

2016-17 Meetings of the Jackson Purchase Historical Society

July

The Society met on July 16 in Clinton, Kentucky at the Hickman County Historical and Genealogical Society on the Courthouse Square. Several members of the host society, principally LaDonna Latham and Ivan Potter shared with us their vision for their society and what it has accomplished. They have collected a great deal of documentary material related to Hickman County as well as photographs, newspapers, and a wide variety of useful research material. They have also organized it to make accessible to researchers. In addition, they publish a quarterly journal and books.

Following the meeting, we adjourned to Columbus-Belmont State Park for a picnic and a brief talk by Society President Bill Mulligan on the history of the Park.

November

On November 5, the West Tennessee Historical Society joined us for our annual joint meeting with the West Tennessee Historical Society at the Weldon Public Library in Martin, Tennessee. Dr. Brian K. Clardy, Associate Professor of History at Murray State University and a graduate of UT-Martin, spoke on West Tennessee politics from 1960 through the 1990s with a focus on the career of Congressman John Tanner. He discussed the many challenges Tanner faced as a “Blue Dog” Democrat. His talk was based not only on his extensive research in Tanner’s Papers, but his personal engagement in politics.

January

Our January meeting was held at the National Guard Armory in Murray and was part of National Guard Day in Murray, which the JPHS helped arrange. More on that in the President’s Remarks. The Murray Company of the Kentucky National Guard was among the units dispatched to the Mexican Border when Pancho Villa launched several cross border raids. William Schell, Jr., Professor of History *Emeritus* at Murray State University, discussed the history of Mexican-American relations that led up to the conflict in 1916. JPHS Past President Gregory S. Miller spoke about the deployment of the Murray unit and its activities, including the death in an accident of Lt. Nathaniel G. Hale.

April

The April meeting was held at the Fancy Farm Winery in Graves County, a bit of a departure from our normal meeting places. Cynthia Elder spoke about her book “*The Catholic Settlement*” *A History of St. Jerome Church 1836-2011* (2011). She discussed the research and writing process for

the book, including previous books on the community, and the history of the Fancy Farm community and St. Jerome's. Everyone knows about the Fancy Farm Picnic, the most famous church picnic in America. She not only spoke about that but also gave us the rest of the story . . . as the saying goes.

President's Remarks

As I complete my second year as president of the society, I want to start my comments as I did last year by thanking the members of the society for electing me as its president and the trust that represents. I began my professional career as historian for the Northborough (MA) American Revolution Bicentennial Commission in 1974 and have always remained close to community history. I have done and will continue to do my best to advance the interests of the Jackson Purchase Historical Society as long as I am its president. I take this responsibility very seriously.

Our four meetings were each quite successful. Each program was of high quality and sparked substantial and spirited discussion. We met in Hickman County for the first time in some years and focused on the remarkable work of the local historical society there. It is truly inspiring to see what has been accomplished. We went to Columbus-Belmont State Park for a picnic afterwards to continue the discussion. The park snack bar has excellent food and you could not ask for a prettier spot. In addition to being a very significant site during and immediately after the Civil War, I think the view from the bluff at Columbus is one of the great scenic views in the country. Unfortunately, other events called and I could not stay for sunset – if you ever can – it is something you will never regret. We continued our tradition of meeting in Martin jointly with the West Tennessee Historical Society in November. My Murray State colleague Brian K. Clardy was our speaker and it was kind of a homecoming for him – he is a graduate of UT-Martin and a native of nearby South Fulton, Tennessee. Our January meeting was different in many ways and began as the brainchild of past JPHS president Gregory S. Miller. The commander of the Murray National Guard unit in 1917, Lt. Nathaniel G. Hale, died in an accident while deployed to the Mexican Border during what is sometimes called the Pancho Villa Expedition. We worked with the local Veterans of Foreign Wars Post to have Murray Mayor Jack Rose and County Judge Executive Larry Elkins declare January 14th Lt. Nathaniel Gibson Hale/Calloway National Guard Day. After the program, I represented the Society for a wreath laying at his grave in the Murray Cemetery. I was happy to work with Greg and others in making this happen. Finally, we ended the year in Fancy Farm, famous for its picnic the first weekend in August. There is so much more to the story of that community than the picnic and I was happy to learn about it from Cynthia Elder who was our speaker. Several members of the community attended and added their reminiscences to the lively discussion. We met at a newly established winery in Fancy Farm. The wine, which I brought home, was pretty good too.

We welcomed a new *Journal* editor in 2016-17. James S. Humphreys has embraced the job and I am confident members will enjoy his first *Journal*. Jim is also a colleague at Murray State