

The Museum News

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

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PRCC Museum receives first grant

Pearl River Community College Museum is the recipient of a Conservation Assessment Program (CAP). The program, funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services and administered by Washington, D. C. based Heritage Preservation Foundation, provides for an evaluation of museum collections by museum professionals. The grant provides for up to \$6,500 for the program.

This grant provides technical assistance to museums in managing collections. Artifacts collected by museums are extremely susceptible to damage from a myriad of sources, according to Ronn Hague, PRCC Museum's director. "A professional conservator will spend two days evaluating the artifacts we've collected," said Hague. "They will examine the artifacts and make recommendations as to how to best preserve them. We have a responsibility to our community to maintain and preserve those articles that have been entrusted to us."

Things as common as too much light or too much moisture affect old documents. The museum staff has attempted to maintain museum standards in the facility, but with Hurricane Katrina, the standards were temporarily abandoned. "We didn't have a lot of damage," Hague said, "but we had water in the building, which caused me a good deal of concern." A visit from the American Association for State and Local History's Disaster Recovery Team set Hague's mind at ease. The team reported no artifact damage.

Even though the team reported no damage, Hague felt that Heritage Preservation Foundation's CAP was necessary to help the museum set up a plan of action to increase security for the artifacts in the museum. Besides giving a report on the current state of the museum's collection, the program will help the museum staff formulate a plan to maintain standards in preserving the college's and its six-county district's artifacts and history.

The grant will also supply a preservation architect to survey the 61-year old building housing the museum.

Annual patrons' meeting cancelled

The annual patrons' meeting for 2005-2006, held after the annual Alumni Association meeting at Homecoming on October 15 was cancelled because it did not have a quorum present. According to museum by-laws, a quorum of 25 is required for any patron's meeting to be held. Since the attendance was insufficient to hold the meeting, Ronn Hague, museum director, and Barbara Highstreet, Museum Advisory Board chairman, decided to mail ballots and annual reports to patrons.

"I don't think any one thing is to blame for the lack of attendance," Hague said. "Hurricane Katrina played a large part, but we had other conflicts." Hague went on to say that another reason for the low attendance was the number of activities which had to be scheduled for the day.

The fiscal year ends on June 30 of each year, and meeting in October places the annual meeting almost four months into the new year. "We may have to rethink our timing for the annual meeting," Hague added. The reason for holding the meeting after the Alumni meeting was convenience, Hague cited.

A new meeting time for future meetings will be discussed at the next scheduled Museum Advisory Board meeting in January.



PRCC Museum receives national recognition—Ronn Hague (center), representing Pearl River Community College Museum, receives the Certificate of Commendation at the 60th Annual American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) Awards program recently in Pittsburgh. The award is presented by the Chairman of the AASLH, David Crosson (left) and the President and CEO, Terry Davis (right). The museum received the award for its production of "The Pearl River College Story," a documentary on DVD. PRCC Museum was the only Mississippi museum represented at the awards ceremony.

General donates 100-year-old document to museum

Pearl River Community College Museum recently received a Poplarville High School diploma and a photo dated 1906 from Brigadier General John Hawkins Napier, III. The objects belonged to Napier's aunt, Dora Etha Tate, his mother's sister. She was the daughter of Eastman F. Tate (known as the father of Picayune). Although Tate was a long-time resident of Picayune, he moved his family to Poplarville from 1904 to 1908 to take advantage of the schools while he built his Picayune mansion, "Greystone." Though Tate only finished the fourth grade at Aaron Academy in Hancock County, he saw to it that his children had the opportunity to attend college. Before coming to school in Poplarville, Dora Tate was educated by her skull-capped tutor, "old Bill Brooks." He was replaced by a governess, Miss Emma Daniels.

According to Poplarville's second newspaper, *The Free Press*, published from 1892 until 1937, high school education in Poplarville began with the founding of Poplarville High School in the spring of 1892. A massive wooden school building was erected and a 1,000 seat auditorium was later added. The school became an institution of acclaim under the lead of south Mississippi educator, W. I. Thames. Known throughout the nation as one of the finest boarding high schools in the south, it pulled in students from as far away as California.

General Napier has strong ties to Poplarville and Picayune. His father, John Hawkins Napier, Jr. graduated valedictorian from Pearl River County Agricultural High School's first class. Beginning his education at Pearl River as a freshman in 1909, the

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Pearl River College: Little Known Facts and Information

This article is the result of research and interviews done for *100 Years of Educational Excellence: the Pearl River College Story*.

