



Constitutional Writes

The official newsletter of Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site

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Members of the "Little Rock Nine" unveil statues of themselves on the grounds of the Arkansas State Capitol. Photo courtesy of the Arkansas Secretary of State's Office.

Hundreds of people gathered on the State Capitol grounds August 30th to witness the Little Rock Nine unveil life size statues of themselves. Tears, hugs and cheers filled the air as the covers concealing the statues hit the ground.

Forty-eight years ago Orval Faubus occupied the governor's office at the Capitol. Now the Little Rock Nine are represented on the same grounds where Faubus ordered the Arkansas National Guard to keep them from entering Central High School.



Arkansas State Senators Tracy Steele and Irma Hunter Brown sponsored legislation to have the statues erected on the grounds of the State Capitol. Sculptors John and Kathy Deering worked for more than five years to create the statues. They were inspired to create the statues after the opening of the Central High School NHS Visitor Center in 1997. "...It was almost as if I could see a finished sculpture of the Little Rock Nine in my mind's eye." Deering said. "I was inspired to create "Testament" through the historical significance of the event and the images of the Nine I had seen in photographs."



Artist George Hunt stands in front of his painting "America Cares" at the Visitor Center. The painting was used for the "Little Rock Nine" postage stamp.

Also on that day the U.S. Postal Service unveiled a stamp depicting the Little Rock Nine as part of a stamp series called *To Form a More Perfect Union*. The artwork, *America Cares*, is by George Hunt from Memphis. Hunt was commissioned to create *America Cares* to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the integration of Central High School in 1997.

Ernest Green, one of the Little Rock Nine, spoke to the Associated Press about the events. "They used to call Arkansas 'the land of opportunity,' and black people said, 'Opportunity for whom?' Today, we can say 'opportunity for all,' and Arkansas can be proud of this moment."

Spirit Trickey, Park Ranger

FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT'S DESK

FUNDING RECEIVED FOR NEW VISITOR CENTER!

On August 2 of this year, President Bush signed into law the fiscal year 2006 budget for the Department of the Interior. Included within the budget is \$5.1 million to fund construction of a larger, permanent visitor center for Central High School National Historic Site. The new facility will provide significantly expanded space for interpretive and educational programming, special events, the storage and preservation of historic archives and museum objects, and work areas for National Park Service staff.

The visitor center will be built on the northeast corner of the intersection of Daisy L. Gatson Bates Drive and South Park Street. Those who are familiar with the history of Little Rock may remember that this property was home to florists and greenhouses for many years. In fact, the Tipton Hurst Company was founded on the site in the late 1800s. The National Park Service acquired the land from Capitol Wholesale Florists in 2004.

Design of both the 10,000 square foot building and new exhibits has been underway for several months. The design team consists of ajc Architects, Quatrefoil Associates (the exhibit designers), and National Park Service staff from several offices. Assuming design and construction proceed as planned, the visitor center will be open to the public by September 2007 – in time for the 50th anniversary commemoration of the desegregation of Central High School.

The new visitor center is necessary for several reasons. The number of people using the current visitor center, housed in the historic Mobil Gas Station building, has increased about 400 percent since Congress designated the historic site. If 2005 visitation continues on its current pace, annual visitation will top the 50,000 person mark for the first time in the site's history. Of course, we are excited that more and more people are including Central High in their travel plans. But, there are an increasing number of days when the current facility (just 1700 square feet in size) becomes too crowded for visitors to have a quality experience. The new facility will be better able to accommodate this higher level of use.

The new building will include almost six times the space for exhibits. This will allow us to interpret the important stories associated with the desegregation crisis in greater detail. A multipurpose room will provide space for events such as book signings and lectures. The new facility also will allow us to convert the current visitor center into an education center – where school children from around the state or nation can visit for focused study.

We appreciate the hard work of Senator Mark Pryor, Senator Blanche Lincoln, Congressman Vic Snyder, and their staffs in turning the dream of a new visitor center into reality. All are enthusiastic supporters of Central High School and the National Historic Site. When this year's \$5.1 million appropriation is combined with past Congressional funding for planning and design and for land acquisition, the total project costs for the visitor center is almost \$6 million. This significant investment will ensure that people of all ages have a top-notch facility to visit to learn about the Little Rock Nine and our country's efforts to achieve equality in education. We also hope the investment will serve as an additional catalyst for rejuvenation of the neighborhoods surrounding the high school.

Please watch for more information about the new visitor center in the coming weeks. Periodic updates will be posted to our website at www.nps.gov/chsc. Official groundbreaking for the visitor center will be held on the Sunday before Daisy Bates Day (February 19, 2006) at 2:00 p.m. Details about the groundbreaking will be sent to those on our mailing list early next year, and also will be made available through the media and the website. Please plan to join us!

