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## Living History II

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# Living History II

Submitted by Wendy  
Ritcher  
For the Siftings

On Sunday, October 30, the Clark County Historical Association will present a living history program featuring some of Clark County's earliest citizens. Among the characters making appearances will be "Jacob Barkman," "Rebecca Barkman," and "George W. Featherstonhaugh." The public is invited to meet these and other historical figures by attending the free performances to be held at the historic Rosedale Plantation Barn at 879 Old Military Road beginning at 2:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m., October 30. The site is not far from the Barkmans' original home along the Caddo River. Plus, the Rosedale Barn itself is significant; it was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2004.

Clark County pioneer Jacob Barkman arrived in what is now Clark County about 1811 and quickly established himself as an entrepreneur and leader in river commerce. He opened the area's first cotton gin and became the first to operate a steamboat on the Ouachita River. Barkman became a large landowner, amassing holdings of approximately 22,000 acres by the time of his death. So significant was his impact on the area's economic growth and development, he is often called "The Father of Clark County." Jacob Barkman was born in Kentucky in 1784 and lived there until moving to Clark County. He and his wife Rebecca first built a cabin on the Caddo River, then constructed a two-story home made of sun-dried bricks. The Barkmans' home was the site of much political and economic activity. Clark County's first postoffice was located there, and following the creation of Clark County in 1818, his house also served as the county seat. The home served as a stop for stagecoaches, and even performed duty as the county jail. Ap-

proximately five miles from Arkadelphia, Barkman's house was located along the Military Road, the primary transportation artery which ran from St. Louis to Little Rock to Mexico and the Southwest. One of the distinctive aspects of his property was the race track he built. Interestingly, it circled an old Indian mound. Local legend says that people came from as far away as Kentucky and Tennessee to wager on their favorite horses.

Geologist George William Featherstonhaugh (pronounced fan-shaw) came to Arkansas and Clark County in the 1830s, and visited Jacob and Rebecca Barkman. His book about the trip, "Excursion Through the Slave States," was published in 1844. According to Featherstonhaugh, Mrs. Barkman "chewed tobacco, she smoked a pipe, she drank whiskey, and cursed and swore as heartily as any backwoodsman, all at the same time . . . with as much ease as if she had been an automaton set to do it with clockwork machinery. She must have been a person of surprising powers in her youth, for I was informed that she was now comparatively refined to what she had been before her marriage." However, Featherstonhaugh found her hospitality to be top-notch. Mrs. Barkman, notwithstanding her habits, was not deficient in good nature to us: they had killed a young steer the day before our arrival, and a dish of fat boiled ribs was set before us, with good bread, of which we made an excellent meal."

For additional information about the living history program on October 30 or other Clark County history matters, visit or contact the Clark County Historical Museum ([www.clarkcounty-history.org](http://www.clarkcounty-history.org) or 230.1360) or the Clark County Historical Association's Archives at the Ouachita Baptist University Library ([www.obu.edu/archives](http://www.obu.edu/archives) or 245.5332).