

The Museum News

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

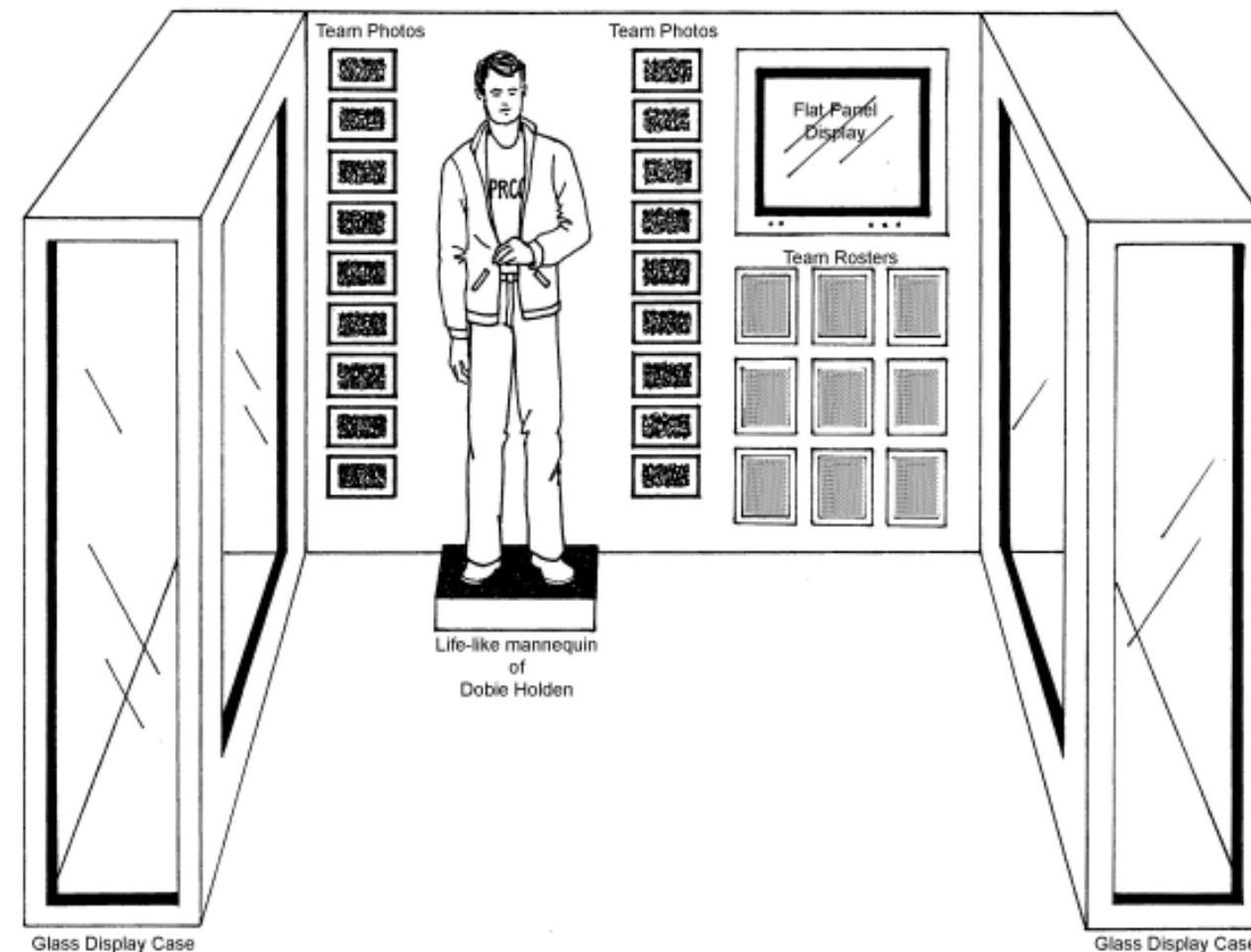
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Museum Advisory Board Approves Dobie Holden Exhibit *Fund-raising efforts underway*

Dobie Holden Exhibit



Board approves Dobie Holden Exhibit

During the regular meeting of the Museum Advisory Board on Thursday, January 27, 2005, the board approved a recommendation to begin fund-raising efforts to build an exhibit devoted to legendary football coach, Dobie Holden, and the teams he coached from 1948-66. Board member Arlin Regan was elected to chair the fund-raising committee. The Exhibit will feature a life like mannequin replication of the coach and contain a short television program about the coach and his teams.

