

**Arkansas Historic Preservation Program  
Walks Through History  
Tour of Arkansas Tech University  
Start at Caraway Residence Hall, 1403 North Arkansas Avenue, Russellville  
May 13, 2017  
By: Revis Edmonds**



**Good morning, my name is Revis Edmonds, and I work for the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, an agency of the Department of Arkansas Heritage. Welcome to our fourth “Walks through History” tour of 2017 of Arkansas Tech University campus. I’d like to thank Arkansas Tech University and the Pope County Historical Society for co-sponsoring the tour, and I especially want to recognize Tom DeBlack and Jayne Jones of Tech and David Vance of the Pope County Historical Society for their help. I also want to recognize our new statewide co-sponsor, the Arkansas Humanities Council, for their assistance in helping us promote this series.**

For any architects in the audience, this tour is worth 2 hours of HSW continuing education credit through the American Institute of Architects. See me after the tour if you're interested.

### **About Russellville and Arkansas Tech**

Russellville is located on Lake Dardanelle, approximately halfway between Little Rock and Fort Smith, and is the seat of Pope County. The largest town in the county, it is home to Arkansas's only nuclear power plant, Arkansas Nuclear One, and home to ten divisions of Fortune 500 companies, as well as Arkansas Tech University.

In the early 1800s, the Osage from Missouri hunted frequently in the valley where present-day Russellville is located. Between 1818 and 1828, the area was within a Cherokee reservation, but after the tribe moved west in 1828, the land became available for white settlement. P. C. Holledger was the first white settler drawn to the valley, then known as Chactas Prairie, and he built a log home there in 1834.<sup>1</sup> By 1836, several homes were located in the area that would become present-day downtown Russellville.

Jacob Shinn built Russellville's first store in 1847 where an east-west road from Little Rock to Fort Smith crossed and where a north-south buffalo trail led to a ford on the Arkansas River. Sometime in the mid-1840s, after debate, the residents named the settlement for Dr. Thomas Russell.

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<sup>1</sup> David L. Vance, "Russellville (Pope County)." *The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*  
<http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=963>

Many men from Russellville served in the state's military forces both during the Mexican War and Civil War. Local men served in the state militia early in the war, transferring to regular Confederate regiments by the war's second year and some served the Union. No battles occurred in or near Russellville, though some skirmishes took place at Dardanelle. While the war ended in 1865, peace did not immediately return; much of the area was disrupted in the early 1870s by the bloody and violent Pope County Militia War.<sup>2</sup> This was a conflict between the Reconstruction government under Powell Clayton and Pope County partisans, which included former Confederates who opposed Radical Reconstruction. It resulted in the assassination of many local officials, most notably Clayton-backed Sheriff Archibald Dodson, and is often seen as a prelude to the Brooks-Baxter War of 1874.

Russellville was incorporated on June 7, 1870, and grew slowly until construction of the Little Rock and Fort Smith Railroad. After the line came through in 1873, the town grew rapidly. Russellville's first newspaper, the *Herald*, was founded in 1870. By 1876, the town boasted a population of approximately 800 serviced by fifteen stores, two cotton gins, and six doctors. The town growth prompted a debate on moving the county seat, in Dover since 1841, to one of the growing business centers adjacent to the new tracks. On March 19, 1887, an election was held in which Russellville beat out all competing towns, though Atkins finished a close second.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Laura Bean, "Pope County celebrates 185 years." Russellville Courier-News, November 24, 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Vance, "Russellville (Pope County)."

While formal education came to the Russellville area early with the founding of nearby Dwight Mission in 1820, most early schools were either private or by subscription. The Russellville Public School District was formed in 1870, the year the city was incorporated, and by 1876, it had evolved into a nine-month school. By 1890, approximately 400 students attended in ten grades, and the first class to attend through the twelfth grade graduated in 1893.

Most nineteenth-century residents farmed for a living or, with the coming of the railroad, harvested timber. By 1900, Russellville and the surrounding area had become a prosperous coal-mining area, with the Ouita Coal Company being the first established. Other coal companies followed with deep mine shafts sunk north and south of town, which gave way to strip mining after World War II. Cotton was at first a profitable crop; in the early twentieth century, bales were sold from wagons in the middle of Main Street. Today, no coal is mined, and the cotton gins are long gone.

