

The Museum News

The official newsletter of the Pearl River Community College Museum Patrons' Organization

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Expansion set for this summer

The Museum will be undergoing major expansion this summer for the third year in a row. Pearl River Community College Museum has been on a growing track for its three years of existence, and plans are to double the museum's exhibit space again this summer.

"We've got a lot of memorabilia that has been donated and a lot promised," said Ronn Hague, Director of the unique museum. "We have to expand. It's not a matter of choice, it's a matter of necessity."

The planned expansion comes as a result of the completed student center in the center of the Poplarville campus. The new convention hall on the west end will free up the back half of the museum which was used for late registration and book buy-back.

Besides exhibit expansion the added space will allow offices at the rear of the museum to become exhibit storage, a work room and a reading room.

"We're really excited about the addition of the reading room," said Hague. "It will contain documents that are best stored in a library type setting. We will use it for research and it will be open to the public."

The room will contain an archive of the past 30 years press releases as well as video's from the same time period."

"We are in the process of converting all the video tapes to DVD," said Hague, "Video tapes have a shelf life of no more than 20 years in ideal situations, whereas a DVD's shelf life is 100 years."

New exhibits will include a theater arts exhibit, an expanded sports exhibit, a uniform and costume exhibit, a Dobie Holden exhibit, an exhibit for Pearl River's six county district, a Hurricane Camille exhibit and an exhibit chronicling Pearl River's military school period.

The museum also plans to incorporate interactive audio into some of the exhibits. "We would like to make the museum as interactive and interesting as we can," Hague said.

New lighting will be added, matching the lighting recently installed.

Annual Patrons' meeting to be set

At a recent meeting of the Museum Advisory Board, the Annual Patrons' meeting was discussed but no time was set. The planned meeting will be held in the Olivia Bender Cafeteria on campus. At the Annual Patrons' meeting, the Patrons will be asked to elect a Museum Advisory Board and will hear a report from Museum Director, Ronn Hague.

The meeting, a dinner, will feature entertainment as well as the annual business meeting. The meeting will require a reservation and a ticket for the meal.

Documentary nets 40 new patrons



Dr. John A Grant, Jr., documentary narrator; Mrs. Kathryn Moody, Museum Advisory Board Chairman, and Ronn Hague, museum director, pause for a picture during the reception that was held following the premiere.

The premiere of "The Pearl River College Story: a historical documentary" on Feb. 26, 2004 was well attended by enthusiastic Pearl River College alumni and friends.

The premiere, which featured the 71-minute film, "The Pearl River College Story: a historical documentary," was attended by more than 250 people in spite of the inclement weather.

The documentary, narrated by Dr. John A. Grant, Jr., told the complete history of the college from its beginnings as Pearl River County Agricultural High School to the present. A brief history of Pearl River County and the city of Poplarville were included in the interesting story.

Ronn Hague, Museum Director, wrote and directed the story, which was projected onto a 10 by 14 foot screen. The premiere was preceded by a welcome given by Mrs. Kathryn Moody (Museum Advisory Board chairman), followed by the introduction of the cast and crew by Hague. Grant followed with an introduction of the documentary.

The cast was made up of Grant, who narrated; Alex Ladner, who played the parts of an early settler and a Native American's moccasined feet; Kenny Russell, who played the part of a farmer; Jason Keene, who played the part of a Native American's eyes; and River Smith, who played the part of school boy. Ladner and Keene are both students at PRCC, while Russell is the PRCC printer and compositor and Grant is the school's Dean of Academic Affairs.

The crew consisted of Ladner, who designed the costumes and the sets; Frank Ladner, Jr., who produced the graphic
(See "Documentary" on page 2)

Documentary (continued from page 1)

intro; and Ronn Hague, who wrote and directed the documentary and who composed the music score.

Following the premiere, Donna Wilson Lee, Development Foundation and Alumni Affairs director, solicited funds for the museum.

The documentary has been professionally transferred to DVD and is available to all Museum Patrons for \$25. The DVD is divided into chapters for easy access to selected material. To purchase a copy of the DVD, call Ronn Hague at 601-403-1316 or go by the Office of Alumni Affairs in the Alumni House on the Poplarville campus.