R. Michael Madell, Superintendent

50th Anniversary of “HOXIE 21”

“In many places, we have de facto school segregation [including Hoxie, which now has very few black students because of demographic changes]. It reminds us that legal change is not the only important change necessary to have an integrated society. The law mandates desegregation, but that’s different from actual integration.”

Dr. Russell Wigginton

On August 18, 2005 Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site and The Butler Center for Arkansas Studies commemorated the 50th anniversary of school integration in Hoxie, AR. The panelists included Mrs. Charlene Trotter, former Hoxie teacher; Mrs. Fayth Hill Washington, student in 1955; Mrs. Peggy R. Wright, director of the Delta Studies Center; Mr. Christopher Mercer Jr., attorney and former NAACP field secretary; David Appleby, professor at the University of Memphis and director and producer of the winning documentary *Hoxie: The First Stand*; and Dr. Russell Wigginton, Special Assistant to the President, Rhodes College, who served as the panel’s moderator.



Mr. Christopher Mercer, Jr. speaks while other panelists look on. From L to R: Mrs. Peggy Wright, Mrs. Charlene Trotter, and Mrs. Fayth Hill Washington.

Approximately 200 people attended the event, including three of the Little Rock Nine. The program opened with a showing of the film *Hoxie: The First Stand*, which tells the story of one of the earliest, most important episodes that set the stage for the crisis of 1957 in Little Rock, AR.

David Appleby director and producer, introduces *Hoxie: The First Stand*.



The panelists discussed how the Hoxie school board made a decision to desegregate the town’s school voluntarily and that desegregation made economic sense because it eliminated the need to provide separate systems of education for blacks and whites. “The Hoxie Imbroglia,” an article by Jerry Vervack in a 1989 issue of *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* describes the scene: “The 21 black children stood away from the rest of the students. White children stared at the blacks with curiosity and the blacks tended to treat the whites with deference. Many mothers of the white children were anxious, apprehensive and hesitant to walk away from their children, once school commenced, however, the novelty among the children

wore off. White boys sought out the black youths and invited them to try out for basketball. Black and white girls played together. From initial appearances, Hoxie was another successful effort at integration in Arkansas.”

To learn more about *Hoxie: The First Stand*, The Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation has provided funding for the distribution of the documentary and accompanying Teacher’s Guide, which can be downloaded from www.wrfoundation.org.

Tarona A. Bennett, Park Ranger

Get A "Taste" of History And Join Us For Our First Annual Chili Cook-off!

Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site in partnership with our friends organization, Central High Museum, Inc., and Central High School will host the first annual *Chili Cook-Off* on March 5, 2006.

During the 1957 desegregation crisis at Central High School, Little Rock Nine member Minnijean Brown, frustrated by repeated harassment at the hands of some fellow students, 'dropped' chili on some boys after they refused to let her pass to her seat in the cafeteria. Dent Gitchel was sitting nearby eating his lunch when he was 'splattered' with chili! Brown was suspended for her actions.

Forty-eight years have passed since the incident. Brown and Gitchel have recently been in contact with each other and now can laugh about the incident that took place in the famous Central High School cafeteria.

The Chili Cook-Off is an opportunity to learn about the 1957-'58 desegregation crisis and more specifically the legendary story of the 'chili incident' at Central High School through Minnijean and Dent themselves! It also will be a great opportunity to sample chili prepared by celebrity chefs!

When: March 5, 2006 – 1:00-3:00 pm
Where: Central High School Cafeteria
Judges: Minnijean Brown Trickey, Little Rock Nine
Dent Gitchel, UALR Bowen School of Law, retired.
Nancy Rousseau, Principal, Central High School
What: Fabulous chili made by the likes of Max Brantley, Tracy Steele, Pamela Smith, and many others.

Proceeds benefit the Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site.

I see the chili cook-off as a way of diffusing the negativity of the situation for all those involved. I hope it's viewed as one moment in the total reconciliation of the desegregation crisis. Minnijean Brown Trickey

Bookstore Browsing

New Items

Jim Crow's Children; The Broken Promise of the Brown Decision by Peter Irons (Penguin Group, \$15.00). From Massachusetts in 1849 to Missouri in 1995, this book recounts the many black children whose parents joined the legal challenges to Jim Crow schools in more than half of the states, across the country.

Supreme Court Cases; Plessy v. Ferguson Legalizing Segregation (The Rosen Publishing Group, \$21.95). A 1896 United States Supreme Court decision in Plessy v. Ferguson established the "separate but equal" doctrine, which provided a legal basis for segregated schools.

