Exhibits manager Curtis Morris (left) repairs the Shiloh Meeting Hall bell under the watchful eye of Springdale Fire Department’s assistant chief Ron Skelton.

Curtis Morris  
Exhibits Manager

The old, white, two-story building on Huntsville Avenue near downtown Springdale is well known to most locals. They primarily know it as the lodge for the Independent Order of Odd Fellows. There’s a lot more to the building’s history than that, and today, as part of Shiloh Museum’s extended campus, we call it the Shiloh Meeting Hall (SMH for short), in honor of the many groups that met there over the last century and a half. We’re building a suite of exhibits on the second floor to explain the building’s rich history, and you’ll hear more about that in 2021.

But I want to tell you about the bells that have held sway over that building for nearly 150 years. Before 24/7 news cycles and instant communication, bells played an important role in communities. They called folks to worship, sounded the alarm, celebrated weddings, tolled for funerals, or simply rang out to mark the passage of time. Before folks carried globally connected smartphones, they relied on word of mouth and loud bells for announcements.

The SMH belfry has been occupied by two different bells; this is their story. The first bell swung in that belfry for about 137 years. Our collections manager, Carolyn Reno, determined that the twenty-inch-diameter, 200-pound bronze bell was cast in Cincinnati, Ohio, between 1848 and 1856 by G. W. Coffin & Company, the name being cast into the bell. How the bell got from there to here is complicated. Local newspapers from the 1930s to the 1950s give three versions of the bell’s story, and all of them involve John Holcomb or his son Joseph. John Holcomb was an elder, a minister, and an influential member of the Shiloh Regular (or Primitive) Baptist Church, one of the three churches that built the SMH in partnership
Those of us who love history are often drawn to read, research, or otherwise explore particular times and places in history. We frequently learn new things—part of the joy of exploration!—but we’re sometimes challenged by uncomfortable parts of history and try to imagine ourselves living in that time or place to contemplate how we’d act or respond to then-current events.

Historians believe that studying history helps us understand and grapple with complex questions and dilemmas by examining how the past has shaped (and continues to shape) global, national, and local events and people. They believe that history provides tools to analyze and explain issues in the past and thereby helps us to see patterns that might otherwise be invisible in the present, thus offering a perspective for understanding (and perhaps even solving) current and future problems. In this day of national polarization, I wonder whether anyone is reading or looking at history.

The obvious parallel to the current COVID-19 crisis is the 1918–19 flu pandemic (aka the “Spanish flu”). The CDC cites that pandemic as infecting about 500 million people worldwide (about one-third of the world’s population at that time) and causing at least 50 million worldwide deaths, with about 675,000 in the United States. Comparatively, at least thus far, we’ve not reached that level, but the current pandemic is far from over.

Can we learn any lessons from responses to that century-old pandemic? Scholars* have suggested:

• The public messaging at the time was: the disease is so widespread, no good will result from public action, so no action was taken in many cases. Fear was more fearsome to the officials than the disease.

• Many times public health officials knew the truth but did not tell it; in many cases they were just plain lying.

• By the time they closed Baltimore schools, for example, it was too late. It was important to do something about it right away (e.g., avoid any lag at all in taking action).

Whether it’s a pandemic or any of a million other issues we deal with today, I hope more of us choose to learn what history has to teach us and how we can bring those lessons to today’s table.


Planning year-end charitable contributions? You can make a tax-deductible donation to the Shiloh Museum via check (see address below).
Volunteer Spotlight

Seth Herod is one of our young volunteers in education. He is ten years old and has been a volunteer for two years. Since the pandemic started Seth has taken on several volunteer tasks in which he has shouldered more responsibility than has been the norm for our volunteers in the past.

We can count on Seth to show up for volunteering at events to which he has committed and to also learn lines and information for a program. He may seem shy when you first meet him, but when standing in front of a group of students he shows a sense of knowing who he is and what he has to say. His delivery goes over well with students.