An Alligator in White Hall

a true story as told to Ronn Hague by Dwight Wesley, Jr.

In 1939, an ice plant stood on the east side of where Ace Hardware now stands. This ice plant produced and delivered ice to the town's people. Back then, blocks of ice were placed in a wooden ice box, an insulated container designed to keep perishables cool. These ice boxes were used before modern refrigerators came into use. Because the ice plant's diesel engines required that the cooling pipes be run through cold water, a pond was located beside the plant.

About that time, a man named Bill Daughdrill delivered Times-Picayune newspapers to newsboys throughout the area. Bill made a trip to New Orleans every day to pick up the papers. One day, Bill was in the marshes between Slidell and New Orleans on Highway 11 (which was a shell road back then), when he spotted a four foot alligator crossing the road. Bill stopped and threw the alligator in the back of his truck, because he knew that most people in Poplarville had never seen an alligator. When he got back to town, he showed his prize catch, and to keep the alligator alive, he placed the aquatic reptile in the cooling pond beside the ice plant.

During that summer of 1939, the town hospital, which was located in the old wooden county courthouse structure built in 1892, was torn down to erect a new hospital in its place. Because there was no other building in Poplarville large enough to accommodate the hospital, negotiations were made with PRC officials, and White Hall was acquired as the county's temporary hospital.

PRCC Alumnus, Dwight Wesley, Jr. (Dwight, Sr. was also an alum) was about eleven years old at this time. His younger brothers, Joe and Robert were eight and five. It was during that hot south Mississippi summer that two very significant things happened. First, Joe, who now runs Wesley Fertilizer Plant located next to the railroad overpass on Main Street, went into the hospital for a hernia operation, and the ice plant installed modern ice making equipment that would no longer require the cooling pond.

The story, according to the elder Wesley, goes something like this. Dwight and his buddies found out that the cooling pond was being filled in. In Poplarville, where a young boy needs some activity on a warm summer day, such an event demanded closer investigation. The boys, clad in their summer uniform of short pants, soon reached the pond and found a dump truck emptying its contents into the water. Being typical curious boys, they asked what was going on and were told that the cooling pond was no longer needed, so it was being filled in.

"What about the gator?" one of the boys asked.

"Well, I reckon he'll be covered up too," the truck driver replied.

"Can we have him?" another of the boys asked.

"If you can catch him, I reckon you can have him," the man said.

So the boys set out on their mission. The reader should realize that in 1939 Poplarville, this was quite an event for a group of young boys. On a scale from one to ten, an adventure like this was definitely a nine-and-a-half if not a ten. So the boys set about to devise a plan to capture the leathery *Alligator mississippiensis* and save him from his sure doom. They decided that the best way was to procure some rope, lasso the critter, and pull him from his pond home and his most certain demise.

Former PRJC professor and dean, Enoch Seal (after whom Seal Hall was later named) was a young man then, and Enoch's father owned a five and ten cent store on Main Street. The boys made a quick trip on their bicycles to the store and told Mr.

Seal that they were about to capture the town's alligator and rescue him from certain death.

"We need some rope to lasso him and tie him up," they said.

Mr. Seal smiled and walked to the back of the store.

Back before windows were made from aluminum and vinyl—back when they were all made of wood, the carpenters devised a method of keeping a window open without having to use a stick to prop it up. The method made use of a short piece of cotton rope known as the window sash cord, a pulley at the top of the window and a counterweight made from pig iron that was concealed within the wall. When you raised the window up, the counterweight would go to the bottom and keep the window from crashing down.

Mr. Seal soon returned with a "hank" (an old term meaning anything from several inches to several feet) of window sash cord for the boys, who happily took the cord and mounted their bicycles for the big game hunt at the cooling pond.

When the boys arrived at their destination, the alligator was sunning himself on some of the concrete chunks being used to fill the pond. After many tries, they lassoed the snoozing gator, and the boys found that the tail end of that grizzled reptile was almost as dangerous as the toothy business end, so they cut the cord into three lengths and securely tied him up. Then, they had to figure out the best means of transporting their prize. It is a very good thing that the leathery belly of an alligator is made of tough stuff, because the best idea the boys came up with was to drag the wriggling beast behind their bicycles.

Dwight and his younger brother Joe, did everything together, sometimes, with little brother Robert tagged along. The fact that Joe was in the hospital produced a real battle in Dwight. They had already had an adventure they would all be able to talk about for years to come—an adventure that no other Poplarville boy could easily match, and poor Joe had missed out on it. Dwight knew that brother Joe would be forlorn having missed so great an adventure for something so trivial as being in the hospital.