Pearl River College: Little Known Facts and Information

In 1922 the Pearl River County Agricultural High School "Aggies" football team was under the supervision of Coach E. W. "Goat" Hale, who later became a founding partner of the Hale and Jones Sporting Goods chain. This team not only played against other agricultural high schools, but also played foes such as Mississippi Normal College (now USM), Louisiana College freshmen (now LSU), Mississippi College, Tulane freshmen, to mention but a few.

The "Aggies" got off to a good start that year, losing none of their games. They followed in 1923 with a similar record. This was, in itself, a laudable accomplishment, but they almost repeated their record in 1924, losing to only one team. By itself, this record was remarkable, but the really interesting thing about the 3-year record was that during the entire period, they allowed no points to be scored against them! Their motto was, "They shall not pass" and was emblazoned across the masthead of the AHS Aggies newspaper. During this time period, a goat became the school mascot. Legend has it that Perk stole the Aggies' goat at one time, but somehow or another, the goat was recovered.

"Goat" Hale left at the end of the '24 session to coach ball at Mississippi College and later at Mississippi State (at that time it was the A&M.) He was replaced by a former "Aggie" named J.F. "Rat" Stuart. Stuart coached the college team for one year, during which the Wildcats won their first state title. J.F. Stuart stayed on here as a professor until 1933 when he became PRCC's third President.

Staying on the subject of former presidents, Joseph Forrest Stuart was the first graduate of PRC AHS to become President of Pearl River College. Dr. Garvin Howell Johnston was the first graduate of the Junior College to become President (1953-1969), and Dr. Marvin R. White was the only PRC president to have graduated from both PRC AHS and Pearl River Junior College.

It is a little known fact that Poplarville almost gave birth to a college in 1906. The story (gleaned from a number of "Free Press" articles, Poplarville's second newspaper) was that Poplarville High School, established in 1892, was under the direction of its second headmaster, W.I. Thames. Thames had been there since the school's second year (1893) and had built himself quite a reputation, not only in Poplarville, but in south Mississippi as well. Thames was also an astute businessman who, with the help of a few local investors, built two large dormitories when the school

began taking on boarders. The girls' dorm was a three story building, while the boys' was a two story.

Thames also branched off into the utilities by establishing the local power and light plant, which was built next door to the girls' dorm.

On June 17, 1906, a fire broke out in the power and light building. It was discovered after the fire was out of control. The fire leapt to the adjacent women's dorm, then spread across the street to the Methodist Church and to the boy's dorm. More than \$40,000 worth of buildings went up in smoke, along with Poplarville's dream of hosting a college. Two weeks later, Hattiesburg announced that W.I. Thames was establishing a college there, the South Mississippi College. Thames located the college on Tuscan Avenue. The college burned about 10 years later and was not rebuilt. Thames then became the principal of Picayune High School.

Later, on the same spot where the South Mississippi College was located, another college was established, Mississippi Women's College. This college was later purchased by the Mississippi Baptist Convention, and William Carey College was established there.

Poplarville, no doubt, was disappointed over losing the college. Even though Poplarville and Hattiesburg were both founded in 1884, the latter had already outgrown Poplarville because of the location of the south Mississippi railroads that ran through the "hub city."

By the time newly elected State Senator, Theo Bilbo, returned home to Poplarville for the summer of 1908, the residents were eager for progress. Bilbo organized a meeting and was elected a committee of one to study the establishment of a school in Poplarville. When the board of education met, Poplarville residents submitted a proposal to locate the school within the city.

The county school board established the Pearl River County Agricultural High School on June 8, 1908 and appointed M.N. McCoy, D.F. Smith, E.B. Ferris, Theo. G. Bilbo and Leopold Locke (ex-officio by virtue of the fact he was the county superintendent of education) the Board of Trustees for the new high school.

When the county board met again on July 30, a motion was made by M.G. Blackwell and attorney M.D. Tate, representing the town of McNeill, to review the decision to locate the agricultural high school in Poplarville and allow other communities in the county to submit proposals. The board, however, ratified the previous decision.