Coach Holden's teams won eight state and one national championship. Team photos and rosters will flank the figure, and glass-front cases will enclose the display. Team artifacts and memorabilia will occupy the cases, recording an outstanding period of Pearl River College's history.

Those wishing to contribute to the exhibit are asked to contact Ronn Hague at 601-403-1316 or email him at rhague@prcc.edu. Donations to the Development Foundation Museum Fund are tax deductible.

Museum Board Elects Officers

At the regular meeting of the Museum Advisory Board on Thursday, January 27, 2005, the board elected officers. The elected officers will serve for one year. Kathryn Moody was re-elected Chairman, LeAnna Thornton was elected Vice-Chairman, Delores Smith was elected Secretary, and Max Huey was elected Treasurer. In other business, on recommendation, the board appointed a membership committee to promote membership in the Museum Patrons' Organization. The board heard a report from Ronn Hague, Museum Director, on the state of the museum. According to Hague, museum artifact donations were up during the fall quarter due to Homecoming festivities in October. Hague also said financial donations are down for the quarter due to holidays.

In this issue: PRCC - Little Known Facts, page 2; State of the Museum Report, page 3; This Quarter's Artifacts, page 4

Pearl River College:

Little Known Facts and Information

(This article is a result of research done for "The Pearl River College Story")

Defining the early success of PRCAHS

Within the first four months of its opening, Pearl River County Agricultural High School (PRCAHS) faced a crisis that closed all but three of the state's new county agricultural high schools. Even so, less than five years later, PRCAHS was recognized nationally as the best example of a rural high school in the country. There are compelling reasons why this school went from obscurity and near demise to a school proclaimed by leading national educators as an exemplary school.

The accolades began as early as 1912, in PRCAHS's fourth session, when State Superintendent of Education J. N. Powers brought the United States Commissioner of Education Dr. P. P. Claxton, for a visit to the new school. After visiting, Dr. Claxton stated, according to State Superintendent Powers, that *"of the state's 19 agricultural high schools, Pearl River was the best."*

J. C. Fant, University of Mississippi professor, who attended the Southern Education Conference in Louisville, Kentucky in April, 1914 reported to the Poplarville *Free Press* newspaper that Dr. Wallace Buttrick, Secretary of the Rockefeller Foundation's General Education Board, *"...stated publicly that he had visited schools in most every state in the Union and in other parts of the world but that [Pearl River County Agricultural High School] came nearer the Ideal School than any other school that he had ever seen."*

Buttrick was not alone in his accolades. The *Country Gentleman*, brother publication to the *Saturday Evening Post*, published an article about Mississippi's agricultural high school system featuring PRCAHS. W. T. McGowin, an official with the nation's education department wrote, *"In making my report to the Department, I am compelled to concede to Mississippi and Pearl River County the position of front rank; a position of which not only you, as County Supt. but all the people of Pearl River County and of Mississippi at large can well afford to be proud . . ."*

In 1906, Pearl River County's education system consisted of about 86 one-room schools distributed in the county's communities. These schools were run by licensed teachers who, for the most part, were only high school graduates. These schools were open for six months out of the year and only went as high as the eighth grade. The only education to be had beyond the eighth grade was found in Poplarville and Picayune, where education to the 10th grade was offered. When the opportunity for better education for the county's children presented itself in the form of the agricultural high school law in 1908, State Senator Theo G. Bilbo began a local campaign to take advantage of the new law. By July of that year, the county's Board of Education and Board of Supervisors met and decided to establish Pearl River County Agricultural High School. This move marked the beginning of a massive overhaul of the county's school system.