"We got to show this gator to Joe," Dwight announced to his friends.

A few days earlier, Dwight and some of his friends had gone fishing at Dead Lake just north of town. They had been rather successful and had managed to convince the nurse on duty at the hospital to allow them to go to Joe's northeast corner room and show him their catch, a gallon jug filled with sun perch, in order to "cheer him up." Dwight and the boys knew that there was a whole world of difference between a jar of fish and an alligator, and they knew there was no way that she was going to let them climb the stairs with an alligator, not even if it would save Joe's young life! They had no other choice—not if they wanted to allow Joe to partake of this adventure. They had to do it.

They arrived at White Hall with their alligator in tow. One of the boys ran up the steps and peered into the screen door. He waited until all the nurses were out of sight, and then signaled the rest of the boys. The boys crept into the lobby and had gotten halfway up the stairs carrying their five-foot "show-and-tell" before a nurse caught them. What ensued after that best not be told for the sake of the boys involved. Suffice it to say, the alligator never got to the second floor of White Hall. The boys never could understand why people got so upset about that alligator, but that's just the way a small boy's mind works.

Note: *The alligator was shortly removed to the Dead Lake north of town where he resided many years, and may reside even to this day.*

The 1921 football team, coached by 1st PRC President, J. A. Huff, tore through eight opponents without having a point scored against them. They beat Jones 91-0 and State Teachers (USM) 40-0! The only points scored against them for the year was at the state championship game against Okolona. It ended in a tie, 7-7, resulting in a state co-championship.

History classes visit museum

Stephen Black, PRCC history instructor, introduced his students to PRCC's history through a "for credit" visit to the college's museum last year. His follow-up of the students' impression was quite favorable, so he repeated the program again this year.

To date, more than 75 students have taken advantage of this semester's program and have learned some important facts about PRCC's history, such as: Mississippi passed the first agricultural high school bill in 1908; Pearl River County Agricultural High School first began classes on Sept. 8, 1909; the school's Board of Trustees voted to add freshman college courses to the PRCAS curriculum in 1920; the ROTC program was begun in 1935, changing the look and feel of the campus and changing the everyday life of students on campus.

Students have been most favorable in their comments to museum staff. Black echoes their response. "It's a good opportunity for the students to experience the museum," Black said. Black became involved with the museum through a viewing of the DVD, "The Pearl River College Story," which is part of faculty orientation each year. Since that time, Black, a museum patron, added the museum visit to his history class. "It allows them to experience the school's past traditions," he added.

This year, Black is joined by fellow instructor Jim Walsh. Walsh's classes are scheduled to begin visiting the museum in November. Black said that between the two classes "we should have close to 200 students participate." He plans to make this an ongoing part of his history classes.

W. I. Thames, Poplarville High School's first principal, was a local entrepreneur. He and some local businessmen established a dormitory company soon after he arrived. The privately-owned dorms allowed the high school to expand its enrollment and its impact on Mississippi. Thames also owned the local power and light company. The power and light building caught fire in 1906 and burned to the ground, along with the dorms and the Methodist Church across the street. This fire halted Poplarville's plan to establish the South Mississippi College. Thames founded the South Mississippi Business College two weeks later in Hattiesburg on the location where William Carey College now stands.

Have an article of clothing, a catalog, photos, or other memorabilia you would like to share? The PRCC Museum is always looking for items of interest from the past. Call 601-403-1316.

Patrons elect new board members; accept budget

In a mail-in ballot, the Pearl River Community College Museum Patrons' Organization elected five members of the Museum Advisory board and approved the museum's budget for 2005-2006. Due to a lack of attendance at the annual meeting, the ballot was sent out to each patron.

Elected for a three-year term were: Shirley Riley, Forrest/Lamar Counties; Paul Highstreet, Forrest/Lamar Counties; Delores Smith, at-large; Max Huey, at-large; and Buddy Stephens, at-large. A budget of \$5000 was also approved.

The budget is the same amount as last year's. The 2004-2005 budget was the first budget the museum has operated under, so some changes were necessary.

