

Bella Vista Vision

Newsletter of the Bella Vista Historical Society

January – March 2025

Editor: Xyta Lucas

The Bella Vista Historical Society was founded in 1976 in order to “discover, collect, preserve or restore materials and artifacts concerned with our community’s heritage.”



1885 Bella Vista Way, Bella Vista AR 72714 (479) 855-2335

Website: www.bellavistamuseum.org Facebook: Bella Vista Historical Museum

Open Wednesday – Sunday, 1:00 – 5:00 p.m.

PROPOSED EXPANSION

Our fundraising committee, chaired by Co-President Dale Phillips, continues to work on projects and ideas for our proposed building expansion. A big event was held on Sunday March 30 (see pictures on page 9) which attracted over 100 people, and a pickleball tournament is planned for later this year (Oct. 4-5) at Branchwood. Anyone interested in donating to our expansion fund is welcome to do an online donation by going on our museum website, www.bellavistamuseum.org, to the DONATE NOW tab, or by mailing a check to the Bella Vista Historical Museum, 1885 Bella Vista Way, Bella Vista AR 72714. We also accept checks and credit/debit card donations in person during open hours of 1-5 p.m. Wed through Sun. We now have raised just over \$100,000 and recognize that we have long ways to go to reach our goal of \$2 million but every donation, no matter what the amount, helps show how much the community supports this project so we are very appreciative. We thank volunteer Bob Salyers, pictured here, for designing and donating this thermometer for us to track our progress.



ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

We held our annual membership meeting at the museum on Sunday March 23. That's when we elect officers for the coming year. Our four present officers were all re-elected: Xyta Lucas and Dale Phillips as Co-Presidents; Virginia Reynolds and Gina Kietzmann as Co-Treasurers. Xyta and Dale did a Power Point presentation, created by Gina, about the proposed expansion. Over half of the 35 volunteers who serve the museum in various roles were able to be present at the meeting and were given certificates of appreciation. After the meeting, we posed for a group picture taken by Mayor John Flynn.



Following the business meeting, we always have a program. This year our speaker was Vanessa McKuin, Executive Director of Historic Cane Hill, and she introduced her special guest, her grandmother Constance Norton Waddell, who is the author of the book *Sally and Me* that we sell in our gift shop. Vanessa also had other family members in the audience whom she introduced before starting her very informative presentation about the history of Cane Hill from the early 1800's to present. Cane Hill is located about 25 miles southwest of Fayetteville just a few miles east of the Oklahoma border. Cane Hill College began operations in 1834. One of the most historic communities in Arkansas, Cane Hill contains 17 listings on the National Register of Historic Places, and was the site of the Battle of Cane Hill during the Civil War.



Prior to the start of the meeting, instrumental music was provided by the Southern Strings of Bella Vista, a group that always draws an appreciative audience when they play at the museum. We had 98 people sign the guest register that day, some who came for the music, some who came for the meeting and program, and others who came just to tour the museum and browse the gift shop. It was a busy day!



MUSEUM'S 40th ANNIVERSARY

We celebrated our museum's 40th anniversary at our annual membership meeting on March 23. The Bella Vista Historical Society, which was founded in 1976, was given land by Cooper Communities and raised money to build the original building through a variety of activities, donations, and loans. The groundbreaking was held on July 12, 1984.

Groundbreaking July 12, 1984

Pictured left to right around the shovel are George Phillips, author of the book *The Bella Vista Story*, Wayne Sheneman of Cooper Communities, Dora Hitzen, president of the Historical Society, and member Bill Cates.



The museum was built next door to a farmhouse that was occupied by the American Legion. At that time the only access to the property was a gravel drive off Kingsland.

Formal grand opening April 14, 1985

A formal grand opening was held on April 14, 1985. The building consisted of one exhibit room shown here, which is today the Linebarger/Keith Room, the kitchen, the two restrooms and one other room that served as the office but is today's gift shop. The present-day Cooper Room was added in 1995 and the Harter Room was added in 2015.



In 2026, it will be 50 years since the founding of the Bella Vista Historical Society so we will have another anniversary to celebrate then!

