

## ARKANSAS STATE SOCIETY

According to the archives, the social get-togethers of Arkansans living and working in the metropolitan Washington, DC area were officially chartered in 1939 as the Arkansas State Society. Earlier records are not available; however, the list of Presidents indicates that an organization with elected officials dates to the early 1930s.

Throughout the years, those who moved to this area from Arkansas or who officially adopted Arkansas as their home state have identified themselves as "Arkansans" or "Arkansawyers." There does not appear to be a distinct preference in the choice of title, yet there is not a distinct pattern of choice, either in region, age, or gender. Which are you?

The Society's archives indicate that a membership card allowed the bearer entry to the annual picnics and "Fisheramas" throughout the 1950s. The "potluck" picnic of 1954 was held in Battery Kimble Park with the Society providing 25 watermelons. The entire cost of that picnic was \$47.39!!!

The picnics continued in the late 1950s and through the mid 1960s at "Glengyle," the estate of Mr. and Mrs. Henry B. Weaver, Jr., near Aldie, VA. The "Fisherama" began in 1957 with prizes awarded for the biggest, smallest, and largest number of fish caught at the private stock pond. Also, "private tours" of the estate to include the 1793 house and gardens were extended to members during picnic hours. Quite a "fishing hole" to provide the main dish for this very popular annual event.

The Oyster Roast and the Bar-be-cue held at the private Jefferson Island Club (started by President Franklin Roosevelt) began in 1967 and lasted for a few years.

The "Catfish Fry" annual event for the Society evolved in the 1970 and continues today in honor of the southern delicacy from our home state – farm raised catfish. Of course no fish fry would be complete without hush puppies and french-fries. Held at various sites around the DC metropolitan area in the fall, it continues to be a popular annual event with our membership. With over 5,000 Arkansans residing in the DC area, the annual Catfish Fry is a time to renew old friendships and enjoy the foods from "back home". Music, games, and various forms of entertainment add to the occasion.

The election of Bill Clinton to the Presidency brought many more Arkansans to this area. The new infusion of folks caused a widening range of activities for the Society while retaining some of the long-running events. From the special reception for the Arkansas Cherry Blossom Princess in April to the special tour of the White House to view the Christmas decorations in December, the Society tries to present something for everyone and we are always open to new ideas.

Corporate sponsors enable the Society to sponsor more events and provide more benefits to its members.

Whether you are an "Arkansan" or an "Arkansawyer", we are glad to have you as a part of the Arkansas State Society and hope you will continue to support your Society and its events.