When the agricultural high school law was declared unconstitutional in 1909, after it was contested by an African-American in Jasper County citing lack of equal provision for the African-American citizens of the state, a group of Poplarville's prominent citizens met to underwrite a bank loan funding the fledgling high school, keeping it afloat until such time as Mississippi legislators passed a new agricultural high school law. Of the thirty new agricultural high schools, only two other schools (Chickasaw County A. H. S. and Madison County A. H. S.) remained open between the rescinding of the original law and the passing of the new law in 1910. The move to establish a county high school and the efforts to keep it in place after state funding was removed speaks volumes concerning how Pearl River County citizens felt about their children's education.

More must be said about education in America at the turn of the 19th century. Agricultural high schools were no new thing. An attempt to establish schools that taught agriculture science and home science on a national level had seen limited success. The Congressional District Agricultural High Schools established in the 1890's provided federal funding for rural boarding schools to be established in each congressional district. Only five states took advantage of this act, and only on a limited basis. Although Mississippi did not take advantage of this program, in 1908, it passed a law funding county agricultural high schools in each county that wished to take advantage of the bill, becoming the first state in the nation with a system of state-supported agricultural high schools. While only one of the original fifty of these agricultural high schools remain intact (Forrest County Agricultural High School), thirteen of these original agricultural high schools added two years of college work. This system of agricultural high school/junior colleges became the forerunner of the nation's first state funded junior college system in 1926.

With a state funded agricultural high school system in place, the Mississippi Board of Education focused on the state's rural grammar schools. Consolidation had been tried with varying degrees of success in isolated pockets throughout the United States. Under the leadership of State Superintendent of Education William H. Smith, the founder of the first federally funded "corn club" (the forerunner of the 4-H clubs in America), Mississippi began making strides in consolidation.

On the local level, Pearl River County had already begun consolidating schools as early as 1912, so that by 1914 only two one-room schools remained. The other 84 one-room schools had been consolidated into 23 new schools, many housed in brick buildings. Each of these new consolidated schools was headed by a principal with a college degree.

These changes in the way the county's children were educated did not come easily. Sacrifices were made. Property taxes were increased to pay for this expensive new program. The cost of maintaining these new schools increased, and teacher salaries were improved. Pearl River County's adult population did not view this increased burden as a liability, on the contrary, as seen by their enthusiasm to welcome new programs, they saw it as a positive advantage for the county's children.

It was this progressive mind-set that, in 1916, effected the placement of the Model School County program in Pearl River County. This Rockefeller-funded program received national recognition among educators and caused Pearl River County citizens to reach even higher as they added first year college courses to the county agricultural high school's curriculum in 1921, six months before the state legislature passed Mississippi's first junior college law.

Museum seeks grant

The museum is currently seeking a Museum Assessment Program (MAP) grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), an agency providing federal funding for American museums and libraries. The grant will provide for a six-month self-assessment of the museum.

The second phase of the grant provides for a peer assessment. One or two persons will be sent to the museum from the American Association of Museums (AAM) to assess the museum. This assessment will closely examine the workings, exhibit, and recording of the museum and its artifacts.

The museum will be notified in April or May concerning the MAP award winners according to the IMLS.

"This assessment will certify the museum's credibility and lead us toward accreditation with the AAM, and accreditation will enable us to seek larger grants," said Ronn Hague, museum director. "It's a good first step in the grant funding process, and it gives us a good beginning."

The State of the Museum

The State of the Museum address was given by Ronn Hague, museum director at the October 9, 2004 annual patrons' organization meeting:

When we began this endeavor, we had no idea that today we would have come so far and seen such positive results as we have. We did not realize the momentum that this museum would gain. Founded in 2000 and opened for the first time in October 2001, this museum has already gone far beyond my expectations, and my expectations were high. When I approached a number of people at the Chapel groundbreaking more than a year ago, asking them to serve on a Museum Advisory Board, I was amazed and delighted that every one of them gave me an enthusiastic "yes". Shortly after our initial meeting on October 7, 2003, we were given a \$3,000 gift from the Dobie Holden family, and the college board of trustees voted to give us \$10,000 from the interest earned on the Brownstone bequest. Prior to these gifts, we had just completed our second expansion, and our account had \$62 left in it.