Russellville saw steady growth in the early part of the twentieth century. At the turn of the century, the town numbered over 1,800 citizens. A fire in 1906 destroyed twenty-one businesses and caused a quarter million dollars of loss. However, the town continued to grow, with the population more than doubling within the next fourteen years. Much of that growth was due to the railroad and coal-mining interests that had moved to the area in the late nineteenth century.

Education became a driving force in Russellville's development. A new high school was built in 1907, and the schools were accredited by the North Central Association in 1928. In 1909, Russellville was chosen as one of four locations (Russellville, Jonesboro, Magnolia, and Monticello) in the state for agricultural schools, and the Second District Agricultural School opened the next year. The school became Arkansas Polytechnic College in 1925 and Arkansas Tech University (ATU) in 1976, and has grown into the state's second largest in student population. With America's entry into World War II, many Russellville men enlisted or were drafted into the military. Many of the local men served in the 153rd Infantry, and Battery D and Battery F of the 206th Coast Artillery Regiment of the Arkansas National Guard were initially stationed at Tech. Many of the men saw service in the Williwaw War, which was the common term for the World War II conflict between American and Japanese troops in the Alaskan Aleutian Islands.

In the years following the war, Russellville's growth was sparked by the construction of Interstate 40 in 1956, which has been a boon to the area's growth. A major economic boost came as a result of the completion of a dam, part of the McClellan-Kerr Arkansas River Navigation System, near the Arkansas River crossing between Dardanelle and Russellville in 1965. The dam created a lake, which led to the establishment of Lake Dardanelle State Park, a major tourist attraction in the area that brings in between \$1 to \$2 billion in trade to the state each year. In 1974, the state's only operational nuclear power plant, Arkansas Nuclear One, west of Russellville, went online. As of 2013, the plant produced in excess of 15 billion kilowatts of energy each year.

Russellville has a diverse manufacturing base. Frozen dinners, railroad crossties, elevator panels, parking meters, aluminum foil, graphite electrodes, microplanes, and aircraft and automotive parts are a few of the products manufactured in the city. The city is home to ten divisions of Fortune 500 companies, including Tyson Foods. Forty-eight manufacturing plants employ more than 8,300 people. Attractions in Russellville include the Arkansas River Visitor Center, the Arkansas Tech University Museum, which we will visit today, and the River Valley Arts Center.

Notable Russellville residents include Jeff Davis, the first governor to be elected to three terms and later a U.S. senator; Fifth District Congressman Brooks Hays, who began his law practice in Russellville before his election and later service as an adviser to Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson; Elizabeth Ward Gracen, Miss America 1982; Corliss Williamson, a member of the Arkansas Razorbacks 1994 NCAA basketball championship team, NBA star, and Coach of the UCA Bears; Bob Bailey, a lawyer, politician, and lieutenant governor; and famed knife maker Jimmy Lile.

The institution that became Arkansas Tech University had its origins in an early twentieth-century program known as the Country Life Movement, which focused on preserving traditional rural lifestyles while addressing poor living conditions and social problems within rural communities. Designed to reverse the decline in rural life in America, the movement was part of the larger Progressive movement. The driving force for the establishment of agricultural schools in the state was the Farmers Educational and Cooperative Union, which was founded in Texas

and proved to be a more moderate successor to the Populists and associated farmers' associations of the late nineteenth century. Spurred on by the Farmers' Union, the Arkansas legislature in 1909 passed Act 100 to establish a "State Agricultural School" in four districts around the state. Competition for the site of the school was intense. Interested towns had to pledge a minimum of \$40,000 and a site of not less than 200 acres. On February 10, 1910, Russellville was chosen over Ozark, Fort Smith, and Morrilton. The decision may have been influenced in part by the town's pledge to offer free electricity and water for three years. The sites chosen for the other district schools were Jonesboro, Magnolia, and Monticello.

The Second District Agricultural School opened for classes in the fall of 1910 with 186 students. Enrollment jumped to 350 by the 1913–14 academic year. But the institution's early years proved to be difficult ones. Funding problems and declining enrollment, particularly during the years of World War I, initially plagued the school. College classes were added in 1922, and by the 1924–25 school year, the Second District School was providing instruction to students from the rank of high school freshmen to college seniors.