For most of our programs Seth dresses in historically correct clothing. He has helped with many of our programs, including “Early Settlers,” “Then and Now,” “Log Cabin Christmas,” and “Mr. Cooper’s Barn,” to which he has even brought some of his sheep from home to add another dimension for learning about life on a farm. He has also helped with outreach programs at area schools. At this type of program Seth can be seen wearing his Shiloh education t-shirt, representing the museum well with his behavior and presentations.

While we are not currently delivering in-person programs due to COVID-19, we are offering livestreaming and recorded videos. For our Arkansas Symbols online resource I offered an opportunity for all of our young volunteers to participate. They could choose a state symbol, research it on their own, let me check their information, and create a video which would be posted online. Three of our young volunteers accepted the challenge, with Seth selecting the state cooking vessel of Arkansas, the Dutch oven. He researched how to cook in a Dutch oven as well as some history of the use of Dutch ovens in Arkansas. He then learned to cook in a Dutch oven and presented what he learned for a video, which is included in our Arkansas Symbols online resource.

To take what he learned a step further, Seth volunteered to co-host our October Shiloh Saturday livestream family program in which he demonstrated preparing a meal in a Dutch oven while sharing information about the use of the cooking vessel in Arkansas. Seth also helped with an earlier Shiloh Saturday program about ice cream. Both videos can be found on our Facebook page.

Seth says he likes volunteering because it is fun and he likes leading the students. Seth is a good example of how having young volunteers not only sets a good example for other youth on learning history, but also stretches volunteers as they grow into the role and set goals to improve.

Judy Costello
Education Manager

Seth Herod takes a break from co-hosting a recent Shiloh Saturday family program on Dutch-oven cooking in the museum’s log cabin.

Connect with us
Subscribe to our monthly eNews. Read our blog, “The Backstay.” Listen to our podcast series on Apple Podcasts, Stitcher, and other podcast providers.

Research Library Wish List
• Images of America: The Great Passion Play by Timothy Kovalcik ($25)
• Images of America: Eureka Springs by Kay Marnon Danielson ($25)
• Hidden History of Eureka Springs by Joyce Zeller ($24)
**Donations to the Collections**

*August–October 2020*

**Judy Alaimo:** Photo of Hindsville Public School class, 1928–1929

**Nancy Bachant:** Nut-head doll churning butter, Eureka Springs, 1940

**Abby Burnett:** Interview records from *Gone to the Grave* book research and with Bobbie Kennard, Kingston (Madison County), 1995–2014

**Georgia Cook:** Shirts, overalls, and toys of Georgie Gabbard; World War I draft cards of Silas Gabbard; hand-carved tools, animals, and pipe bowl of George W. Harrison, all from Sulphur City (Washington County) late 1800s–1932

**Nettie Everett:** Handmade baby cradle from the Everett family, Madison County, circa 1900

**William Andy Fletcher:** Land records of Robert, Andrew, and John Fletcher, Baldwin (Washington County), 1833, 1837, 1858

**James and Joyce Hale:** Sign for Razorback Rifle-Pistol Club, Rogers, late 1900s

**Sally Kirby Hartman:** Dolls and sock monkey made by Ollie Norman Austin, Benton County, 1940–1950s

**Tana Lewallen Jackson:** Cash box; school annuals; First Christian Church directories and history book; photographs; Springdale and Fayetteville, late 1900s

**Dr. Carol Kendrick:** Scrapbooks of the Berry Braun family, Springdale, early-mid 1900s

**Vicki and Gary Lindley:** World War I Navy uniform of Victor Jones Sr., Elkins, 1918

**Carolyn Reno:** Postcard of Chief Motel, Fayetteville, early 1960s

**Jackie Stites:** Ozark Ballards by George Ballard, Fayetteville, 1928; Dogpatch USA postcard folder, Newton County, 1969, *Sing the Glory Down* record album by the Calvary Echoes, Prairie Grove, 1970s

**Laura Thiel:** Ewalt family Bible, quilts made by Hazel Berry Ewalt and Mary Ida Berry, Springdale, 1890s–1940s

**Photos loaned for copying**

**Susan Clarkson:** Searcy and Clarkson families of Springdale, late 1800s-mid 1900s

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**Board Member Brief**

**Name:** Marian Hendrickson

**Family:** Husband Scott Schroeder

**Job:** History teacher at Springdale’s Don Tyson School of Innovation

**Pets:** Sasha and Zoey, my cats

**Favorite TV show:** *Dr. Who* and *The British Baking Show*

**Hobbies:** Reading. Frequently my weekends are taken up with judging debate and FIRST Tech Challenge robotics competitions, and “fishing” with my husband, which means reading in the sunlight.

