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Richardson's work remains a star

By Wendy Richter
For the Sittings

Through the years, Clark County has seen its share of talented individuals. In fact, the work of one of Arkadelphia's early 20th century artists continues to be highly sought-after today. Charles Richardson's well-known and very recognizable landscapes featuring river scenes and beech trees have become prized possessions for many.

Charles Richardson was born in Tennessee in 1869, and his family came to Clark County sometime in the 1880s. The family was not well-off, and as a young man, Charles found work as a carpenter's helper to pay for his art lessons at the local level before receiving a scholarship to the Cincinnati Art Academy. After graduating there, he returned to Arkadelphia and supplemented his income as an artist by working as a carpenter and house painter.



IMAGE COURTESY CLARK COUNTY HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

Charles Richardson's artwork is still highly sought-after today.

Richardson received recognition for his work at county, state and regional fairs, and even at the Southern Art League exhibition in New Orleans in 1930. He preferred to paint landscapes, but would produce portraits and images of houses upon request. One of his most visible portraits hangs in the second-floor lobby of Riley-Hickingsbotham Library, and is of long-time Ouachita Bap-

tist University employee Estelle McMillan Blake. Of great significance to local historians, another of his non-landscape images depicted the home of Clark County pioneer Jacob Barkman, the only known likeness of that structure in existence today.

Richardson sold his paintings for prices ranging from \$2 for very small works to \$125 for a portrait. He also added to his income by taking on students from time to time and by teaching classes at Henderson and Ouachita.

Richardson engaged in activities other than painting. He loved music and played the tuba in Dwight Blake's band for several years. Interestingly, he apparently did not care for jazz. Richardson also had a fascination with archeology, and participated in efforts to collect Indian artifacts in

this area which were later preserved by the HSU Museum. And, according to local historian Farrar Newberry, Richardson was quite a story-teller, and loved to joke about his own blunders.

The artist grew weak during the last few years of his life, and could not keep up with the requests for his work. Some orders for paintings were never filled. Richardson died in 1948 (possibly of tuberculosis) and was buried in Rose Hill Cemetery in Arkadelphia next to other family members.

For additional information about Clark County history, visit or contact the Clark County Historical Museum at the train depot (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 or 245-5332).

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