

# COLLECTIONS

## ARTIFACTS FROM ENDURING UNION

The Old State House Museum's collection of artifacts is central to its mission. Each object in our collection was sought for its ability to convey a greater understanding of our shared Arkansas heritage.

This year, the museum kicked off its four-year commemoration of the sesquicentennial of the Civil War with the first of five exhibits about this conflict, *An Enduring Union: Arkansas in the Civil War*. This exhibit concentrates on the national and state reunions once held in Arkansas by Confederate and Union veterans. Hundreds of badges, ribbons, photographs, postcards and souvenirs

were donated or purchased so that they could be featured in *An Enduring Union*. A few of these impressive items are highlighted on this page.

There is no end to the museum's collection's efforts. Additional Civil War-related objects may be featured in the four upcoming exhibits. Artifacts are collected with the intent on including them in diverse future exhibits as well. The Old State House will continue to seek items related to our state's political history, as it is central to our particular site. In addition, the museum will continue to seek items related to our Arkansas-related core collections: politics, first families, State Police, Department of Correction, the Old State House building, and entertainers.



*Reconciliation is the theme conveyed through this photograph from a Civil War veterans reunion.*

## HISTORY MAINTAINED

The Old State House Museum's collection of the inaugural gowns of Arkansas first ladies is one of the largest, most comprehensive collections of inaugural gowns in the country. Gowns in the collection date back to 1889, and include the original inaugural gown of nearly every Arkansas first lady since. The collection is one of the museum's most popular exhibits and is always available for the public to view. Occasionally individual gowns may

be removed from exhibit so that needed conservation work may be undertaken.

Such was the case with the gown of Arkansas First Lady Eula Terral (1925-1927). Last year the Museum received a donation of \$7,500 from the Pinnacle Chapter of Questers International to aid in the restoration and conservation of this stunning inaugural gown. Questers International is a civic organization devoted to the research, study and preservation, restoration and conservation of historic buildings, sites and antiquities.

Made of cream-colored satin and encrusted with over 4,000 seed pearls, this sleeveless gown typifies the Art-Deco silhouette favored in the 1920s. It features armllets encircling the upper arms and a scoop neckline with a Y-shaped inset. The garment ends just below the knee with a scalloped hem. The lower half of the dress is heavily embroidered with a medallion design and encrusted with tiny gold, cut-steel, and bugle beads as well as pearls and paste gems. The medallion motif also ornaments the front, center bodice.

A water lily decorated with paste gems and silver braid adorns the right side, and its three, 2 1/2 inch-long buds travel the length of the gown to the hem. Terral's gown was a Parisian import, retailed by B. Altman and Co. of New York. Harold Mailand (Indianapolis, IN) worked to conserve the gown, repairing small tears in the fabric, reinforcing weakened seams, and re-beading. The process took eight months to complete. The newly-conditioned gown is back on exhibit in *The First Ladies' Gowns of Arkansas*.



## FLAGS RAISED HIGH

Readers may recall that during the fall of 2009, the Old State House Museum and the Missouri State Museum agreed to trade ownership of three Civil War battle flags, returning them to the appropriate states. The Old State House Museum received two Arkansas-related flags and transferred a Missouri-related flag from its collection to that of the Missouri State Museum. One flag is linked to Arkansas regiments that fought in every major Army of Tennessee battle, and a second represents an Arkansas artillery unit known for its role at the Battle of Pea Ridge. The 1868 Pea Ridge flag is the only one of its kind from a battle between Confederate veterans and a state-organized militia during Reconstruction, representing the violent political struggles that followed the Civil War.

In February 2010, Old State House Museum launched the Save the Flags fundraising campaign. To date, over \$7,000 has been raised through private donations. Museum Director Bill Gatewood expressed his gratitude saying, "We are thankful for the generous spirit of Arkansans and the value they place on our state's heritage."

More recently, the Old State House Museum was the recipient of one of the nine Save America's Treasures awards made by the Institute for Museum and Library Services. The amount awarded was \$26,032. These grants "make critical investments in the preservation of our nation's most significant and endangered cultural treasures, which illustrate, interpret, and embody the great events, ideas, and individuals that contribute to America's history and culture." Save America's Treasures grants are awarded to federal, state, local, and tribal government entities, and non-profit organizations



through a competitive matching-grant program, administered by the National Park Service in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS), and the President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities (PCAH). The program has not been funded for 2012 so the Old State House Museum was very fortunate to receive funding this year.

Gatewood added, "The support we received from IMLS will help us to ensure the flags' survival for future generations." The museum's friends group, the Old State House Museum Associates (OSHMA), matched the private contributions by making a donation of \$6,500. In May 2011, the Associates voted to match the grant received from IMLS, donating an additional \$26,032 to the Collections Department.

In March 2011, the flags were sent to Textile Preservation Associates, Inc. (West Virginia) to be cleaned and treated to resist humidity. Each will then be placed in an archival, pressure-mounted frame. The project will take up to a year to complete. "The goal is to conserve these symbols of Arkansas's history by 2012, in time for the museum's second exhibit commemorating the Sesquicentennial of the American Civil War," said Gatewood.