This decision may very well have saved Pearl River College. Had the high school been located in McNeill, it is doubtful that the town would have been willing to "front" the school for an undetermined period of time when the Agricultural High School Law of 1908 was declared unconstitutional. Poplarville, on the other hand, had already lost one "college" and the residents were not about to lose another. The bitter taste of losing was still fresh for most residents and they had no intention of going down in defeat a second time. When the agricultural high school law was declared unconstitutional in December of 1909, a few key businessmen banded together and borrowed the money against the passage of a new agricultural law. The bill was introduced to the legislature in 1910 and passed that spring. Pearl River was one of only three schools to remain open during that period. The other two were in Chickasaw and Madison counties.

Director's Corner

This column will be an open letter written by the museum director to the Pearl River Community College Museum Patrons. It will appear in each issue of The Museum News.

On this, the first issue of *The Museum News*, I will take the opportunity to give a brief overview of the state of the museum and the plans for 2004-2005. This will be covered in better detail at the Annual Museum Patrons' Meeting.

Until after the first Museum Advisory Board meeting, held in October 2003, the museum was operating on a minimum of money. From 1999 (when the museum was first conceived) until October of 2003, total donations did not exceed \$3,000 for the entire three year period. However, during that period, the museum grew to its current size, including the major renovation completed last summer. Total expenditures for that period of time (including re-carpeting the entire south wing) was \$2,577. After four rather generous donations, we were able to complete the remodeling by adding lighting. Still the total amount spent for the last renovation was less than \$2,500. In the fall of 2003, the PRCC Board of Trustees elected to fund the museum with interest derived from the Brownstone contribution. The funded amount was \$10,000. The recent premiere netted the museum (to date) \$1,365. With expenses paid, we currently have on hand in the two funds, \$12,093.81, with \$1000 of that figure in a special Dobie Holden Exhibit fund. The remaining \$11,093.81 is in the general fund.

This glowing financial report comes at a time when we are currently facing another expansion which will double the size of the museum's exhibit space yet again and provide much needed archival storerooms, a workroom and a reading room. We have developed a working plan for this expansion, and find that to implement it fully will take quite a lot more than we currently have on hand. We plan to stretch the amount we have to do the remodel, but we will ultimately need more. Some items, such as mannequins, interactive audio and video kiosks are quite expensive.

The current plan is to move the museum back to occupy the full south wing of Hancock Hall. This is necessary since we have two full rooms of donated and found (on campus) school memorabilia that we will need to display. New exhibits planned for the expansion are:

! A Dobie Holden Exhibit, featuring the man and his teams. Holden coached football at PRCC from 1948 until 1965 and his time here is legend.

! A Fine Arts Exhibit, featuring music and theater arts on campus. We have artifacts dating from the 1930's and expect to find even more uniforms and other memorabilia.

! A Six County Exhibit featuring artifacts from our six county district.

! A Hurricane Camille Exhibit featuring photos of the devastation caused here on campus by the storm and interviews describing the devastation.

! A Military Years Exhibit featuring Pearl River College's years as a military academy from 1935 until 1948.

! A Costume Wall displaying many of the sweaters, jackets, skirts and uniforms donated in the past three years. It is important to place these artifacts in a display.

Our plan also outlines several programs that we wish to institute, including:

! The Living Legacy Project, a program of interviewing a number of our older alumni, instructors and friends in front of a video camera and preserving the interviews on DVD.

! The DVD Project, a program of taking archived video tapes (we currently have about 80 of them) and transferring them onto DVD for preservation.

! The Media Room Project, the construction of a theater in the museum to screen a shortened version of the documentary.

We are also currently working with our administration to design a History Museum Studies course for students that will allow them to work in a museum environment, archiving, dressing displays and handling tours. If this program is approved, students will be able to take this course for college credit.

As you can probably tell, we have been quite busy preparing ourselves for a summer of expansion. We hope to involve as many of our patrons as will volunteer. If you are handy with a paint brush or hammer, please call us and let us know. We have already had several people volunteer, but we will need more. If you can help us, call 601-403-1316.