In February 1925, the legislature decided to change the names of the four agricultural schools. All others became Agricultural and Mechanical (A&M) schools, but the Second District School, in an effort to remain free from the education focus offered at Conway, became Arkansas Polytechnic College (called "Tech" for short), which denoted a higher education institution offering courses at degree or below, especially in vocational subjects. Despite the name change

and the desire to be distinct from the now-University of Central Arkansas, the focus of education at Tech gradually changed from agriculture to teacher training and the liberal and fine arts. In 1929, the school was officially accredited as a junior college by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.

After a brief fall-off, enrollment at Tech increased during the latter years of the Great Depression, growing from its previous all-time high of 482 students in 1929–30 to 758 by the fall of 1940. This turnaround came several years after the Arkansas General Assembly discussed abolishing the agricultural schools it had created barely twenty years earlier. Tech weathered that storm only to be confronted by a new challenge with the onset of World War II. Even before the United States entered the war, 104 members of Tech's two National Guard units (one out of every four male students on campus) were ordered to mobilize for a year's training at Fort Bliss, Texas, in January 1941. The group included twenty-five members of the football team, all but one letterman on the basketball team, the entire track team, and eleven of fourteen student councilmen. In February 1941, *Life* magazine ran a pictorial feature article on the group's last day on campus and the school's efforts to honor them. The war took a devastating toll on Tech's enrollment; it plunged to a mere 133 students in the fall of 1943, the second lowest total in the institution's thirty-three-year history. To offset the drop in tuition revenue, the college actively sought government contracts to serve as a military training facility. The effort succeeded when the institution was awarded generous contracts to train elements of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAACs) and naval air personnel.



By 1955, enrollment once again topped 1,000 and increased through the next decade under President Joseph W. Hull, who served from 1932 to 1967, doubling to 2,000 in 1965. The school grew from seventeen major buildings to forty-six during this period. In 1976, Arkansas Polytechnic College officially became Arkansas Tech University, and the school awarded its first graduate degrees in 1977, and over the next two decades hit a record enrollment of 4,840. The university hit enrollment records in each subsequent year through fall 2012. Enrollment passed 5,000 in 2000 and Tech's enrollment hit 10,000 in 2011.

Since 1995, the university has invested more than \$210 million in construction, renovations, and instructional equipment, resulting in a complete overhaul of the school's physical appearance. One of the most significant additions was the Ross Pendergraft Library and Technology Center, which opened in June 1999. Other new facilities constructed since 1995 include the Doc Bryan Student Services Building, University Commons on-campus apartments, Norman Hall (home of the Arkansas Tech Department of Art), Baswell Techionery (a new student union), three new residence halls (Baswell, Nutt, and M Street Residence Halls), Thone Stadium at Buerkle Field, the Chartwells Women's Sports Complex, and Rothwell Hall—a new 60,000-square foot classroom building that also houses the College of Business and the Roy and Christine Sturgis Academic Advising Center.<sup>4</sup> In 2003, Arkansas Valley Technical Institute merged with Tech to become Arkansas Tech University-Ozark.

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<sup>4</sup> Thomas A. DeBlack, "Arkansas Tech University." *The Arkansas Encyclopedia of History and Culture*  
<http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=4138>

Arkansas Tech is home to the first emergency management degree programs in the world to be accredited by the Foundation on Higher Education in Disaster/Emergency Management and Homeland Security. Tech is one of only two public universities in Arkansas to offer accredited programs in both mechanical engineering and electrical engineering. In 2015, Tech began offering a Doctor of Education degree program in school leadership. In the fall of 2015, 12,009 students were enrolled at Arkansas Tech.

Tech has six buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places. We will be touring all six on our tour today.

1. **Caraway Residence Hall- 1403 North Arkansas Avenue**

Caraway Hall is a brick building with Colonial Revival styling, built in 1934 with funding from the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), later known as the Public Works Administration (PWA). It is roughly H-shaped, with a central three-story section with a gabled roof and end chimneys, which is flanked by two-story flat-roofed wings, one longer than the other.<sup>5</sup> Caraway Hall was constructed according to the designs of Little Rock architect A.N. McAninch; the general contractor was J. H. Leveck and Sons. As such, it was built during the period covered by the historic context of *The Evolution of the Public School System in the Arkansas Ozarks, 1920-1940* by William D. Baker.<sup>6</sup> It stands as an outstanding

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<sup>5</sup> National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, "Caraway Hall - Arkansas Tech University." Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, September 10, 1992.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

example of a large brick masonry dormitory building with an irregular "HW-shaped plan designed in the Colonial Revival style (mainly the absolutely symmetrical composition of the front facade and the semi-circular, columned Classical central entrance portico, including its four Doric columns that dominate the composition).

