, Mary John Jones, Ann Kabanuck, Megan Kaplan, Mitsy Kellam, Darlette Kendrick, Tommy Kendrick, Jim Langford, Mira Leister, Vera Leone, Joseph McCain, Pat Mills, Vanya North, Adam Pang, Ann Payne, Sharon Perry, Barbara Pulos, Pam Redfern, Laura Redford, Ann Schumacher, Russell Self,

Pat Sharp, Ann Shumate, Charles Shumate, Vande Southerland, Dolores Stamps, Truman Stamps, Deloris Stults, Ayden Tillery, Christian Tillery, Elaina Tillery, Gwen Tillery, Samuel Tillery, William Tillery, Mary Vaughan, Haley Wallace, Becky Witte, Members of the NWA Handweavers Guild, Members of the Wool and Wheel Handspinners Guild

STAFF

Allyn Lord, director; Judy Costello, education manager; Marie Demeroukas, photo archivist/research librarian; April Griffith, research library assistant; Corryn Hall, education assistant; Don House, photographer; Curtis Morris, exhibits manager; Adam Pang, weekend assistant; Kathy Plume, secretary/receptionist; Marty Powers, maintenance; Carolyn Reno, assistant director/collections manager; Victoria Thompson, education/collections assistant; Susan Young, outreach coordinator

SHILOH MUSEUM OF OZARK HISTORY

118 W. Johnson Avenue • Springdale, AR 72764 • 479-750-8165
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Erwin

From page 1

in June, entering “lumberman” as his occupation. Uncle Sam soon observed that enormous quantities of lumber were needed to support the war effort in France. It was too dangerous to ship lumber by sea because of the peril of being sunk by German U-Boats. Timber was available in France and a decision was made to recruit American engineer troops for lumber production. Because of his sawmill experience, Carl was offered a position in the Twentieth Engineers, U.S. Army.

The September 22, 1917, edition of the *Harrison Weekly Times* (hereafter noted as the *Times*) announced, “C.B. Erwin started to Little Rock Thursday to report for physical examination for entrance into the Twentieth Engineers (Forest) United S. S. Service.” The Twentieth Engineers took basic training for about six weeks at Camp American University near Washington, D.C., and landed in France in November 1917. Carl was assigned to Company A, First Battalion, which was assigned a tract of 1,700 acres of pine forest near the village of Mees in southwest France, well away from combat.

Carl was immediately promoted to sergeant first class. He was foreman in charge of installing the machinery in the mill, which became operational in April 1918. Carl’s responsibilities increased and he was eventually promoted to acting warrant officer, although he described the job as having the responsibility but not the pay. Promotions had been suspended toward the end of the war.

An interesting observation about the sawmill was that the sawdust created was transported by a chain conveyor and used for boiler fuel. All the firemen had to do was regulate the sawdust feed and keep water in the boiler. Even with

this use there was still a surplus that had to be hauled away; slabs or waste boards were shipped to the troops for use as firewood. The war was over in November 1918 and the operation of the Twentieth Engineers was deemed a great success. Carl was denied a permanent promotion to warrant officer, but in 1919, several months after returning home, he received a citation for exceptional meritorious service signed by General John J. Pershing. Carl prized this more than the promotion.



Carl Erwin in his World War I uniform, circa 1917. Courtesy Steve Erwin

While Carl was away during the war, his younger brother Dewey took over the joint operations of sawmilling and threshing. Uncle Bill had slowly showed his age. The Erwin family Bible recorded in the fine handwriting of James Erwin that “W.E. Erwin departed this life April 8, 1918 at 5:15 a.m. He was born April 14, 1850 in Missouri.” Upon Uncle Bill’s death, Carl and Dewey became partners in the sawmill/thresher business, a partnership that lasted until 1949.

Carl married Ada Fearnside in 1920. Their daughter Bonnie

Louise was born in 1921. Their son Joseph Richard was born in 1923.