OUR CONDOLENCES

Our condolences go to the family of Dave Wiemer, who died at age 96 on January 10, 2025, in Iowa. Dave was well known in Bella Vista, especially for his contributions to the Tanyard Creek Nature Trail. He and his wife Wanda moved to Bella Vista in 1990 and lived here until 2002, when they moved to Florida. Wanda died in 2016 in Florida. Dave was known as the “Trail Boss” for his contributions to the scenic two-mile-long Tanyard Creek trail. Dave got involved with it right after moving here in 1990, designing the pavilion and the suspension bridge. The trail was built over a four-year period by many volunteers with the help of the Bella Vista Property Owners Association and Cooper Communities. The first phase opened in 1992. The trail includes access to the Lake Windsor waterfall. The pavilion sits at the head of the trail and is available for use by groups.

In 2018, museum volunteer Jack Kellogg spearheaded an effort to get special recognition for as many of the original trail builders as could be located. Jack teamed up with the City of Bella Vista and the Property Owners Association to plan a recognition ceremony, and was able to convince Dave, by then living up north, to return to Bella Vista for that event. It was held at the pavilion in April 2018, with then Mayor Peter Christie conducting the ceremony on behalf of the City and the POA. Jack was also instrumental in getting a plaque that was unveiled that day by the POA and hangs in the Pavilion.

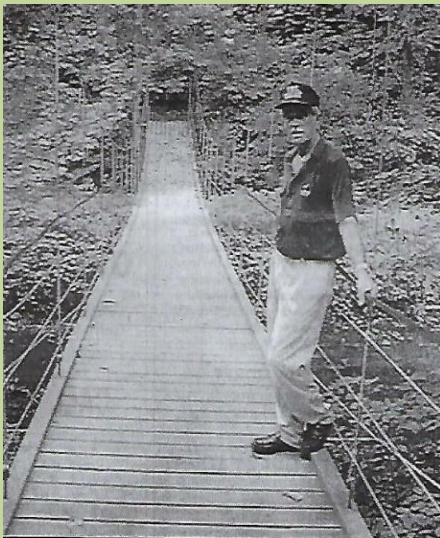
Dave was recognized by Mayor Christie in 2018.



This plaque was unveiled at the recognition event.



Dave Wiemer on the suspension bridge he designed.



Source: Village Voice August 1997

CITY WIDE GARAGE SALE

The museum is again participating in the annual City-wide garage sale event to be held on Friday & Saturday, April 25 & 26, with a fundraiser that consists of renting spaces on our grounds to individuals who want to have a garage sale but not at their home. Volunteer Dustie Meads is again coordinating this event. If you are interested, call her at 479-381-8546 to reserve a space. Once she has confirmed there is space available, please stop by the museum to pay. The cost is \$25 for one space, \$45 for two spaces which covers both days of the sale. The museum will be open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. those two days.

If you have items that you no longer need but don't want to hassle with selling them, you are welcome to bring them to the museum for us to sell at the garage sale as a museum fundraiser.

DUG HILL CHURCH FUNDRAISER

We continue to do what we can to help the Dug Hill Cemetery Association raise funds for the renovation of their church building. The church and adjoining cemetery are located at Town Center just south of the Goodwill building. The church was built in 1936 and was getting to the point where it needed a lot of work. The Association is going to have a garage sale and a bake sale at the church during the City-wide garage sale on April 26, and will raffle off a new shotgun that day which was donated by Dug Hill trustee Sam Walker and his wife Kara. We are supporting them by selling raffle tickets at our museum. The tickets are \$5 each or 5 for \$20. Stop by the museum during our open hours if you'd like to buy raffle tickets. The winner of the raffle must be able to pass a firearm background check. For more information, contact Kara Walker at 918-801-8495.

Dug Hill Church March 26, 2025



LAKE BELLA VISTA GRAVES

Museum volunteer Deborah Lukotch brought to our attention last fall the stones along the trail at the south side of the former Lake Bella Vista and questioned if they might be gravestones. We then enlisted the services of grave dowser Terry Davis who located one adult and one infant grave at that spot. We have now met with Bentonville Mayor Stephanie Orman and members of her staff, who have agreed to plant boxwoods to mark the area of the graves and let us erect a small cemetery marker. (The former lake area is now a City of Bentonville park.)



TEMPORARY ROTATING EXHIBITS

Exhibits in these two glass cases in the Cooper Room of the museum are changed out periodically as volunteers come up with suggestions on a wide variety of topics. Currently the cases hold an exhibit titled “Literature and Needlework” which was created by Xyta Lucas. She completed the barn, the Marine Corps logo, and the Neuschwanstein Castle needlepoints years ago. The little turtle was created by Marcia Worley, the Green Gables needlework was donated by Doris Bolain, and the Norman Rockwell cross stitch was done by Gina Kietzmann. The remaining needlework items were purchased, as were the books except for the Marine Corps book which is on loan from the estate of Jim Lucas.