**Describe a perfect day.** In a foreign country with a list of places to see and new experiences to have.

**What is your favorite animal and why?** The cat, of course. My cats are independent but loving. They may need a cuddle but can just be happy sitting near me. Most of the time one of them is sitting on me or on whatever I am trying to work on. They are certain that Zoom calls are meant for them to be the center of attention for a whole new audience.

**What three people, living or dead, would you invite to dinner?** Composer John Williams, because his music makes movies like *Jaws*, *Superman*, *Indiana Jones*, and *Harry Potter* even better. Emmeline Pankhurst, the British suffragette, to let her know that the struggle continues in some places. Douglas Adams, creator of the science fiction comedy series, *The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy*. The brain that came up with that has got to be a hoot.
Greetings,

I take pen in paw to write you this letter. I am enjoying very good health and hope that you and yours are enjoying the same great blessings.

In my work as museum ambassador, I strive to present a calm and welcoming presence for our guests. See photo left. In these stressful times, the responsibility can be exhausting. See photo center. Most days I am treated with well-deserved respect and affection from all the humans I encounter. Sometimes that human affection is demonstrated in the form of healthcare. See photo right. My main man Marty recently wrestled me into submission so’s he could apply my quarterly dose of flea and tick medicine. The topical treatment is only a mild assault on my dignity—no invasive procedures or lame attempts to conceal a pill inside a bit of cheese.

I go for an annual check-up to stay current on all my vaccinations. I’m feeling more spry in my back legs thanks to a daily over-the-counter hip and joint supplement. I have a new brush and my museum humans take turns giving my coat the once-over during their lunch breaks. I have food to eat (Fancy Feast wet food and a bit of dry kibble) and a warm, dry place to sleep (the barn, or on cold days, a heated sleeping pad in Marty’s shed). I’m one lucky cat.

But here’s the thing. While a title of high honor, my role as museum ambassador comes with no benefits package. My museum humans chip in for my vet visits and my food. They’ve been doing that for years. Lately I’ve been thinking that I need to help pay my own way. Toward that end, I am announcing the establishment of the Shiloh Museum CAT (Care About T) Fund. Financial contributions of any amount are welcome. No amount is too small! Stop by the museum where a donation jar has been set up, or send a check to the Shiloh Museum CAT Fund, 118 W. Johnson Avenue, Springdale, AR 72764. My humble thanks to you.

In the meantime, now more than ever, stay healthy, wear a mask, and keep washing your paws!

Yours truly,

Mr. T
with the Masonic lodge in 1871. The immediate area surrounding the SMH was originally called “Holcomb’s Spring” after John and his family settled there in the 1840s. John Holcomb donated the land for the construction of the building. Holcomb’s Spring became Shiloh and then Springdale, with Joseph Holcomb serving as Springdale’s first mayor. Clearly the Holcombs were major players in the town’s early history.

Newspaper version #1 reports that John saw the bell on a steamboat while travelling on the Red River. The story goes that John tried to buy the bell for his new church, but the boat captain wouldn’t sell. Apparently the captain had a change of heart, because, as Holcomb disembarked from the boat at his destination, the bell was there packaged up with the rest of his baggage. Newspaper version #2 is the same story but with Joseph acquiring the bell from a Mississippi River steamboat. Newspaper version #3 has Joseph bringing the bell back from a plantation in Hempstead County in south Arkansas, and this agrees with Holcomb family tradition. We know Joseph lived for a time in Hempstead County and married his second wife, Belle Smith Dupree, there before returning to live in Springdale in 1870, so this version has the most “steam.” On a somber and ironic note, the first recorded use of that bell was at the 1874 funeral of Joseph Holcomb’s mother, Dorothea.