The Erwin Brothers partnership progressed nicely. A December 23, 1921, issue of the *Times* reported, “Erwin Brothers have moved their sawmill to James Erwin’s timber.” The May 25, 1923, issue noted, “C.B. Erwin went to Lawrence County last week and purchased from the Case Co., a slightly used 50-horsepower tractor engine which will be used to run Erwin Brothers separator this year’s threshing season. The engine will be shipped over the Missouri-Pacific to Bergman this week.”

Early sawmill and threshing operations had their share of accidents, such as this mishap recorded in the *Times* on March 16, 1923: “Carl B. Erwin stepped too close to a line shaft last Friday morning at his sawmill and a nut on the shaft caught in his pocket and wound up his clothing, spinning him around the line shaft several times and stripped every thread of clothing from his body before setting him free. Erwin suffered bruises and scratches and a sprained arm and leg.”

It was wheat-threshing season when misfortune struck Erwin Brothers in July 1930. They were threshing south of Harrison at the Jim Villines farm when the separator caught fire. Carl received some serious burns while trying to put out the blaze. Younger brother Raymond later reported that Carl rebuilt all the damaged parts and restored the separator as good as new.

Dewey and Carl tried to learn more about the threshing operation by working with other threshing crews. Dewey was working in Canada in 1922, then in Clearwater, Kansas, in 1924 and 1927. Carl was in Kansas in 1926. It appears that one brother stayed home and ran

continued



Erwin sawmill at Gaither, 1912. Identified in the photo: Carl Erwin on left, Dewey Erwin in center, Uncle Bill Erwin on far right. *Courtesy Steve Erwin*

the local wheat-threshing operation while the other brother worked the huge fields of America's bread basket. Wheat threshing in the Harrison, Arkansas, area gradually declined until it ended about 1940.

Carl and Dewey purchased four acres of land along the bend of Crooked Creek in Harrison from the Arkansas & Missouri Railroad in 1944. They built a sawmill that used a steam engine powered by sawdust which later also powered an electric generator. They could run their operation day or night and it only cost them sawdust and water. Today, the four-acre sawmill site is

home to Ben Eddings' auto dealership on the Highway 65 South Bypass.

Erwin Brothers had a contract with the government during World War II and supplied 150,000 rifle and machine gun stocks made of walnut timber which was partly cut from lands soon to be impounded by the waters of Lake Norfork (Baxter County).

The Erwin Brothers firm dissolved in 1949. Carl bought Dewey out and Dewey established a tool-handle business working with hickory timber. Carl received government contracts for walnut gun stocks during the

Korean War and later from private gun manufacturers. The Harrison flood of 1961 washed many of his stockpiled gun stocks downstream.

Carl closed the sawmill in 1966. He passed away in 1984, at the age of ninety. He is buried in Hill Top Cemetery atop Gaither Mountain in Boone County along with his wife, his siblings, his parents, and his beloved Uncle Bill. 🍷

Sources for this article include Boone County Headlight, Farm Collector, Harrison Daily Times, and Harrison Weekly Times.

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Subscribe to our free monthly eNews. Read our blog, *The Backstay*. Listen to our podcast series on iTunes U.



A Lasting Gift

Many of you reading this newsletter are already Shiloh Museum members, thereby taking a stand—and becoming champions—for the importance of local history. With our members' help, we've made remarkable strides in telling the stories of the Arkansas Ozarks, preserving the tangible collections representing local history, and helping others to learn about the past. But despite this progress, there's still so much to do and no shortage of programs, exhibits, collections, and oral histories to develop and make accessible to the public.

Thank you, members, for all you've done to help us tell the history of this corner of Arkansas. Now I hope you'll consider building an enduring personal legacy that will help us keep doing our important work by making a planned gift to the Shiloh Museum endowment.