2025 CORPORATE SPONSORS

Our membership form at the end of each newsletter offers the option of corporate sponsorship at the rate of \$50 per calendar year or for services donated. If your organization or business is interested in supporting the museum as a corporate sponsor, we will publish its name in our newsletter each quarter and add it to our posted sign at the museum. We hope you will join us!

Acorn Realty – Linda Lloyd

Ahnimisha Consulting LLC – Abby Foster

Allen’s Food Market

Bella Vista POA

Blue Crane

City of Bella Vista

Hutchinson Realty – Gary Reynolds

WINTER WEATHER

Our winters have been easier the past few years but the museum was still closed in February a few days due to snow and very cold temperatures. The first closure was on Wed February 12, the second one was on Wed-Thurs February 19-20. The overnight low that night was 5 below!

Thankfully the snowfall didn't come close to the record set fourteen years ago on February 9, 2011. Your editor's house in the eastern part of Bella Vista received 17 inches of snow that day; other parts of NW Arkansas got even more (Siloam Springs for example recorded 24.5 inches)!

Museum grounds Feb. 20, 2025



Car buried under the snow in Siloam Springs Feb. 2011



Source:

<https://www.onlyinyourstate.com/nature/arkansas/ar-2011-snow-fall-record>

SPRING HAS SPRUNG!

This is what the museum looked like on March 30, 2025.



THANK YOU'S

As you know, we have no paid staff, so it's up to our volunteers to keep the museum running smoothly. We just can't thank everyone enough who pitches in any time we ask for help, including our Board members and all of our docents. We thank our website administrator Brian Mobley for his continued work, and Debbie Sorensen who is our Facebook administrator, our Membership Chairperson, and handles tasks related to our property insurance. We thank our technical support & security coordinator, Jack Kellogg, who also this quarter helped with some of our water system issues. We appreciate the City of Bella Vista for its continued financial support, and the POA for the various services they provide. Our thanks go also to the Democrat Gazette and the Weekly Vista for continuing to publish information about museum events.

We also thank...

--Brandon Kelly with the Advertising & Promotion Commission *Discover Bella Vista* for the 'passports' he's providing for us to distribute to museum visitors.

--Roni Anderson for the donation of Coca-Cola items and other items for us to sell in our gift shop in memory of Sandy Martinez.

--Other individuals, including Nancy Noyes and Debbie Sorensen, who have also donated a variety of items for us to sell.

--Kathy Jeffrey for the donation of books from the former used bookstore at the library for us to sell.

--Susan Ferraro for donating Valentine baskets for us to sell and the wooden dough bowl that we now have on display in our Settler's Cabin.

-- Susan Visser for her ongoing donation of grounds keeping help by Ron Ruby, with scheduling by Dale Phillips.

--William Armacost at the Highway Welcome Center for arranging for us to obtain the old metal sign that was on one of the cottages being torn down behind the Welcome Center.

--Constance Norton Waddell for her donation of more *Sally and Me* books to sell in our gift shop.

--Michael Keys for his donation of pottery items for display that he has found in his neighborhood near the former Sunset Hotel.

--Those who have made cash donations to our building expansion fund including Beta Sigma Phi and museum volunteer Angie Rader.

--Roxanna Ruth for donating miscellaneous items for our upcoming garage sale.

--Artists Nadene Kranz and Wendell Langum for providing their paintings for us to sell in our gift shop on a commission basis.

--All of the volunteers who helped make our annual meeting on March 23 and our fundraising event on March 30 be such successes. Our total guest count for the two events was over 200!

It was another hectic quarter at the museum so we apologize for anyone we overlooked but we are grateful for everyone's donations and support.

POA GROUNDS MAINTENANCE CREWS

We really appreciate the help we get from Mark Nelson, Grounds Maintenance Superintendent, and his crews for the seasonal mowing of the museum grounds. They also come at the start of each spring to trim back our liriopie in the front of the building. They are shown here arriving for their first mowing of the season on March 24.