A little more than a year later, we are in the best financial shape we have been in since our founding. As I reported to the Advisory Board at our August meeting, we had \$9,723.04 on hand in both the Development Foundation Museum Fund and the Brownstone Fund, with some of this money earmarked for the expansion or special projects. The Board adopted our budget for this year, 2004-2005, in the amount of \$5,000. This budget was listed in our September Museum News, so I will not go into detail.

At the present time, our third expansion is underway. We had hoped to have it completed for the Homecoming festivities, but it was not finished in time. Our artifact contributions this year have been great, and it would take some time to mention them all, but they appear in our quarterly publication of the Museum News.

Let me take just a moment to talk about the Museum News. This is our way of keeping each patron informed of activities in the museum. This is your museum and we want you to be aware of what is going on. Each issue will include new memberships, donated artifacts, and updates on museum activities. I also try to include an interesting bit of history in each issue based on my ongoing research of the school's history. I would like to encourage you to pass this newsletter around. We hope that it can be used as a tool to excite others about our museum and help us gain more patronage.

In June 2004, we were visited by Cindy Gardner, the State Field Curator for the Mississippi Department of Archives and History. Mrs. Gardner gave us a list of actions to take in order to bring our museum up to standards. Operating a museum is much more than simply putting things into a display case. It involves record keeping, preservation, conservation, and sometimes, restoration. We have been given an awesome task to preserve and maintain the artifacts donated to us, and we are serious about our responsibility. We are currently reinventorying each artifact in the museum, writing a description of each artifact, and recording that information onto a computer and on hard files. This, in itself, is a massive undertaking, but at completion we will have a record that will comply with museum standards. We have also undertaken some extensive preservation and conservation projects: encapsulating photos, important documents, newspapers, and other artifacts in mylar film to preserve them, coating them with de-acidification materials to further preserve them, and we are undertaking a textile preservation program to preserve the many articles of clothing that we have been given. When we are finished with the current project, we hope to seek grant funding for a museum assessment program performed by the American Association of Museums. After the assessment, we will apply for accreditation with the American Association of Mu

At the Advisory Board's direction, I applied for membership in the American Association of Museums, the American Association of State and Local History and the Mississippi Museums Associa-

tion. We are now a member of those organizations and our membership is posted on the wall of the lobby in the museum. This will further our eligibility to obtain grant funding.

In February 2004, with the premiere of "The Pearl River College Story: a historical documentary," we began a drive for patron membership. At that time we had about 10 members. We added almost 50 new members as a result of that drive, and I would like to thank each one of you for your support.

I recently conferred with Dr. John Grant, PRCC Vice President for Instruction, about the possibility of adding a History Museum Studies program to our curriculum. This one-hour credit course will offer a student two hours per week laboratory study in the operation of a history museum. The students who take this course will gain hands-on experience in the methods of preservation, conservation, recording accessions, and guiding tours. We understand that this course will soon be available. This course will be under the supervision of one of our instructors of history and will be the only one of its kind in the state. Pearl River College continues to lead the way in education in Mississippi.

This past year, the museum has seen tremendous growth in finances, donated artifacts, and physical expansion. This is only the beginning. In researching the history of this school, I have begun to catch a glimpse of the vision that our founders had. This vision was to prepare the children of this county for a brighter tomorrow. They were willing to sacrifice in order to give their children the future they could not have. The children of this young school were full of hope and enthusiastic about furthering their education, knowing that they were fortunate to have the opportunity. Many visiting educators were impressed with the student body and their eagerness to learn. A number of those fine young students stayed in our district, and many raised children who followed in their footsteps, coming to Pearl River for their education. Many of their children's children did likewise. Now, many of you here today can claim a parent or grandparent who attended here, and you followed the tradition they set because they told you of the difference that this institution made in their lives. Those early children who came so eagerly, and those early parents who made sacrifices to send their children, were the example that we follow. For in their sacrifice and through their efforts, they gave south Mississippi a hope for the future, both then and now. Our job as a museum is not only to tell the story of Pearl River College, but it is also to share the vision of our founders, to share the dreams of the thousands of students who came here with hope and left here with the tools for success, and to share the idea that each Pearl River Alumnus is a part of a unique institution that has made a difference in education in our nation.