In considering a gift to our endowment, there's a wide range of choices to meet your personal financial and estate-planning objectives while making a vital difference in the Shiloh Museum's work for years to come. You can name the museum as a beneficiary of your estate through a will, life insurance policy, or gift of property. You can also donate stocks or the proceeds from a retirement plan to help reduce your estate taxes and secure other financial benefits. And you can make a gift of cash or securities in return for a fixed payment for life, or even establish a trust for your loved ones.



Your financial advisor may be able to assist you in determining how best to do this. You may also learn more about giving to the museum's endowment by contacting us directly. We'd be more than happy to talk with you. The museum will also be offering an estate-planning workshop in the coming months, so watch our Facebook page, e-blasts, or website for news of that event.

If you've already named the Shiloh Museum in your estate plans, please drop us an email (alord@springdalear.gov) or give us a call (479-750-8165) so that we can welcome you as a friend of the endowment and recognize your commitment to the museum. Thanks.

Welcome, Corryn!



We're pleased to introduce our new education assistant, Corryn Hall. Corryn was born in Houston, Texas, and grew up in Poteau, Oklahoma. She comes from a family of educators, as both her mother and father were teachers in Poteau and her grandfather served as school superintendent. She said there was no getting away with any mischief as she was growing up!

Corryn attended the University of Arkansas, graduating with a degree in political science. Her honors thesis was a study of women's political roles in Tanzania, where national law guarantees a certain number of seats for women in Parliament.

In her spare time, Corryn enjoys reading. Recently, she's enjoyed *Under the Dome* by Stephen King and *Gone Girl* by Gillian Flynn.



Remember the museum store when you're shopping for unique, local gifts!

Larry Shivel: multimeter

DONATIONS TO THE COLLECTIONS

September–November 2013

Karen Cordell: Karen Hendricks' baby spoon and fork, 1960; merit awards, late 1970s; and wedding dress, April 21, 1979. Mike Cordell's Springdale High School band medals, late 1970s; and shirt from first date with Karen Hendricks, 1977

Allen Crouch: Farm implements and family letters from the Moore and Crouch families of Fayetteville, 1900s

Mary Jane Dyson: Brownie Hawkeye Flash Camera with flash, ca. 1953; piano recital program, Springdale, May 14, 1952

Betty Jo Ezell and Dr. James Sharp: Two-piece black wool suit and dark red print dress of Martha Crawley Strickler of Strickler (Washington Co.), early 1900s

Caroline Clark Hamilton: Photographs of Camp Joyzelle in Benton County, 1950s

Dean Hutchinson: *The Hawk* record album by Ronnie Hawkins, 1971

James McNally: Springdale telephone directory, 1919; Springdale High School annuals, 1980, 1981

Carmen Newberry: Joe Hussey's Cine-Kodak Model K movie camera, Eureka Springs, ca. 1940

Joe Clyde Pack: Joe Robinson's shovel and printed program from Beaver Dam groundbreaking ceremony, November 22, 1960

Nancy Robinson: Sonora Union Sunday School friendship quilt, 1920s; Louie Horn Cannery (Springdale) and Lowell Cannery labels, ca. 1930

Ginger Greathouse Rocas: Photo postcards of Holcomb Street and of parade band on Emma Avenue, Springdale, 1919

Don W. Rutledge: University of Arkansas *Razorback* annual, 1963

Max Ryan: Ryan's Department Store cash register, signs, store records, measuring tapes, and miscellaneous materials, Springdale, 1950s-2013

Russell Self: Color postcards of Springdale and Fayetteville sites, 1960s

Julie Sheffield: three-pound solid iron shot, Springdale, early 1860s

Shiloh Museum Board of Trustees: Photograph of Home Protection insurance office and employees, Springdale, April 1917

Scott Test: Oak Grove School (near Springdale) register, 1936-1937

Kermit Welch: L.S. Welch for state representative campaign poster, Springdale Valley, 1920s

Photographs loaned for copying:
Carroll Bolton, Loretta Brunetti, Karen Cordell, Patrick Dalla Rosa, Betty Jo Ezell, Mary John Jones, Christine Pianalto Martinez, Kathy Pianalto Miller, Evelyn Pianalto, Roger Pianalto, Ginger Greathouse Rocas, Riley Tessaro, Edna Lou Zulpo

To learn more about artifacts and photos in our collection, visit our website's "Artifact of the Month" and "Photo of the Month."

