



First Jenks Arkansas River Bridge



**JENKS AMERICA MUSEUM
& HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

JAM NEWSLETTER

Vol. 2 No. 4. 2025

A lot is happening with the JAM

Jenks America Museum & Historical Society Corp.

Thank you to our recent donors

We are thankful for the donations to the JAM from this past month's supporters.

Tadd Bogan is our president and a partner in the law firm Jones, Gotcher & Bogan, P.C., in Tulsa. Tadd is also a 1998 Jenks Graduate.

Jenks Lions Club. Though no longer active in Jenks, the club was the premier civic club in the City and gave the City a tennis court and a building for its meetings. Thanks to past Presidents Randy Ewing and Steve Oakley.

Mike Fretz, Mike Fretz Homes and owner of Mike's Treasures at 316 East Main Street.

These people are strong supporters of Jenks and are proud to help the Jenks America Museum & Historical Society take another step toward opening a museum in Jenks.

Please join us in thanking them for their generosity.

The Jenks America Museum & Historical Society is a registered 501 C (3) nonprofit corporation and all donations are 100% tax deductible.



Rev. Green to Tell the Story of Rentie Grove

Rev. John Green will speak about the 100-year history of Rentie Grove, the Muscogee Freedman Community, at a May 31 event sponsored by the Jenks America Museum & Historical Society. The session is planned for the Jenks Library, beginning at 10:30 a.m.

Green attended kindergarten at Rentie Grove, which is located in the vicinity of 91st and Harvard in Tulsa. He is a 1967 graduate of Jenks High School.

Light refreshments will be provided, and a question-and-answer session will follow the presentation.

The Jenks America Museum & Historical Society is currently building the foundation for the creation of a museum that will tell the story of Jenks and its environs. To learn more, visit jenksamericamuseum.org.



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JAM NEWSLETTER

Vol. 2 No. 4. 2025 Pg 2

The Queen of the Bootleggers and the Game That Never Was

By Brian Sherman

“Have you at any time in the past actually swam in the Arkansas River.”

That was the first question asked by Becky Bolton, one of three members of the Jenks America Museum & Historical Society Committee, which hosted JAM's second history lesson at the local library April 26.

None of the three longtime Jenks residents who were featured at the meeting would admit to ever taking a dip in the river, but all three – Jay Creekmore, J.D. Newland and Larry Wasson – entertained the overflow crowd with recollections and stories of what Jenks was once like.

Jenks, according to the three guests of honor, might have been, in some cases, a harsh and boring place to live, but it was home, and it was the source of precious memories that date back to within three decades of Oklahoma statehood.

JAM Committee Member Ed Phillips introduced Newland, who graduated with him in the Jenks High School class of 1956. Born on Jan. 27, 1938, Newland's family moved to Jenks in 1943. He's been here ever since, teaching wood shop at the high school and later serving as director of buildings and grounds.

As a youngster, he remembered that “there wasn't a whole lot in our community to do,” other than roller skating, riding bicycles and skinny dipping. “When you went in in your underwear, you couldn't wear it again,” he pointed out.

After graduating from high school, he served as a custodian at the school – he said he preferred the term building engineer – but in 1958 was hired to teach wood shop.

“If you can imagine 30 freshmen kids who never made a birdhouse or nothing. When I asked them why did you take this class, every one of them said ‘I want to build something,’” he said, adding that “we have kids who are 70 years old and still have their bread board.”

Indeed, several members of the audience noted that they still had items they, their kids or their parents made in Newland's class.

“We went from hand tools to power tools, and the only youngster who ever got hurt was cleaning his fingernails with his pocketknife and cut himself and he fainted,” Newland related.

Continued Page 3



JENKS AMERICA MUSEUM & HISTORICAL SOCIETY

JAM NEWSLETTER

Vol. 2 No. 4. 2025 Pg 3

The Queen of the Bootleggers and the Game That Never Was. Continued

Creekmore, introduced to the audience by JAM Committee Member Wayne Parker, was born July 25, 1932, and has lived in Jenks his entire life. His parents came to Oklahoma from Arkansas sometime in the 1800s. He and his parents and three sisters lived in two-story house without utilities of any sort.

"There was no electricity, no phone, no gas – no nothing," he said.

Wasson, whose parents arrived in Jenks in 1912, was in a similar situation. He said his family – his father was a sharecropper – lived in a tent on the banks of Polecat Creek.

"It had a dirt floor, but that was a common thing," he said. "You do what you gotta do."

He added that at one time, he was related to half the people in Jenks, pointing out that Creekmore's grandmother was his grandfather's sister.

"You didn't dare say anything bad about anyone because they were all related," Wasson said.

He also remembered that growing up, he was "always in trouble." Specifically, he recalled the time he and a friend were in the local movie theater when a law officer showed up and accused them of being peeping Toms earlier in the evening. However, the owner of the establishment insisted that they had

been in the theater since the beginning of the show.

"If it hadn't been for him, we would have been jailbirds," Wasson said.

He added that he didn't have a job during his high school years because "work was a four-letter word." He later learned that the town wasn't as "boring" as he originally thought. He said he was having a beer in a local bar with Norman Phillip "Shorty" Gentis, when he found out that his drinking partner had been an aircraft mechanic who worked on the plane flown by World War I ace Eddie Rickenbacker. Gentis later served as mayor of Jenks

Creekmore said he didn't participate in sports in high school instead worked on a farm. He also related that one of his jobs was as a "stripper." He explained that after the automatic milkers did their work on at a local dairy farm, he was responsible for "stripping" out the remainder of the milk. "My last year in high school, I worked eight hours at night and went to school six hours a day," he said.

Creekmore also remembered Cleo Epps, "the Queen of the Bootleggers." He said his uncle John rented a property from Cleo, "who was a super nice person," and she stored her whiskey in his uncle's barn. Creekmore said his cousin once rescued a case of whiskey from the barn.

"He took it out in the woods and hid it behind a tree. I had a car and picked him up. He said 'stop right

Continued page 4



JENKS AMERICA MUSEUM & HISTORICAL SOCIETY

JAM NEWSLETTER

Vol. 2 No. 4. 2025 Pg 4

The Queen of the Bootleggers and the Game That Never Was. Continued

here' and I stopped, and he came back with the whiskey," Creekmore remembered.

Newland said his time at Jenks "has been a fabulous ride for me," but he apparently has at least one regret: that there were no state high school playoffs in 1954, a year the Trojans finished with an undefeated season. "We were in there with Pawnee. We would have played in the first round of the playoffs, and there's still some debate as to who would have won that game," he said.

New Time Next JAM Meeting:

**Monday June 2, 2025, 6:00
PM
Louie's In Jenks**

Strategic Planning Meeting

**Saturday June 14, 2021
9:00 untill 1:00 PM
Pizza for lunch**

JAM Sponsored By



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The Jenks America Museum & Historical Society Corp. is a registered 501 C (3) and all donations are 100% deductible.

Donations may be mailed to:

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& Historical Society
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Tulsa OK 74137