HISTORIC TASTING/BAKE SALE/JAM SALE FUNDRAISER

Following successful events last year, museum Board member Jill Werner agreed to coordinate another event, which was held on Sunday March 30, as a fundraiser for our proposed expansion project. The theme for this one was “Forgotten Tastes of Old Bella Vista”. Jill provided historic recipes which volunteers prepared for a free tasting. In addition, Jill had her Agatha’s Table jams for sale and had recruited other volunteers to donate baked goods for sale. We ended up having another successful day with over 100 visitors and, including the 25% of her jam sales that Jill donated, approximately one thousand dollars raised. Our thanks to Jill, her assistant Jessica Traylor, everyone who did the baking, and the many volunteers at the museum who helped with set up, worked the event throughout the afternoon, and helped with clean up afterwards. We appreciate everyone’s contribution!

Jill Werner and her Agatha’s Table jams



Visitors were served samples at the Historic tasting tables.



Angie Rader served as cashier.



Foundation9’s architectural drawing of our addition.



BELLA VISTA CIVIL WAR ROUND TABLE

The Bella Vista Civil War Round Table continues to meet monthly at the museum on the first Thursday evening of each month at 7 p.m. Our Dale Phillips, retired National Park Service superintendent, spoke to a full house at the museum on January 2 about the first day of the Battle of Chickamauga in Georgia, September 18, 1863. Dale was also a speaker on January 11 at the 10th annual symposium on the Battle of New Orleans held at Nunez Community College in Chalmette, Louisiana. The college is adjacent to the battlefield.



The February 6 speaker was retired National Park Service historian Connie Langum on Confederate General Sterling Price's 1864 Missouri expedition/raid.



On March 6, Dr. Chris Huggard, history professor at NW Arkansas Community College, spoke to a large audience about the devastation that occurred in this area after the Battle of Pea Ridge, which took place 163 years ago on March 7-8, 1862. Pictured is CWRT President Chuck Pribbernow, at left, thanking Dr. Huggard for his presentation.

The speaker on Thursday April 3 at 7:00 p.m. will be nationally recognized historian and author, Danny Sessions, on *Granbury's Texas Brigade: A Force to Be Reckoned With*. Admission is free; donations are welcome to help with speaker expenses. The Round Table continues to be a popular one for speakers; the schedule is now filled through the end of 2027!

OUR VOLUNTEER JUDGES

Concordia of Bella Vista invited museum staff to be judges at their chili cookoff on January 27. Our volunteers Deborah Lukotch and Gina Kietzmann agreed to fill that role for us. They said it was a fun afternoon!

Deborah and Gina also responded to the request for judges at the NW Arkansas History Day competition at the University of Arkansas on March 8. The role of the judges that day was to help evaluate local 6-12th grade student projects. We thank Deborah and Gina for representing our museum so well at these events and especially for this one because they had to be at the campus location in Fayetteville by 8 a.m. on a Saturday morning!



VOLUNTEER DOCENTS

We are pleased this quarter to welcome new docents April Taylor and her daughter Elle, and Isabelle Johnson. Elle is in Scouts and was looking for community service opportunities. Isabelle is a student at the University of Arkansas and enjoys studying history. We thank two of our museum volunteers, Maci Echols and Anna Isbell, who recently resigned due to other demands on their time.

We continue to recruit docents, as our goal is still to have enough docents available so that no one has to serve more than one afternoon per month (unless they want to, of course!). The docent role consists of welcoming visitors to the museum, giving a little information about Bella Vista history, explaining how the museum exhibits are laid out, and handling gift shop sales. We always have two docents per shift and start out new docents by having them partner with experienced docents for training. We look for men and women who like interacting with others and enjoy learning about Bella Vista history. We ask that they read Gil Fite's 1993 book on the history of Bella Vista, and our 2021 pictorial history book, Images of America Bella Vista. Anyone interested in becoming a docent is welcome to leave a message on our museum phone, 479-855-2335, on our email, bellavistamuseum@gmail.com, or to stop by in person during our open hours.

POSTCARD HISTORY

This old postcard has a view of the Linebargers' original bathhouse that stuck out into the northeast corner of Lake Bella Vista. It had a diving tower that was built out in the lake and was used prior to the 'Plunge' swimming pool opening in 1924. Prior to that, all swimming was done in the lake.



This particular postcard was postmarked "Bentonville Aug. 4, 1929" and was mailed to (name unreadable) in Lancaster MO. The message said, "Dear Aunt Elsie, We arrived at Bella Vista Friday. We made it in one day this time. We had a nice rain and it is cool and nice. We hope you got through all right. Uncle Walter's are all coming to Sapulpa for Thanksgiving. You come too please, Mama said. (Signed) Avera Fish."

