



REACH Celebration Draws Visitors from Schools, Community, and Seven States

The recent three-day celebration of the completion of the Rice-Upshaw House and the Looney Tavern drew large numbers of people from the community, from area schools, and from seven states. The restoration project, called REACH, or Researching Early Arkansas Cultural Heritage, is a project of historic preservation undertaken by Black River Technical College. More than 1,000 people attended one or more of the activities.

The project began almost ten years ago and included extensive historical, archeological, and architectural research and study; it culminated with the restoration of the territorial-era structures near Dalton in northern Randolph County built by Reuben Rice (ca. 1828), and William Looney (ca. 1833). Also restored were two similarly aged outbuildings, a smoke house and a granary at the Rice site. New construction included a pavilion and stacked rail fencing at the Rice-Upshaw site. The project was funded with four grants from Arkansas Natural and Cultural Resources Council.

Highlights of the event included demonstrations of pioneer life with Gerry and Maria Barker and Jake Yost and their oxen, as well as a return visit by the craftsmen and other professionals who were involved in the project. These included Eric Sammons and crew from Mountain Home, James Parker of Jonesboro, Kathy Candy of the Arkansas Archeological Survey, Tommy Jameson, architect, of Little Rock, and Joan Gould, Historic Preservation Consultant of Preservation Matters of Fayetteville.

Also a highlight was an evening concert with David Bowlin and Wil Maring, along with the St. Louis Metro Singers, BRTC performers Joniece Trammel, Rachel Wise, and Dr. Gary Buxton, and Angel Gibson of Walnut Ridge and Marilyn Hogan of Pocahontas. Other performers or participants included Marilyn's Clogging Company, The Kimbrough Singers, and demonstrations of soap making and quilting.

Other BRTC staffers who performed included Kelly Grooms and his son Walter Grooms, who along with Thom Fielder presented "Reuben, Hiram and William," and Cindy Robinett, Rice family descendant, who presented an overview of family histories.

The ribbon-cutting ceremonies included recognition of descendants of the Reuben Rice and William Looney, as well as Downey family descendants and African American descendants of the Looney homestead.

"We greatly appreciate the efforts of all the many community volunteers—individuals and organizations, many of whom are not named here—who helped us in this event," said Dr. Jan Ziegler, Vice President for Development. "We could not have done this without their help."