Recent Donations

We have had a number of items donated to the museum recently. Again, Pat and Shirley Riley have donated several items, including: a framed Pearl River diploma and class ring, a PHS cheerleader's sweater and class ring (the diploma and class ring was her mother's.) and a 1948 annual.

Helen A. Clunie of Picayune donated a 1949 annual, several wonderful pictures including a photo of the 1924 football team, a photo of the 1924-25 graduating class, an identified photo of the 1941 baseball team, a 1941 photo of Company "A", an identified photo of the 1940 football team, two 1946 graduation photos, and a panoramic photo of the school and students (1920's).

Kathryn Moody and her daughter donated a 1947 annual and a PHS cheerleader's letter (the high school became known as Poplarville High School in the 40's and 50's instead of the AHS.). Mrs. Kathryn earlier donated 2 diplomas dating from the 1920's and a dormitory rules sheet from the 1930's. She also donated 2 photos of former PRJC alumnus and Mississippi's Secretary of State, Heber Ladner.

Dr. Ted Alexander, former PRCC president, donated his inauguration speech delivered on May 3, 1985. Dwight Wesley, Jr. recently donated his father's graduation certificate. He stopped by a couple of weeks ago and dropped off a mounted picture of the 1924 graduating class to go with the diploma. He and his brothers are paying to have the photo framed to match the diploma.

If you have items that you wish to donate to the museum, contact Ronn Hague at 601-403-1316 or bring them by either the museum (located in the south wing of Hancock Hall) or the Alumni House/Development Foundation house (located in the first president's house).

If you have information you would like to share for this news letter, or if you have a particular question you would like for us to research - call Ronn Hague at 601-403-1316.

Welcome to New Members

We want to welcome the following members (below) to the newly formed Pearl River Community College Museum Patrons' Organization. The membership stands at 55, which is a major accomplishment, since membership has only been actively sought for the past five months. We are currently receiving 1 to 2 applications for membership each week. Please help us continue to grow. Your active support means that we can continually upgrade the quality museum we have. This means better displays, better information for our visitors about Pearl River College's rich past, and better preservation of the materials entrusted to us. In order to maintain our present rate of growth, we need 200 patrons who annually donate a minimum of \$25 per person. If you are receiving *The Museum News* and you are not currently a member of the Museum Patrons' Organization, this will be the last newsletter you receive. To become a Patron, call Ronn Hague at (601) 403-1316

New Members:

John W. Hall, Martin and Dolores Smith, Hattie Burks Gentry, Arlin Regan, Carole and Daniel Lund, Leanna Thornton, Mr. and Mrs. Berlon Lee, Dwight Wesley, Jr., Mr. and Mrs. Lampton O. Williams, Fran and Lewis Murray, Paul and Barbara Highstreet, Dr. and Mrs. Marvin R. White, Chuck Abadie, Mrs. Anthony C. Waits, Kathryn Moody, Dr. John A Grant, Jr., Dr. and Mrs. William Lewis, Earlora Holden, Dr. and Mrs. Thomas E. Holden, Kenny W. Russell, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Jelks, W.C. Pahlman, Larry J. Ladner, Dr. and Mrs. Travis J. Harrison, Mary Jean Saulters, Robert Palmer, Ann Morris, Marilyn Dillard, Max Huey, Webster Ladner, Jane Marshall Brister and Dr. Frank L. Brister, Jr., June Fowler, Pat and Shirley Riley, Ronn Hague, Bob and Bonnie Boyce, Dr. and Mrs. Ted J. Alexander, Dr. and Mrs. Wes Estey, Sybil Estess, Steve Regan, and Violet Lee.



After the premiere, a reception was held in the museum. More than 100 people crowded into the museum where they were served punch and cake. Three cakes displayed the three original buildings: The original Agricultural High School building, Jacobs Hall and Batson Hall.

The Museum News is a publication of the **Pearl River Community College Museum Patrons' Organization**. If you wish to receive a subscription to this publication, you must be a member of the Museum Patrons' Organization. Membership dues are \$25 annually. For more information, call Ronn Hague at (601) 403-1316.

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