Senator Hattie Caraway dedicated the building on October 18, 1935, during the campus's annual "Dad's Day" celebration.<sup>7</sup> The Russellville Courier-Democrat twice reported in error that the new residence hall was to be named in honor of Hattie, whom according to one of the reports, "aided Tech officials in securing funds for construction." While a logical assumption, it could not have been more wrong. College officials had indeed considered naming the building after her, but chose instead to name it after her late husband, Senator Thaddeus Caraway, who had also been a faithful friend to Tech.<sup>8</sup> Built at a cost of \$87,000 (\$2,100,458 in 2017 dollars), it was a three-story, 100-bed dormitory with a spacious 98-by-38 foot reception area that accommodated student activities. In the summer of 1945, Caraway Hall had become so overcrowded that the faculty apartments and part of the Girls' Domestic Science Building were converted into girls' dormitories.<sup>9</sup> In the spring semester of 1972, in response to a decline in college enrollment, Caraway Hall was closed, and

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<sup>7</sup> Kenneth R. Walker, *History of Arkansas Tech University 1909-1990* (Russellville: Arkansas Tech University, 1992), 132.

<sup>8</sup> Site visit and comments by Tom DeBlack, April 16, 2017.

<sup>9</sup> Walker, 182.

was not reopened until an enrollment surge in 1982.<sup>10</sup> The building underwent major repairs and upgrades in 1995, and in the fall of 1996, Caraway Hall became a sorority dorm with 24-hour visitation, and currently houses 88 women.<sup>11</sup>

Caraway Hall was placed on the National Register on September 10, 1992.

## 2. Girls' Domestic Science Building (Browning Hall)- 1505 North Boulder Avenue

The Girls' Domestic Science and Arts Building is a 2-1/2 story masonry building in the plain traditional style with a symmetrical rectangular plan, a tile hip roof, and walls finished in brick and stone. The roof is pierced by hip-roofed dormers on both the long and short sides and is covered in ceramic tile.<sup>12</sup> It was built in 1913 as a women's dormitory and extensively renovated in 1935 to serve as a Home Economics center. According to Thomas DeBlack's "A Century Forward: The Centennial History of Arkansas Tech University," The Public Works Administration provided funds for school construction in January 1934, of which \$7,500 was allocated for renovating this building. Shortly after the Home Economics degree was eliminated in 1972, the building suffered over \$10,000 in damage from a fire. It later became home to the Art Department until it moved to Norman Hall as the building fell into disrepair and closed in 2006.

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<sup>10</sup> Walker, 538.

<sup>11</sup> "Residence Life: Caraway Hall." <https://www.atu.edu/reslife/res-caraway.php>

<sup>12</sup> Rachel Silva, "Arkansas Listings in the National Register of Historic Places". *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* (Winter 2009), 68.

In 2012, Tech received a \$550,000 grant from the Arkansas Natural and Cultural Resources Council to help fund a \$1.6 million restoration of the building. The restoration sought to combine the best elements of the old and the new as the structure's floors, doors, and unbroken windows were left intact during restoration. The Director of University Relations, Sam Strasner, observed when one walked in the building, they experienced "that good creak you get from old floors that gives a building character." In December 2013, the Tech board voted to rename the building Browning Hall (named for benefactor William Elmo Browning who established a scholarship to benefit students who graduated McCrory or Augusta High Schools), Browning graduated from Arkansas Tech in 1937. He gave back to his alma mater by financially supporting various academic initiatives, the baseball program, the athletic department and the Return to Glory capital campaign. He was also a regular contributor to the university's greatest need category of the annual fund, known today as the Tech Loyalty Fund.

"(Browning) contributed approximately \$600,000 in scholarships that assisted many students to receive a college degree," wrote Jayne Jones, Tech's vice president for development. "The scholarship program was a direct result of Mr. Browning's belief that what you leave behind is not what is engraved in stone monuments, but what is woven into the lives of others."

Arkansas Tech bestowed its Presidential Fellow medal upon Browning in 2002. He was the first individual to receive that award. Browning died in

February 2010.<sup>13</sup> Browning Hall now houses the offices of the Controller, University Relations, Human Resources, and Administrative Services.

The Girls' Domestic Science and Arts Building was placed on the National Register on September 18, 1992.