Legacy of a Monarch an American Journey by Jan Sumner (Jadan Publishing, \$15.00). A biography of an All-Star Negro League baseball player Byron "Mex" Johnson, from 1930s-1940s. It is a story of not only a black baseball player, but of an African American's journey through American (and Little Rock) history.

Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site Stamp cachets (\$2.50). The official first day of issue- August 30, 2005 (limited editions).

All of the items along with other educational materials about the Civil Rights era are available for purchase at the park bookstore.



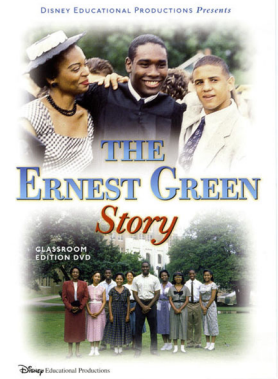
Education Corner

New Lesson Plan Available...

With so much interest in the Little Rock Nine, we have created a new lesson plan titled, *“Every Person Has A Story:” The Little Rock Nine*. The lesson, targeting grades 5-12 in Arkansas history, civics, and U.S. social studies and civics, introduces biographies of the Little Rock Nine, includes a question and answer section with Thelma Mothershed Wair, and gives students the chance to participate in activities related to character development and personal courage. If you are interested in obtaining a copy of this lesson, contact Lea Baker, Education Specialist, at (501) 374- 3067 or e-mail Lea_Baker@nps.gov. The lesson plans are free!

New Loan Item!

The historic site now offers a classroom edition of *The Ernest Green Story* for loan. The film, produced by Disney in the early 1990s, gives insight into the experiences of Ernest Green, a member of the Little Rock Nine, during the 1957-1958 school year. The DVD can be loaned for a two -week period by contacting the Education Specialist at (501) 374-3067 or e-mail Lea_Baker@nps.gov. The DVDs are also located in all Arkansas Education Service Cooperatives and can be reserved by contacting the teacher center coordinators at each location.



Volunteers In Parks Needed!

Have you thought about volunteering in the community? Do you enjoy meeting new people from different places, helping host special events, or just gardening? If so, volunteering at Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site is for you!

School National Historic Site is for you!

Thanks to everyone for volunteering for National Night Out 2006. Over 400 people attended the evening, which consisted of fun filled and educational activities, including a special appearance from Smokey the Bear .



Americorps volunteers from Children's Hospital pose after a cleanup day at the site, December 10, 2005.

If you are interested in the Volunteers-In-Parks (VIP)

Program, please contact Lea Baker, volunteer coordinator, at (501) 374- 3067 or e-mail Lea_Baker@nps.gov on getting started as a VIP!

Big Boo!-seum Bash 2005

A rainy night did not keep mummies, princesses, and other costume clad kids from attending Little Rock's Big Boo!-seum Bash 2005. The rain drove activity tables and games indoors but with close to 650 participants the event was indeed a "Big Bash." Central High School National Historic Site participated this year with the Arkansas History Commission and 22 student volunteers from Central High School. Thanks to everyone!

A unique feature this year was a video projecting 1950s "I Love Lucy" episodes interspersed with actual footage from the 1957 events surrounding Central High School.

EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA

The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the
Interior

This newsletter is brought to you by the staff of Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site.

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Tarona A. Bennett, Park Ranger

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Scheduled Programs

January 16, 2006, 1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m.

Join park rangers for a special program about Martin Luther King, Jr.

February 19, 2006, 2:00 p.m.

Join Arkansas Senator Mark Pryor and others as we officially break ground for the new visitor center.

February 20, 2006 - Daisy Bates Day

Booksigning with Grif Stockley, author of *Daisy Bates: Civil Rights Crusader from Arkansas*, 5-6:30 p.m. at the visitor center.

March 5, 2006

First annual Chili Cookoff! 1:00 pm in the Central High School cafeteria. Join us and sample chili recipes from several famous and soon-to-be famous chili chefs.

April 2006

Celebrate National Park Week with us and learn about Little Rock's own National Historic Site.

May 2006

Help us celebrate the anniversary of the *Brown v. Board* decision with one of the students whose lawsuit became part of *Brown*.

July-August (Monday and Friday at 10:00 a.m.)

Ranger-led walking tours at 10:00 a.m. Join a Park Ranger and learn about Little Rock and the 1957 Crisis.

Park Rangers are available to give tours of the visitor center exhibit, commemorative garden and the exterior of Central High School. Off-site visits for classes or groups can be arranged as well. The Visitor Center features the exhibit, "All the World is Watching Us: Little Rock and the 1957 Crisis," as well as a bookstore with a wide selection of educational materials.

Contact a park ranger for more information on program topics and scheduled events. Reservations are required for tours and can be made by calling the park at (501) 374-1957.