

SWAAG 2009
October 29th to 31st Wyndham Riverfront,
North Little Rock
Sponsored by the University of Central Arkansas

Join your fellow geographers this fall as we converge upon the Little Rock area for our annual conference. Late October is a beautiful time in Central Arkansas. The downtown and nightlife district of Little Rock, where there is a lot to do, are just a few minutes away by street car. Meetings will be at the conference hotel, the Wyndham Riverfront of North Little Rock. Call 501-371-9000 and mention SWAAG for the conference rates. The hotel offers free airport shuttle, has several restaurants, (steak house, and Benihana Japanese), and is a three minute walk from a River Rail Streetcar stop, (a real trolley with steel rails, overhead electric lines, and if you're nice they'll let you clang the bell!).

The River Market District (nightlife center of "the Rock") is 5-10 minutes on the trolley line or a 15 minute walk, and has many restaurants, night clubs, music, micro breweries, etc. Also on the trolley line is:

- Clinton Presidential Center/Museum
- the Historic Arkansas Museum; a living history museum with several pre-Civil War buildings,
- Old State House Museum: oldest surviving state capitol west of Mississippi (and from SWAAG's perspective, did anything of importance ever happen east of the Mississippi?!?)
- Heifer International: Major international aid/development agency with one of the most "green" buildings in the US, tours available; next to Clinton Library.
- Museum of Discovery; children's museum
- USS Razorback; a WWII era submarine open for tours.
- World of the Pharaohs (one of only four destinations in the world tour) Egyptian Masterpieces from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston

Close to the hotel is the Central High Visitor Center, now within the National Park system, with displays about the famous Central High crisis of 1957 and its pivotal role in the Civil Rights Movement. A short drive away is Pinnacle Mountain State Park, a beautiful peak to climb and enjoy the fall colors. Both of these sites will be part of the field trips on Saturday. There are several other parks and nature centers in the region

Registration also includes the Opening Luncheon on Thursday, October 29th, the Welcome Reception that evening, the Awards Banquet on Friday the 30th, and a trolley pass. Papers and poster sessions are planned all day on the 29th and 30th, with special Friday afternoon sessions on pedagogy, K-12 geography, and AP Human Geography, and a special session for state history teachers. These would be exceptionally helpful to those ABDs and grad students that will soon be teaching, as most will be thrown into a heavy teaching load of courses they

may not be well versed in. We hope to share a wealth of lesson plans, materials and experiences with these new teachers, and show how they can connect to the wider geographic community and cultivate geographic learning well before the university level (our future geography majors!)

Both a physical and an urban field trip are planned for Saturday morning. The physical geography trip will look at five of the six physical regions of Arkansas that converge close to Little Rock. The city has both Mississippi Delta and Ouachita Mountains topography, and within a few miles are the southern flank of the Ozark Plateau (Boston Mountains), the Gulf Coastal Plain, and the Arkansas River Valley. We will probably spend a good bit of time in the Ouachitas, as those metamorphic “odd-balls” are quite unique, and Pinnacle Mountain and the State Arboretum are just west of our conference location.

The urban field trip will emphasize both the redevelopment of the downtown and the old manufacturing district, anchored by the Clinton Library and the River Market, and the unique history of the vibrant African-American community and Little Rock’s roll in the integration of America. It will include a visit of the Mosaic Templers Union (the oldest and once largest African-American fraternal organization in America,) and the Central High museum where the infamous desegregation case of 1957 pitted Federal Troops against State National Guard Troops.

Some final thoughts from the conference coordinator: We are all short on time and money, and many of our travel budgets have been cut. Fortunately, the conference includes several meals. If you fly in you won’t have to rent a car, and if you drive you should be able to park your car/van at the Wyndham and take the trolley to everything (especially important if you have a van load of students!). We hope to resurrect interest in field trips at SWAAG, something that has been waning over the years, probably because we’re all so busy that we fly or drive in, present, and leave quickly.

This would be a great conference location to bring the family. A visit to the Children's Museum, spending a day climbing Pinnacle Mountain, or biking the extensive riverfront bike trails could keep you entertained for days. There is so much to do in the Little Rock area. You might consider coming early or extending your stay through the weekend. The Sunday brunch at the restaurant in the Clinton Library is exquisite!

If you have any questions or comments, please feel free to contact me at jeffa@uca.edu or call at 501-450-5641. I hope to see you all in the Rock this fall!

Jeff Allender, SWAAG 2009 Conference Coordinator