### 3. Tomlinson Library- 1507 North Boulder Avenue

Built with aid by the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works and completed in August 1936, Tomlinson Hall is a two-story brick building with Colonial Revival features, and served as the library at what is now Arkansas Tech University from the time of its construction until the opening of the Ross Pendergraft Library and Technology Center in 1999. At the time of its construction, it was a 31,000 square foot facility that cost \$60,000 (\$1,049,704 in 2017 dollars) and its last remodeling was in 1966. The building was renamed in 1955 for longtime botany department Chair Everett S. Tomlinson. As enrollment grew and technology changed, the library became increasingly obsolete. In 1996, the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation announced it would award Tech a \$12.4 million gift to fund what would become the Pendergraft Library and Technology Center. In November 2001, Governor Mike Huckabee, in a campus announcement, declared he would release \$400,000 for the renovation of the Tomlinson Library. President Robert Brown noted that that the renovation was particularly welcome to provide badly needed additional classroom space after three straight years of record enrollment. Today, Tomlinson Hall

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<sup>13</sup> "Browning Hall Dedication Set for April 17." *Techties* <http://www.techties.atu.edu/s/978/16/index-social.aspx?sid=978&gid=1&pgid=252&cid=3100&ecid=3100&crd=0&calpgid=15&calcid=752>

provides classroom space and faculty offices to the university and is home of the Arkansas Tech Graduate College.<sup>14</sup>

**4. Administration Building- 1509 North Boulder Avenue**

Originally known as the brick Dining Hall, this structure was built in 1910 as one of the first six buildings on campus. A one story masonry building in the plain traditional style, it was built with steam heat, electricity, and running water, and an initial seating capacity of two hundred. From 1910 to the mid-1960s, the dining hall was known for having much of its food grown on the adjacent Tech Farm. The building's first renovation came in 1926, and for many years was the center of student activity on campus. Another remodeling project in 1939 doubled the dining hall's seating capacity to four hundred, and the cafeteria line was introduced in 1943. Prior to this, the staff served the students at their tables. After work began on the new Chambers Dining Hall in 1965, the Manhattan Construction Company converted the Dining Hall into an Administration building at a cost of \$173,936 (\$1,350,207 in 2017 dollars), and the administration moved in in spring of 1966.<sup>15</sup>

**5. Physical Education Building (Techionery)- 1502 North El Paso Avenue**

The former Physical Education Building is a two story brick Classical Revival structure, built in 1937 with funding from the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) according to the designs of the Fort Smith architectural firm of Haralson and Mott; the general contractor was the

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<sup>14</sup> DeBlack, "Arkansas Tech University."

<sup>15</sup> Walker, 534.

Manhattan Construction Company.<sup>16</sup> Its design features the absolutely symmetrical composition of the front facade, the segmental arch windows in the center of the first floor and the pedimented, classical entrances. According to Tom DeBlack's History of Tech, during its years as a physical education center, the service of John Tucker was most prominent. Tucker is ultimately responsible for the nickname "Wonder Boys" for Tech. On November 15, 1919, Tucker, as a 17-year-old freshman, scored two touchdowns and kicked two extra points to lead the Second District Agricultural School Aggies to a 14–0 upset win over Jonesboro. In newspaper accounts following the game, Tucker and his teammates were referred to as "Wonder Boys," and the nickname remains to this day. Tucker was labeled as "The Original Wonder Boy" and was associated with the school for the rest of his life. He went on to play on the University of Alabama's Rose Bowl team in 1931 and served Arkansas Tech in a variety of roles, including coach, athletic director and chemistry professor between 1925 and 1972. Two buildings on the Tech campus: Tucker Coliseum and Tucker Hall, are named in his honor. Now known as the Techionery Building, the building currently houses the Arkansas Tech Museum with displays about the history of the university. The Museum was established in December 1989, and its mission is to provide a center for collection, conservation, interpretation, and research concerned with the history of Arkansas Tech while making this knowledge and interpretation

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<sup>16</sup> National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, "Physical Education Building - Arkansas Tech University." Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, September 10, 1992.



available to the community served by the University.<sup>17</sup> The museum also houses a museum store, which once housed the pressroom for the campus yearbook and newspaper. Part of the building also houses the theater department, whose space underwent a major renovation in 2012. A new nearby center, known as the Baswell Techionery, was completed in 2011.

The Physical Education Building (Techionery) was listed on the National Register on September 10, 1992.