FY 2005-2006 Budget

Office/Postage/Mailings		\$350.00
Postage	\$200.00	
Office Materials and Supplies	50.00	
Museum News printing	100.00	
Preservation and Conservation		\$2500.00
Preservation and Conservation Supplies	\$2500.00	
Maintenance and Cleaning Supplies		\$300.00
Replacement bulbs and lighting	\$ 50.00	
Carpet cleaning and misc. cleaning	250.00	
Promotion		\$700.00
Travel	\$150.00	
Promotional Materials	150.00	
Subscriptions/Dues to AMA, AASLH, MMA and others	200.00	
Advisory Board Meetings	50.00	
Fund Raising	150.00	
New Exhibits		\$1000.00
Construction Materials		
Miscellaneous (Signs, props, mounting board fasteners, etc.)	\$700.00 300.00	
Miscellaneous		\$150.00
Miscellaneous or unbudgeted expenses	\$150.00	
Total Budget for 2005-2006		\$5000.00

The Pearl River Community College Museum depends solely on contributions for new exhibits, improvements, and preservation supplies. We have no other funding source except you. Make your contribution to the museum today! Cut out this form and send it with a check payable to the PRCC Development Foundation (write "museum" in the for space on your check).

I would like to contribute \$_____ to (check one)

- Historical Marker for the College
- General Fund
- I would like to purchase ___ DVD(s) "The Pearl River College Story" (\$25 each), winner of the AASLH Certificate of Commendation
- I would like to purchase ___ timeline(s) (\$2 each)
- I would like to purchase ___ copie(s) of The Historic Buildings of Pearl River College (\$15 each)
- I would like to become a member or renew my membership. (\$25 per year single membership, \$35 per year for 2 members of the same household.)

Please fill in the following information:

Name _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Ph. _____ - _____ - _____

Alumni? Yes No Years attended _____ to _____

Please allow 2 weeks delivery for items ordered. Please include \$3 for postage. Mail this order/donation to:

Pearl River Community College Museum
101 Highway 11 North
Poplarville, MS 39470
visit us at www.prcc.edu/museum/

General *(continued from page 1)*

year the school was founded, the elder Napier went on to Mississippi A&M (now Mississippi State) where he received his Bachelor's. He attend University of California for his Master's, and Stanford for his doctorate. He moved the family back to Mississippi in 1943 to become the Superintendent of Picayune Schools. He was married to Lena Mae Tate.

The younger Napier is no stranger to Pearl River County. Born in Berkley, CA in 1925, he visited "home" on numerous occasions before his family moved back to Picayune. He graduated from University of Mississippi in 1949, earned a master's from Auburn in 1967 and holds an honorary doctorate from Napier University in Edinborgh, Scotland. He used his degree in history when he researched and wrote the book "Lower Pearl River's Piney Woods: its land and people," a book about the history of Pearl River and Hancock counties published in 1985. "This is important," said Napier about the document he donated, "because my family has always been deeply interested in public education." He went on to say that both his Napier grandparents had college degrees; his grandfather a doctorate from Southern Normal College and his grandmother a B. S. from the normal college at Houston, MS. Napier's mother also held a post graduate degree from Judson College in Marion, AL.

The diploma and photo, a few months shy of 100 years old, has been preserved and placed with the museum's artifacts. "It will command a principal place in a planned exhibit on early education in PRCC's six county district," said Ronn Hague, museum director.

Napier resides with his wife in Ramer, AL.

Did you miss an issue of *The Museum News*?

You can find back issues on the PRCC web site at:
<http://www.prcc.edu/museum/news.html>

Did you know?

The first time PRCaHS met Perk in football was on Thanksgiving Day, 1914. The "Aggies," as we were known then, easily beat the upstarts 51-0. This was also the first year the football team went unbeaten. It was also the first year the football team would play without allowing an opponent to score.

Joseph Forrest "Rat" Stuart replaced E. W. "Goat" Hale as football coach in 1925. Fortunately, the team did not adopt Stuart's nickname as a mascot. (Yes, for a brief period, the school mascot was a goat. In fact, Perk once stole the goat) Stuart went on to become President of Pearl River Junior College in 1933, the first PRCaHS graduate to take the college's helm.

The 1923 school year started with an enrollment of 250 students, and 166 of them were boarders representing 25 counties in Mississippi. By this time, there were almost 40 agricultural high schools across the state, but Pearl River was garnering a lion's share of students from other counties. This spoke well of the academic reputation the school was gaining.

The county's fair grounds were once housed on the PRCaHS campus. There were two mentions of this fact in the Poplarville *Free Press* newspaper, when the original building burned in 1919, and about a year later.

The Pearl River Community College Museum
staff would like to wish everyone a
Merry Christmas
and a very happy New Year

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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Pearl River Community College Museum
Hancock Hall - South Wing
101 Highway 11 North
Poplarville, MS 39470