

Fall 2010

Book Review: Statesmen, Scoundrels, and Eccentrics: A Gallery of Amazing Arkansans

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Recommended Citation

Matthews, Melinda F. (2010) "Book Review: Statesmen, Scoundrels, and Eccentrics: A Gallery of Amazing Arkansans," *The Southeastern Librarian*: Vol. 58 : Iss. 3 , Article 6.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/seln/vol58/iss3/6>

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BOOK REVIEWS

Statesmen, Scoundrels, and Eccentrics: A Gallery of Amazing Arkansans. Dillard, Tom. Fayetteville: The University of Arkansas Press, 2010. 266 pages. ISBN 978-1-55728-927-8. (pbk: alk.paper). \$17.90.

Statesmen, Scoundrels, and Eccentrics: a Gallery of Amazing Arkansans is an outstanding masterpiece enlightening readers with two to six pages each of terrifically researched narratives on seventy-four astounding people of Arkansas. The monograph includes Contents, Foreword, Acknowledgments, Introduction, the excellent chapters Chapter One Natives, Explorers, and Early Settlers, Chapter Two Antebellum Politicians, Chapter Three Postbellum Politicians, Chapter Four Twentieth-Century Politicians, Chapter Five The Law, Chapter Six Entrepreneurs, Chapter Seven Artists and Writers, Chapter Eight Education, Science, and Medicine, Chapter Nine Entertainers and Performers, Chapter Ten Religious Leaders, Chapter Eleven Seers, Spiritualists, and Skeptics, and Chapter Twelve Eccentrics, Frauds, and the Inexplicable. The contents page lists the twelve chapters and the names of the people within the chapters by topic and the chapter pages. Each essay starts with the person's name. For example, from Chapter Nine Entertainers and Performers is Scott Joplin. Joplin's music "The Entertainer" dazzled in the movie *The Sting* featuring Paul Newman and Robert Redford.

The perceived interest to the readership of the journal is superb by providing preceding information on the southeastern state Arkansas. The writing style is expressive. Seventeen black and white photographs adorn the brilliant book. One photograph is of a deceased man discovered in Prescott City Park 1911 never known who remained in an Arkansas morgue for sixty-five years before being placed in a grave. The morgue workers leaned the deceased male referred to as Old Mike against a car momentarily for the portrait. Another print splendidly assists in describing Dr. William Baerg, creator of the University of Arkansas Entomology School. The image is of Gretchen Baerg with her father Dr. William Baerg while Gretchen holds a tarantula. Dr. Baerg enabled persons to not be afraid of bugs. Baerg was poisoned by a black widow among other bugs yet lived to ninety-four in 1980.

Other vibrant persons written about are as follows. Samuel Lee Kountz started kidney transplants, developed prednisolone to aid the body in keeping the new kidney, and alerted the world of giving human organs. Governor Winthrop Rockefeller set up residence in Petit Jean Mountain, Arkansas after a wealthy existence in New York. Rockefeller desired to inspire Arkansas and strove for human rights. His son Winthrop Paul Rockefeller was Arkansas Lieutenant Governor.

After the Louisiana Purchase, Spain employed Pirate Jean Lafitte to study Arkansas. Lafitte was a dexterous emissary due to his knowledge of Spanish, English, and French. Davy Crockett travelled to Texas to the Alamo and was shortly at the Jeffries Hotel, Little Rock. Spain's Hernando De Soto was at Fourche la Pave River. Senator Hattie Caraway was an initial female United States Senator. Lieutenant Governor Maurice Footsie Britt received medals for his superior service in World War II: the Purple Heart, the Congressional Medal of Honor, the Distinguished Service Cross, the Silver Star, and the Bronze Star. Being drafted to World War II prevented Britt from playing for the Detroit Lions. John R. Eakin's spouse was Elizabeth Erwin relative of Edgar Allan Poe.

Ben Pearson lived in Pine Bluff and was a seller of archery worldwide. Pearson's archery business became Los Angeles Leisure Group. Pearson won National Archery Hall of Fame and National Bow Hunters Hall of Fame. Art genius Dionicio Rodriguez's "The Old Mill" created at T.R. Pugh Memorial Park in Little Rock consisting of a ten thousand pound wheel of water with bridges and benches was used in the start of *Gone with the Wind*. Hot Springs' Keller and Marian Breland's Animal Behavior Enterprises educated animals for Opryland, Six Flags, Sea World, Busch Gardens, television commercials, Knott's Berry Farm, and were on Ed Sullivan.

Glen Campbell was from Arkansas. Little Rock's Broncho Billy Anderson in "The Great Train Robbery," the earliest cowboy short movie kicked off cowboy movies in 1903. In 1870, Bishop Edward Fitzgerald disapproved with one other Italy bishop on pope fallibility while five hundred thirty-three did approve. Harold M. Sherman's book *Your Key to Happiness* greatly sold several editions. Liberty party presidential nominee William Hope "Coin" Harvey suggested using silver not gold for United States currency. Nebraska's William Jennings Bryan ran for president in the 1890's on Harvey's ideas of silver opposed to gold. McKinley, however, triumphed as President. Hazel Walker was on the national Red Heads basketball team and Women's Basketball Hall of Fame. Academic and public libraries will educate and delight patrons with the enchanting book, *Statesmen, Scoundrels, and Eccentrics: A Gallery of Amazing Arkansans*, revealing extraordinary and, sometimes, shocking details on the wonderfully charming Arkansas.

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