#### **6. Wilson Hall- 502 West M Street**

Wilson Hall (Later named for Judge R.B. Wilson, who was instrumental in getting the school located in Russellville and served on the institution's Board of Trustees from 1913-27) is a large two-story brick building constructed in 1910 with Colonial Revival styling, consisting of a central block, from which symmetrical wings extend forward from its ends, ending in slightly wider "houses." In December 1933, a new residence hall would combine the shells of three earlier dorms dating back to 1910 into one larger 105-room building. President Hull secured a loan of \$83,000 from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation for the project and the Civil Works Administration (CWA) provided the resources and manpower for drainage and landscaping for Wilson and other projects on campus. The 1933 edition of the Agricola described the plans for the complex and expressed the Tech community's anticipation:

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<sup>17</sup> "Arkansas Tech University Museum." <https://www.atu.edu/museum/>

**“A loan of \$67,000 from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation to Arkansas Tech will permit the changing of the three boys' dormitories into the beautiful, modern building pictured above (aerial photo in the yearbook). The loan is sufficiently large to provide an entirely new dormitory. The interior of the present dormitories will be wrecked completely and built back, fireproofed, modernized, and remodeled. The capacity of the dormitory will be increased to 210 students by the addition**

**of the wings from the West dormitory to the North and South dormitories. The court created by the U-shaped hall will be landscaped, a small pool constructed, and other beautification steps taken. One-half of the first floor in each of the smaller dormitories will be created into lounges, or recreation rooms, and the other half of the floor will be converted into apartments for the professors who will reside in the dormitories.**

**College officials state that the dormitory will be one of the finest in the state when completed. Work will start on the project immediately after the regular session and the building will be completed in time for the regular 1933-34 session.”<sup>18</sup>**

**It was built during a period of expansion in which the school, then still the Second District Agricultural School, began offering four-year degree programs. It has mostly served as a men's residence hall from its inception. It was closed for a time after 1972 due to low occupancy and would later reopen with other functions, such as a child development center. The School of Nursing also was housed for a time in the west wing. Tom DeBlack noted in his history of Tech that by the 1990s, Wilson had fallen into such a state of disrepair that that then-President Robert Brown discovered on his first campus tour a horrible stench under a stairwell that uncovered cages containing various live animals left there by the Wildlife and Fisheries program. Inadequate heat and air systems were causing mold issues and dirty, tobacco coated walls abounded in Wilson and other**

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<sup>18</sup> *Agricola 1933, 6.*

halls. In 1995, renovations were done to Wilson Hall due to building neglect and enrollment growth. The hall closed during the 2015-16 academic year to complete several upgrades including replacement of the heating and cooling systems and the installation of a sprinkler system.<sup>19</sup>

The renovation was made possible in part by a \$1 million grant from the Arkansas Natural and Cultural Resources Council. Wireless Internet access was also installed during the renovation. It reopened in the fall of 2016.

Wilson Hall was placed on the National Register on September 18, 1992.

#### **7. Hughes Hall- 514 West M Street**

Hughes Hall (also called “the Rock Armory”) is a two story stone building in the Plain Traditional style in a U-shaped plan, with a hip roof and stone foundation. The roof of its front facade is pierced by two small hip-roofed dormers. It was built as a classroom building in 1940, with funding support from the Works Progress Administration (WPA). Initially, the first floor would house the National Guard, while the second floor served as a men’s dormitory. Originally called “The Rock Armory,” it was renamed Hughes Hall in honor of longtime Agriculture Department head Claude Allen Hughes in 1955. In 2009, it was converted into a dormitory after years of being used as Physical Plant and storage and shop space. Re-opened in Fall 2009 as a residence hall, this co-ed Living Learning Community is located on the west side of campus behind Tucker and Critz halls. This is a traditional residence hall with a community style bath. Residents have access to one spacious lounge with a television and an outdoor "grass

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<sup>19</sup> “Wilson Hall.” <https://www.atu.edu/reslife/res-wilson.php>

mall area". Since Fall 2014, Hughes has been home to the Agriculture Living Learning Community.

Hughes Hall was listed on the National Register on September 18, 1992.