The bell’s clapper came to Springdale by a different route. In a 1934 newspaper article, eighty-seven-year-old Margaret Baggett related the story of the clapper. Because Margaret’s family had Union sympathies during the Civil War, they fled to Missouri to avoid the bushwhackers operating in this area. On their way back after the war, Margaret’s brother, William Lichlyter, picked up a cannonball from the Pea Ridge battlefield as a souvenir. William’s brother Richard, who was a blacksmith apprenticed to James Baggett (Margaret’s husband), forged the cannonball into the clapper for the original bell. The museum staff were dubious about the authenticity of the cannonball until local Civil War authority Alan Thompson provided specifications for Civil War artillery projectiles. After carefully examining and measuring the ball in the clapper, it seems at least plausible that it is a six-pound solid shot, which was used by both sides in the 1862 Battle of Pea Ridge.

The bell and ordnance-grade clapper remained in service until it was removed during roof and exterior repairs in 2008–2009. That was early on in the process of renovating the building. As museum director Allyn Lord remembered,

“We knew at that time that we wanted to place the (original) bell—due to its history and importance for Springdale—in the exhibits that we’ll have on the second floor. I tried mightily to find a replacement bell while the roof work was being done, but failed. About two months after the roof project was finished, I was contacted by museum member and friend Mary Jane Dyson of Springdale, just out of the blue, asking if we wanted an old bell she had. Unbelievably, it was exactly the right size for the Shiloh Meeting Hall’s belfry. We just no longer had the lift to get it up there.”

That was in April 2009. And just like that, we had a new bell—a nineteen-inch, 150-pound iron bell by the C. S. Bell Company, of Hillsboro, Ohio. According to company records, it was made between 1894 and the 1970s. As soon as it got here, the contractors wasted no time getting it installed. Time was tight and they probably had never hung a bell fifty feet above ground before, so the contractors just imagined how it should work and rigged it the best they could.

continued
Flash forward to the grand reopening of the SMH on June 30, 2018. The place was packed with folks eager to get a look at the newly restored hall. Many people there had known about the building for decades but had never been inside it. All were eager to go inside and soak up the nineteenth-century ambiance. After the Sacred Harp Singers sang and several speeches were made, including one from Springdale Mayor Doug Sprouse, Carolyn and I crept up the stairs to ring the bell, as the event announcements had promised. A small crowd gathered on the lawn, looking upwards in anticipation of hearing the new bell. Carolyn slowly pulled the rope to ring the bell, careful not to damage the untested rigging. And, from inside the building, we didn’t hear a thing. Folks on the lawn said they heard a faint “clank,” but all agreed that it was a big disappointment. With a long camera lens we were able to see the problem from the ground. The new bell had been rigged in such a way that when Carolyn tried to ring it, a knot in the bell rope got stuck in a pulley the contractors had added to the system. The bell was lodged nearly sideways with no way to free it from the ground. That put an unsatisfying end to what was supposed to be a ceremonial bell ringing.

After Mary Jane Dyson’s generous donation of the new bell and all the time and effort invested, we were determined to make it work properly. But how to get up there to do that? We had previously used bucket trucks parked in the yard to reach the building’s peak, but with the new landscaping and lights, the SMH lawn is now off limits. We needed a truck that could reach the roof from the parking lot. The solution was the gracious loan of Ladder Truck 1 from the Springdale Fire Department (SFD) and the folks to run it. All told, it took three trips to the belfry. The first trip was a training mission; several SFD folks got some hands-on experience setting up the truck and operating its extending ladder and bucket. For me it was a reconnaissance mission, allowing me to scope out the bell issues from close range. That first trip we freed the bell and tied a knot in the bell rope to prevent it from getting stuck in the pulley again. That got the bell working, but it wasn’t a very elegant solution.

