Delta Sources and Resources

Historic Arkansas Newspapers available for free as part of Chronicling America The Library of Congress's Historic American Newspapers collection (online) by Katie Adkins and Darren Bell, Arkansas State Archives

Since 1905, the Arkansas State Archives (ASA) has collected and preserved official records and historical materials for the State of Arkansas. It has amassed a vast collection of state, county, and federal records, manuscripts, military records, newspapers, family histories, and genea- logical resources. Newspapers, however, are at the heart of the Arkansas State Archives and are the most requested resource in the collection.



The Arkansas State Archives has operated its newspaper microfilming program since 1957. Its archives contain the largest existing collection of Arkansas journalism, curating approximately 22,000 rolls of microfilm containing nearly 1800 titles and representing all 75 of the state's counties, with an estimated page count exceeding 22 million. The Arkansas State Archives is the only institution in Arkansas that still microfilms historic and current Arkansas newspapers. In 2017 the Arkansas State Archives joined the Library of Congress's (LoC) National Digital Newspaper Program (NDNP) and began to digi- tize its historic newspapers of record. Today, more than 300,000 pages of curated Arkansas newspapers are digitized with an additional 100,000 to be completed by the end of August 2025. Dates of these digitized newspapers range from 1819 (with the recent addition of the Arkansas Gazette) to 1959 with the Arkansas State Press, owned and operated by Daisy and Lucious Bates. These digitized newspapers are part of the Library of Congress's (LoC) Historic American Newspapers collection and can be accessed for free at Chronicling America: https://www.loc.gov/collections/chronicling- america/. The digitized titles include several from Ar- kansas's Delta region. Most chronicle the late nineteenth and early

twentieth centuries and cover a range of topics and readership from the following communities: Arkansas Post, Brinkley, Carlisle, Dermott, Des Arc, DeWitt, Dyess, For- rest City, Gillett, Helena, Marianna, McCrory, McGehee, Napoleon, Newport, Osceola, Para- gould, Pine Bluff, and Stuttgart. The largest amount of content submitted from a single title comes from the Pine Bluff Daily Graphic, with daily and semi-weekly issues from 1893-1920. The Graphic chronicles an era of pros- perity in Pine Bluff, then the third largest city in Arkansas. During this time the city was a transportation hub and agricultural center for Southeast Arkansas. Many Delta newspapers selected for digitiza-

tion showed their support for the Democratic party but there were exceptions to this. The Southern Shield from Helena, for instance, was published by Quincy K. Underwood, a nationally prominent member of the Whig Party. The title suspended publication during the Civil War after secessionists burned its building in response to its support of the Union cause. Published between November 1860 and April 1861, Consti- tutional Union from Des Arc contained argu- ments for remaining in the United States as a counter to the Citizen (1854-1869) which sup- ported secession. The Citizen was known for printing news transmitted via telegraph from Memphis. Both newspapers are available on ## Chronicling America. The Delta region contributes newspapers published for African American and immigrant communities such as the Forrest City Herald. Af- filiated with the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the Herald promoted African American communities as well as church objectives. Seven issues from 1896 (the only remaining issues) have been digitized. Issues of the Negro Spokesman, from Pine Bluff, representing African American interests rather than any one political party, were published from 1938 to circa 1958; the two sur- viving issues are included. The Stuttgart Ger- mania, a German language newspaper, was published from 1895-1913 and served the immi- grant population that founded the town, Stuttgart, as a colony in the 1870s; nine issues exist from 1908. Most recently, titles were selected that dem- onstrate the environmental impacts of economic development particularly from communities in which agriculture, timber, mining, and oil pro- duction were significant, from 1819-1942. Issues of the Forrest City Times and Herald 1920-1928, and the Courier-Index, Marianna, 1921-1930 were included as a result of their role as central hubs



The Courier-Index.