Subscribe to our website's RSS feed to keep up with the new offerings each month.

Help wanted

We're working on a collaborative project to build an interactive/mobile website that will feature maps, images, and the history of Springdale's Emma Avenue. A volunteer is needed to conduct research using historic Springdale city directories to identify businesses and residences that were once located on Emma Avenue through the years, and transcribe this data into an Excel spreadsheet for reference purposes. If you're interested, email research library assistant April Griffith or give her a call at 750-8165.

Image from the 1968 Springdale telephone directory

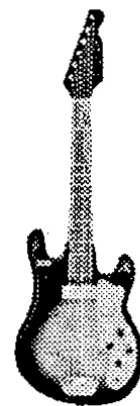
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CALENDAR

Through January 11, 2014. *From Archaeopteryx to Zapus*, an exhibit on the history of the University of Arkansas Museum. This exhibit is cosponsored by KUAF 91.3 FM National Public Radio.

Through March 1, 2014. *Cover Stories*, an exhibit of "special occasion" quilts from the Shiloh Museum collection.

December 17–May 10, 2014. *Scenes of Newton County*, a photo exhibit of people and places in a ruggedly beautiful area of the Ozarks.

2014

January 11, 10 a.m.–2 p.m. Cabin Fever Reliever, the museum's annual open house featuring displays by local collectors.

January 15, noon. "Weaving Warmth: Uncovering Ozark Coverlets," a program on coverlets in the Shiloh Museum collection by museum volunteers and long-time weavers Marty Benson and Laura Redford.

January 27–January 10, 2015. *Just Doing My Work*, an exhibit featuring the paintings of folk artist Essie Ward.

February 19, noon. A program on the effort to preserve Mount Kessler, an urban forest southwest of Fayetteville, by Mount Kessler Greenways member Frank Sharp.

March 15, 2 p.m. "Arkansas Civil War Heritage: A Legacy of Honor," author talk with W. Stuart Towns.

March 19, noon. "Ozark Reflections," a program by Ozark storyteller, journalist, and musician Marideth Sisco of West Plains, Missouri.

March 24–March 24, 2015. *A Boy's Toys*, an exhibit of toys from the 1930s and 1940s from the Shiloh Museum's Orville Hall Jr. Collection.

April 16, noon. "The History of Tobacco Advertising," a program by Brenda Patterson, coordinator for tobacco prevention and education with the Madison County Health Coalition.

May 12–December 13. *Healing Waters*, a photo exhibit examining the importance of medicinal springs in Northwest Arkansas, from healing a person's ailments to establishing towns and tourism opportunities.

May 21, noon. "Times of Change: Madison County After World War II," a program by University of Arkansas Honors College Fellow Mary Guthrie.

June 18, noon. "A Real Satisfaction," a program on the life of Ozark folk artist Essie Ward, by Shiloh Museum outreach coordinator Susan Young.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Shiloh Museum of Ozark History serves the public by providing resources for finding meaning, enjoyment, and inspiration in the exploration of the Arkansas Ozarks. Adopted by the Shiloh Museum Board of Trustees on July 13, 2006

Join the Shiloh Museum Association

- Satisfaction of knowing you are supporting an important cultural institution and helping preserve our Arkansas Ozark heritage, *and*
- 10% discount on Shiloh Store purchases
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- Reduced fees for children's and adult workshops
- Invitations to exhibit openings and special events

Consider a gift to the Shiloh Museum Endowment Fund

- ☐ Check here if you would like more information about the endowment fund.

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Membership Levels

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Senior Individual (65+) - \$10 | <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor - \$500 |
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