Head-scratching and phone calls ensued. After weighing the options, it seemed wise to restore the bell-ringing system to its original setup. SFD assistant chief Ron Skelton kindly brought Ladder Truck 1 back to carry us aloft to remove the old crank arm and measure for a new one. A few days later I had a new arm welded together, and Ron returned to get me up there one last time to remove the old parts and install the new system. After applying a bit of grease and fitting the new arm with a new cable, the new bell is set to ring out for another 137 years.

![The replacement bell in October 2020, now in good working order.](image)

**Thank you for these “for-use” items (August–October 2020)**

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<td>Cross Church: 50 Years Together: First Baptist Church of Springdale/Cross Church and The 150th Anniversary Celebration of Cross Church</td>
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<td>Walt Gallagher: vacuum</td>
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<td>Steve Goering: July 1963 Flashback</td>
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<td>Marsha Jones: Putting Students First</td>
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<td>Mira Leister: <em>The History of Bentonville: Arkansas and Images of America: Harrison</em></td>
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<td>Aaron Loehndorf: computer monitor</td>
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<td>Allyn Lord: <em>Collecting Tech</em></td>
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<td>McClelland Consulting Engineers: office furniture, bookshelves, file cabinets, coat rack</td>
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<td>Pam Redfern: 2019 Prairie Grove telephone directory</td>
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<td>Truman Stamps: 4GB SD card</td>
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<td>UARK Federal Credit Union: 200 reusable bags</td>
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Along with our regular programs (all virtual at this time), two special events have kept us busy of late. Education staff and volunteers met at the Ozark Natural Science Center (ONSC) for a socially distanced broadcast of “Tall Tales, Folktales, and Other Ozark Stories from Primary Sources.” Education specialist Kim Hosey told stories about two rare Ozark critters, the Arkansas rubberworm and the whoofenpoof. Volunteers Abigail, Henry, and Oliver Freeman debuted their retelling of the Osage creation story, using masks which they made themselves. We also shared a tale of how the first dandelions came to Northwest Arkansas as well as real-life stories about logging and agriculture in the Ozarks. The broadcast is available on ONSC’s Facebook page under “Videos.”

Native American Day, a two-day virtual event, launched November 19 and 20, offered recorded talks available for the rest of the 2020–2021 school year. Co-hosted by the Arkansas Archeological Survey, Native American Day is designed to meet fifth-grade Arkansas education-curriculum standards.

After several planning meetings in 2019 and early 2020 to organize an in-person Native American Day here at the museum, COVID-19 forced us to reimagine the event as a series of live, online programs. A positive outcome of pivoting to virtual programming is the ability to offer presentations from across the state to audiences across the state.

We enlisted the help of over twenty-five presenters from the Arkansas Archeological Survey, Arkansas State Parks, and various Native American tribes—all professionals with a wealth of knowledge. Then we invited educators to register. (Over 2,000 participants signed up!) We held a Native American Day logo design competition to Springdale EAST (Education Accelerated by Service and Technology) students. The winner was Lakeside Junior High School eighth grader Rylee Gill. Helen Tyson Middle School EAST students used Rylee’s design to print 2,000 stickers, one given to each Native American Day participant along with a reproduction arrowhead.

Some sessions offered hands-on instruction for Native American crafts. We provided supplies for students who registered for these classes: we cut and drilled wooden twining looms, wound balls of yarn, sorted clay for pottery and wood cookies for pendants, and more. We then had a packing day at the museum to assemble materials for mailing to each participating school.

Many of the presentations will be uploaded to YouTube and organized for later viewing. Some information will also be translated into Spanish.

We thank the Arkansas Archeological Survey, Arkansas State Parks, and tribal members for sharing their expertise, and the Arkansas Humanities Council for awarding us a CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act grant to help cover program costs.
Scenes from Oaklawn Farm

Janice Gneiting recently donated some beautiful images from the 1920s and 1930s of Oaklawn Farm in Fayetteville. Located on present-day Porter Road, the farm was owned and operated by Janice’s great-grandparents, Henry Clay Porter and Mary Squyres Porter, and their sons, including Janice’s grandfather, Henry Otis Porter. It is believed that the photos were taken by Henry Otis Porter.