MIGHTY MISSISSIPPI FLOODS VAST AREA

DELTA SECTION OF LEE COUNTY IS INUNDATED

RECORD FLOODS COME IN CYCLES

FALSE REPORTS ARE SENT OUT

DEATH CLAIMS W. F. KERSHAW

The front page story of the Mariana Courier-Index: April 21, 1927 (The Great Flood). Image courtesy of the authors.

for refugees displaced from the 1927 Mississippi River flood. The Arkansas Gazette, founded in 1819 at Arkansas Post and at Little Rock since 1820, consistently promoted immigration and land sales, while documenting life in Arkansas settlements and early “agribusiness.”

Collaborating with the Butler Center at the Central Arkansas Library System, Historic Dyess Colony Heritage Site managed by Arkansas State University, and Special Collections at the Uni- versity of Arkansas in Fayetteville, the Arkansas State Archives has assembled a nearly complete run of the Colony Herald, 1936-1937, from the Dyess Colony in Mississippi County. The colony offered relocatees modest houses with electricity and water and the opportunity to support them- selves by farming during the Depression. The Herald contained community news and farming

techniques. The paper was suspended from mid- January to mid-May 1937 as the colony was evacuated because of the 1937 flood. Singer Johnny Cash, the most famous resident of the Dyess colony, reflects on the rise of flood waters in his childhood home in his 1959 song, “Five Feet High and Rising.” Newspapers relevant to the Delta region but not originating from the area include the Arkan- sas Homestead, Arkansas Farmer & Homestead, and Arkansas Farmer (Little Rock). These titles focus on agriculture statewide, dating from 1906-1930. Another group of papers related but not originat- ing in the Delta include a collection of populist- related titles published in Faulkner, Pulaski, and White counties from 1895-1938. The populist movement originated in part with farmers’ frus- tration with low crop prices, lack of access to credit, and monopolies in transportation and marketing. Issues of the Union Label Bulletin and Union Labor Bulletin from Little Rock, 1903-1931 address concerns from various agricultural organ- izations in the early twentieth century and are now included on Chronicling America. Since its migration to the Library of Con- gress’s collections website, Chronicling America now contains several Arkansas-specific titles not submitted by the Arkansas State Archives. A col- lection of miscellaneous African American titles from the LoC were added in 2022. Included in this collection were two titles from the Delta, each single issues from 1900, the Pine Bluff Weekly Herald, and the Reporter from Helena. Further ad- ditions were made in 2023 when the LoC began to reorganize their various online newspaper col- lections under the Chronicling America name. Two titles published in Japanese, by Japanese Americans detained at the Rohwer Relocation Center in Desha County, the Rohwer Outpost, 1942-1945, and Rohwer Relocator, 1945, are now available as part of Chronicling America. For a full list of Arkansas newspapers currently digitized on the LoC’s Chronicling America website, visit https://www.loc.gov/col- lections/chronicling-america/dynamic-list-of-ti- tles/ and search “Arkansas.” The National Digital Newspaper Program is a partnership between the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the Library of Congress. One cultural institution from each state works alongside the Library of Congress to digitize newspapers for that state, in grant cycles of 100,000 pages at a time. The Arkansas State Archives joined the project in 2017 and has digi- tized Arkansas’s newspapers of record, papers from underrepresented communities, and papers that demonstrate the relationship between the economy and the environment. All fifty US states along with Puerto Rico and the Virgin Is- lands have participated (or are currently participating) in this project.

To learn more about the National Digital News- paper Program, visit https://www.loc.gov/ndnp/. For more Arkansas State Archives resources in- cluding search guides, lesson plans, topic guides, recipe booklets and activities for kids, visit https://ar-digital.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/adnp.


ADNP
ARKANSAS DIGITAL NEWSPAPER PROJECT

Revision #10
Created 2026-08-10 17:48:54 UTC by Michael Moore
Updated 2026-08-10 18:11:55 UTC by Michael Moore