I thank each one of you for your continued patronage in this part of the Pearl River College experience.

Museum offers students view of a rich history

Steven Black, PRCC history instructor, offered his classes a chance to observe history from a different perspective. During the Fall 2004 semester, his classes were required to visit the school's museum and participate in a historical scavenger hunt among the museum's exhibits. Some of the questions his students were required to answer were, "What do the original PRC AHS building, Jacobs Hall, and the new chapel have in common?" and "What do Garvin Johnston and Marvin White have in common?" Mr. Black's students had the opportunity to understand how history is uncovered.

The original PRC AHS building, built in 1908, Jacobs Hall, built in 1911, and the new chapel, still under construction, all used the same bell, purchased in 1909. Although the old bell no longer

(see Museum offers on page 4)

Museum holds first patrons' meeting

During Homecoming festivities Oct. 9, the newly formed Museum Patrons' Organization held its first meeting following the alumni luncheon. The meeting was well attended.

The members elected a new museum advisory board, approved a museum mission and purpose statement, approved the 2004-2005 Budget, and heard a state of the museum report from Museum Director Ronn Hague.

According to Hague, the museum is in the best financial state since its founding. Hague mentioned that even though the museum started the new year with a surplus, there is still great need to continue to seek financial support, since the current expansion is still incomplete and will require more finances to complete it.

Advisory board members for 2004-2005 are as follows: Hancock County - LeAnna Thornton and J. Larry Ladner; Jefferson Davis County - Traci Waits; Lamar County - Mary Jean Saulters and Barbara Highstreet; Marion County - Steve Regan and Arlin Regan; Pearl River County - Kathryn Moody and Earloria Holden; At Large Members - Delores Smith, Peggy Daniels, Max Huey, Buddy Stephens, and Berlon Lee; Ex-Officio Members - Dr. William Lewis, Dr. John Grant, Dr. Marvin R. White, Dr. Ted J. Alexander, Bruce Hankins, Martin Smith, Donna Lee, Chuck Abadie, Clinton Tapper, and Ronn Hague.

New Artifacts

Artifacts this quarter include Dr. Cowart's medical bag filled with medical instruments. Dr. Cowart practiced in the Poplarville area for more than 60 years. The bag was donated by his granddaughter, Jane Marshall Brister, who also gave an autographed copy of the book she wrote detailing the life of the country doctor. Dan Mastrean donated a letter jacket, football blanket, a needlepoint of Dobie Holden, and numerous photos and news clippings from his time here. Mrs. Kathryn Moody donated a steamer trunk owned by Ms. Frankie Durham, an early PRC AHS teacher. The museum would like to thank everyone for sharing their treasures.

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Poplarville, MS 39470

Museum offers . . . (continued from page 3)

rings to call students to class, it has a new permanent home atop the bell tower in Malone Chapel. The question regarding PRCC Presidents Johnston and White is discovered on the timeline wall in the museum. Joseph Forrest Stewart was the first PRC AHS graduate to become the school's president. Garvin Howell Johnston was the first Pearl River Junior College graduate to become president. Marvin Ross White was the only PRJC president to have graduated from both the AHS and the junior college, so both Johnston and White graduated from Pearl River Junior College.

"This program will make PRCC students aware of the incredible history that is Pearl River College," museum director, Ronn Hague said. "By realizing that they are a part of an institution that gained national interest in its early years, broke all kinds of sports records and consistently produced successful educators, businessmen, ministers, lawyers, public servants—the list is endless—these students discover a new respect for their alma mater."

After the semester's assignment was completed, Steve Black said "Over one hundred students participated in this history project . . . after visiting the museum, several students expressed appreciation for an educational opportunity they might have missed."

At the project's end, Black had his students write about their experience in the museum.

Doug Dawsey, one of the students wrote: "A few weeks ago, I stumbled across a hidden gem on our campus . . . to my intrigue, the museum was well put together and extremely interesting."

Lauren Jackson wrote: "As a truly unique asset to the campus, it [the museum] can only get better."

Holly Braswell wrote: "I think it is very important for people to know the history behind our community college, and this is a wonderful place to do that."

Black plans to implement the same program with his Spring 2005 classes.

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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