The Fish family was typical of the kind of visitors the Linebargers welcomed to Bella Vista. Avera's father was a physician in Tulsa. After graduating from high school where the football squad chose her as their homecoming queen (then called "gridiron queen"), she attended Drury College in Springfield MO for one year. At age 20, she married William Taylor who later became a physician also. In fact, she mailed this postcard on Aug. 4, 1929, and four days later on Aug. 8, 1929, the Sapulpa OK Herald published a marriage license notice for her and William.

This picture of Avera Fish was published in the 1929 Drury College yearbook, which listed her as an English major. Sadly, she died of breast cancer in 1972.



LINEBARGER GARAGE/STABLES

Another look back in history: This Linebarger Brothers' garage building stood north of Lake Bella Vista in the 1920's on what today would be the south end of the soccer fields. This photo is from the museum's collection.



Constance Norton Waddell recently donated the undated photo below of the building on fire. Constance, who grew up in old Bella Vista in the 1930's, remembered the building contained stables. We don't have a date for the fire, but she speculated that perhaps the building was rebuilt to be used as stables after the fire. She said "a pretty large number of horses" were always taken from the stables to a nearby farm at the end of the tourist season each fall but her family kept a cow in the pasture north of the building and it stayed in the stables at night year-round.



OLD BROWNING FARM

Surveyor Tom Costello came across a tobacco spear when he was doing some surveying in the western part of Bella Vista, and he donated it to the museum last fall. He also shared some pictures he took of the old Browning farmstead where he found the spear. The way the tobacco spear was used is that its metal-pointed tip was placed on the end of a roughly three-foot-long wooden pole. It was then driven through the stalks of the harvested tobacco plants. Once the wooden pole was full of plants, the tip was removed and the stick and plants were hung from a transport vehicle and taken to the drying barn. The tip was then attached to another wooden pole and the process repeated. For more information about this spear, see the exhibit in the Linebarger/Keith Room of the museum.

How a tobacco spear was used



Remnants of the old Browning farmstead



Tom gave us the following information from his research:

The land was originally patented from the Government to Elisha M. Browning in year 1889. I think she lived on the land until she died in 1914. I found she is buried in the Jane Missouri Cemetery along with her parents. At one time she owned over 200 acres which is now part of the Scotsdale Golf Course and surrounding area to the north. I think she acquired her father's land when he passed away. His land was adjacent to hers. The 1903 Atlas shows what she had left at that time. She must have sold off some. The creek that runs through that property is Browning Creek, I would guess named after her or her family. The old house that is now fallen is in the spot a house is shown on the 1903 Atlas and the nails in the house appear to date to the late 1800's.

PROGRAMS AVAILABLE

We continue to offer programs on a variety of Bella Vista history related topics to groups either at the museum or at their desired location. If your organization is looking for a speaker, leave a message at the museum in person or call 479-855-2335.

Programs this quarter were presented to the Artisan Alliance about the history of the Arts & Crafts Festivals, and to the Fly Tyers about the history of Dug Hill, both by Xyta Lucas.



Artisans Alliance program



MEMBERSHIP

New members are always welcome! Membership in the Bella Vista Historical Society, which operates the museum, is on a calendar year basis. So if you haven't already renewed for 2025, please do so now.

We appreciate your past support and hope you will continue to be a member with us. You may mail your check to us or, when we are open, stop by in person to pay by check or card.

By becoming a member, you support the preservation of Bella Vista's rich and unique history, and help us educate the public. Benefits include receipt of our quarterly newsletter and an invitation to our annual membership meeting usually held each March. Our newsletter is available by email or snail mail, but of course we would prefer to have your email address so that we can avoid printing and mailing costs. If you don't have email, however, we will mail our newsletter to your home address. We have no paid staff so all revenue, including membership dues and donations, is applied to our general operating expenses unless a particular project is specified. We very much appreciate the financial support we receive from the City of Bella Vista, which helps us pay for major operational expenses, but we still need your individual membership dues and donations to help us continue to improve the museum in every way we possibly can. Thank you!

Bella Vista Historical Society
1885 Bella Vista Way
Bella Vista, AR 72714

(479) 855-2335
www.bellavistamuseum.org

Date: _____
Name: _____
Street Address: _____
City, State, Zip Code: _____
Telephone: _____ Email Address: _____

Membership Fee:
Individual \$15 _____
Family \$25 _____
Corporate \$50 _____

Donations in excess of your membership dues are very welcome also.

The Bella Vista Historical Society is a 501(c)3 organization and donations qualify as tax deductible.

Thank you for your support!