#### **8. Colonel Henry Stroupe Building- 1303 North El Paso Avenue**

The Colonel Henry Stroupe Building (originally the Armory) was constructed in 1926 and is a two story brick building in the Plain Traditional style with a hip roof and concrete foundation. The building was designed by architect H. Ray Burks and constructed by E.W. Jenkins. The building was the result of a \$15,000 appropriation by the 1925 General Assembly (matched by \$15,000 by Tech) to build a National Guard armory on the Tech campus. 100 by 150 feet, it contained a large court for drill and other purposes on the first floor, surrounded by rooms for officers' quarters, and lockers for Guard members. The space above the rooms contained bleachers, looking down on the drills, athletic contests, and other events. At the time of its dedication in August 1926<sup>20</sup>, it was also used for basketball and other sports, and could be easily converted into an entertainment hall with a seating capacity of 1,500. The court replaced the old auditorium in the Main Building which was equipped as a library. Tom DeBlack recounted that in order to obtain the folding chairs that were initially used in the building, President Dr. James Grant asked individuals to pay \$2.50 each which purchased a chair and for which the person in exchange received either a season basketball ticket or a lyceum ticket.

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<sup>20</sup> Clay Wyllia, "Tech Timeline: 1909-1929." *Tech Action*, April 16, 2009, 15.

Will Rogers, one of the most popular humorists and commentators of his day, who was known as “The Cowboy-Philosopher, made an on-campus appearance at Tech in 1931 as a part of his efforts on the President’s Organization on Unemployment Relief (POUR) to assist private and local relief efforts around the country.<sup>21</sup> An account of Rogers’ visit to Arkansas Tech in the *Agricola* yearbook, where he addressed an overflow crowd in Stroupe Building, described that “on the morning of the performance people came from all of the surrounding towns, and the biggest crowd that has ever been on the Tech campus crowded into the armory and around the doors.” His performance in Russellville raised over \$2,000, which was used to provide payment for workers to construct a municipal airport, on the same parcel of land where Tucker Coliseum now sits, and a monument to Rogers stands on the front lawn of the facility.<sup>22</sup>

In 1954 the Armory was renamed the Colonel Henry Stroupe Building and was renovated by Nabholz Construction of Conway. Today it serves as an indoor practice facility for the baseball team, but is scheduled for demolition when the new practice facility is complete.

#### **9. Williamson Hall- 1205 North El Paso Avenue**

**Williamson Hall is a two-story brick building with Colonial Revival features, built in 1938 with funding support from the National Youth**

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<sup>21</sup> Site visit and comments by Tom DeBlack, April 16, 2017.

<sup>22</sup> “Will Rogers Monument Re-Dedication June 15.” *Techties* <http://www.techties.atu.edu/s/978/16/index-social.aspx?sid=978&gid=1&pgid=252&cid=4327&ecid=4327&crd=0&calpgid=61&calcid=2669>

Administration<sup>23</sup>, which, incidentally was headed at the state level at that time by Tech President Joseph W. Hull.<sup>24</sup> The building was at first used to house the NYA's programs before it was turned over to the school in 1940. It is distinguished by its Greek temple pavilion on the front facade, supported by six Doric columns.<sup>25</sup> It was originally named the Fine Arts Building, which housed music classes, and in 1954 was renamed for longtime Tech Music Director (and Tech's first student) Marvin Williamson. It would house the school's radio station and from 1972 to 1991 an indoor firing range for the ROTC program. After that time the building would pass to the University's hospitality education program. When renovations began to allow Williamson Hall to house the program, the brick interior was stripped away to reveal the original stone and pine walls. A state of the art commercial kitchen was then installed complete with gas and electric stoves, a convection oven and walk-in cooler. In the spring of 2003 the hospitality program began serving weekly lunches in its new dining space (once the indoor firing range) and expanded to weekly dinners in fall 2003. Williamson Hall was placed on the National Register of Historic Places on September 18, 1992.

Again, on behalf of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, I want to thank you for joining us this beautiful Saturday in Central Arkansas. If you

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<sup>23</sup> National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, "Williamson hall - Arkansas Tech University." Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, September 18, 1992.

<sup>24</sup> Mark K. Christ, "National Youth Administration." *The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture* <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=6280>

<sup>25</sup> National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, "Williamson Hall - Arkansas Tech University."

**are able, please join us for our next “Walks Through History” tour of 2017 at Searcy, as we explore the amazing architecture and history of Downtown Searcy in White County. We begin at 11 AM on Saturday, July 15 at the White County Courthouse.**

**And just a reminder, if you are dining out after the tour, be sure to patronize your locally owned establishments. You’ll love the taste, and you’re building a better community!**