Oaklawn was a diversified farming and dairy operation, with the Porters raising white leghorn chickens, dairy and beef cattle, hogs, goats, grafted apple trees, apples, grapes, roses, and gladiolas. Their Oaklawn Dairy sold milk, cream, whipping cream, buttermilk, and butter.
When Jean Dipboye was asked to serve on the museum board in late 1995, her application referenced her love of history, collecting old china and cut glass, and being raised on an Iowa farm as one of thirteen children. One comment on that application no doubt endeared her to the museum staff: “The Shiloh Museum is one of the nicest projects Springdale has ever given to Northwest Arkansas.”

Jean passed away on November 13, 2020. Her legacy includes a slew of relatives, many friends, and a well-lived life of service. Among that service was to the museum, where she not only volunteered and was a donor of artifacts, but most notably served eleven years on the museum board, 1996–2006.

Jean served on numerous board committees, including acquisitions, education, events, and nominating, but it was her financial expertise—a decades-long career in banking, including vice president of the First National Bank—that made her a valuable asset to the endowment and finance committees. She was board vice-president in 2000 and president in 2001. Because of that expertise and leadership, Jean was one of the main board members I looked to for help and advice when I started as museum director in 2005. Jean went on to serve as an ex-officio member of the board, 2007–2009.

I will remember Jean as a valuable team member and for the generosity of her gifts of support and time. I will remember her grace and kindness as she moved through life, her deep knowledge, and the strength with which she undertook the hardships that were thrown at her. The Shiloh Museum has lost a true friend. I’ll always remember her as a woman of grace and strength.
**MISSION STATEMENT**

*The Shiloh Museum of Ozark History serves the public by preserving and providing resources for finding meaning, enjoyment, and inspiration in the exploration of the Arkansas Ozarks.* Adopted by the Shiloh Museum Board of Trustees on February 11, 2016.

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**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
- Discount on photo reproduction fees
- 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.

**Help us save money and trees**

- Check here if you would like to receive your newsletter by email instead of U. S. mail.

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**Membership Levels**

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**Name**

**Address**

**City**

**State**

**Zip**

**Please make check payable to:** Shiloh Museum

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

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**UPCOMING PROGRAMS AND EVENTS**

All listed programs and events will be virtual.

**January 9.** Cabin Fever Reliever Collector’s Day on our website. Featuring items from the Shiloh Museum’s founding collection, the William Guy Howard Collection.

Along with our website, visit all our online offerings for more local history:

- YouTube
- Instagram
- Apple Podcasts, Stitcher, and other podcast providers
- Shiloh Museum Facebook page
- Shiloh Museum for Educators Facebook group
- Springdale History Facebook page

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**CALENDAR**

We are currently open on a limited basis, Monday through Friday, 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. COVID-19 protocols are in place. Thursday mornings from 10:00 a.m. to noon are reserved for at-risk visitors. Visit our [website](#) for more details.

**CURRENT SPECIAL EXHIBITS**

**Through December 12.** *Queen for A Day*, a photo exhibit exploring contests of beauty and skill in Northwest Arkansas.

**Through January 9, 2021.** *Going Greek*, an exhibit on the history of University of Arkansas fraternities and sororities.

**Through April 10, 2021.** *Make Do*, an exhibit on 19th- and 20th-century Ozark ingenuity, showcasing ways folks took discarded and found materials and used them to make or repair everyday objects. See the virtual exhibit.

**UPCOMING EXHIBITS**

**December 15–June 12, 2021.** *A Better Bird: History of the Poultry Industry* photo exhibit. From backyard birds to vast broiler houses, this photo exhibit examines how the chicken has changed the nature and economy of Northwest Arkansas.
It took a lot of prep work to assemble, pack, and mail supplies to 2,000 participants in our recent Native American Day virtual event. In the foreground are education manager Judy Costello (left) and education specialist Kim Hosey. In the background are volunteer Henry Freeman and Dr. Melissa Zabecki, educational outreach coordinator with the Arkansas Archeological Survey, a co-host of Native American Day. See page 8 for more details.