

Arkansas Entrepreneurs: The Natural State

A thematic collection of resources for Arkansas teachers



The University of Arkansas Bessie Moore Center for Economic Education

Katie and Abraham Carpenter - Carpenter's Produce

Quick Facts

- started with Katie's one-acre garden in 1969
- focused on multiple crops, not just a single crop
- family business – all of the Carpenter children are part of the business

Carpenter's Produce started as a one-acre garden planted by Katie Carpenter in 1969. Katie sold her **produce** at local Farmer's Markets. Katie was very successful - she was making as much money in one week as her husband Abraham did in one day! When he saw how successful Katie was her husband, Abraham, quit his job at the lumber mill and bought more land. The Carpenters grew their farm with the help of family members. Over 35 family members have helped to make Carpenter's Produce a success – including all eight of their children! They were even named Farm Family of the Year in 1988 by the Arkansas Farm Bureau.

In this part of Arkansas, farmers usually grew only a single kind of crop (often cotton, soybeans, or rice.) Katie and Abraham grew many types of fruits and vegetables, including squash, sweet potatoes, watermelons, purple hull peas, and beans. This meant that when one **crop** stopped growing there was another ready to sell.

Carpenter's Produce now covers 1,000 acres! It is one of the largest **employers** in Grady, Arkansas. The Carpenters also help others outside of Arkansas. They teach others how to conserve resources while farming and manage family businesses like theirs. Abraham, Jr. works with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to promote participation in their programs and mentor young farmers. When Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast, Carpenter's Produce sent trucks full of produce to help feed people in need.

Patricia Upton – Aromatique

Quick Facts

- first decorative fragrance was called The Smell of Christmas
- Aromatique combined Patti's love of art and fashion
- Patti created a scent called The Natural State

The **decorative fragrance** company, Aromatique, began in 1982. It all started when Patti Upton had an idea! She mixed acorns, pine cones, gumballs and hickory nuts, and added some spices and oils for a lovely **aroma**. Patti named her first mix The Smell of Christmas and sold it at a Church bazaar. Visitors loved it and wanted to buy it. Aromatique was born!

Patti worked hard to grow her company. She used her love of fashion and art to create the decorative fragrance **industry**. She began by selling her products in exclusive gift shops. Soon the shops were coming to her. Besides smelling good, Patti's fragrant creations are beautiful! She uses just the right ingredients to create a special aroma and **appearance**. Because of her hard work and creativity, Aromatique was a great success!

Patti has added many new **scents** to her collection. She even created a scent called The Natural State in honor of Arkansas! When people buy that fragrance, money is given to a special group called The Nature Conservancy.

Aromatique items are made in Heber Springs, Arkansas. You can buy them at Dillard's and gift stores in Arkansas but they are sold all over the world!

Ben Pearson – Ben Pearson Archery

Quick Facts

- learned to make his first bow from a Boy Scout manual
- scored very low in his first archery competition
- known as the Father of Modern Archery

Ben Pearson was an **archer**, **bowyer** (*bow maker*), and **fletcher** (*arrow maker*) from Pine Bluff, Arkansas. He is known as the Father of Modern Archery.

In 1926 Ben competed in a statewide contest using a bow built from a Boy Scout manual. He finished next to last. But he didn't give up! He worked to make his equipment better and he won the Arkansas State Championship the very next year!

Ben traveled all over America to show others how to use his bows and arrows. In 1972 he was among the first **inducted** into the Archery Hall of Fame.

Ben started a company called Ben Pearson, Incorporated. It was the first company in the United States to mass-produce archery sets and **equipment**. They used the wood of the bodark (Osage orange) tree to create the bows. This wood was traditionally used by the native tribes in Arkansas to make bows also. At its height in the mid-1960s, Ben Pearson's company had more than 800 employees. They made 3,000 – 5,000 dozen arrows and 4,000 bows each day. They used 15 to 20 rail carloads of turkey feathers to make all the arrows. In 1988, the company presented Governor Bill Clinton with the six millionth bow and the 200 millionth arrow.

Forrest L. Wood – Ranger Boats

Quick Facts

- top fishing guide on Bull Shoals Lake, the White River, Buffalo River, and Crooked Creek
- boat factory destroyed by fire in 1971 but re-opened after only 40 days
- led to rise of multi-billion-dollar industry in sport fishing

Forrest L. Wood was born in Flippin, Arkansas in 1968. He was a cattle farmer and construction worker but was also known as a top fishing guide on Bull Shoals Lake, the White River, Buffalo River, and Crooked Creek. He founded Wood Manufacturing Company in 1968 to make Ranger Boats. He named his boats in honor of the Army Rangers and the Texas Rangers.

Wood started out small – building boats in the back of a filling station. He sold only 6 boats in his first year but the next year sold 600. His boat factory was destroyed by fire in 1971 but re-opened after only 40 days.

Wood is widely known as the developer of the modern bass boat. His innovations led to the rise of multi-billion-dollar industry in sport fishing. He served on the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. Because of his legend in the sport fishing industry, the Walmart FLW Tour for sport fishing is named for him. He is a member of the Legends of the Outdoors Hall of Fame, Arkansas Walk of Fame, and the Arkansas Business Hall of Fame.

Mike Mills – Buffalo Outdoor Center

Quick Facts

- turned his hobby into a business
- has paddled all around the world
- built cabins and a lodge for visitors to the Buffalo River

Mike Mills grew up on a farm in Rogers, Arkansas. He knew how to work hard. He was an excellent student and athlete. His dad always pushed him to work harder and do better. He learned about the outdoors growing up camping with his family. Due to the 1970s environmental boom, his skills became popular when he was in college.

After studying pre-med at Hendrix College, Mike followed his passion and turned his love of the Natural State into a career. He bought a canoe rental business and founded Buffalo Outdoor Center in 1976. Mike loved canoeing and hiking. A vacation to him is to paddle a river somewhere around the globe. His memorabilia from these excursions decorate the BOC cabins.

Each year, in the winter, when he was not renting canoes, Mike and his one employee built a log cabin. A lot of people liked renting the cabin so he built a cabin each winter. Then he built a lodge for big gatherings with porches that overlook the Ponca area. The Buffalo Outdoor Center experience now includes hot air balloon rides, a zip line and soon a spa – all tucked away in the Buffalo River region of the Ozark Mountains in Ponca, Arkansas – a town of 117 people. He now has a gift shop and recreation center and employs 35 people.

Mike has paddled around the globe and hosts many international visitors at his Buffalo River resort. His business sells experiences on the first national river in the United States. In 2013 Buffalo Outdoor Center was Arkansas' Small Business of the Year.

Maurice ‘Mo’ Elliott – Fayettechill

Quick Facts

- turned his hobby into a business
- started in 2009
- supports local groups that protect the environment

Maurice ‘Mo’ Elliott formed Fayettechill in 2009. Maurice grew up in Dallas, Texas but came to Fayetteville to study at the University of Arkansas. He loved the outdoor life of the Arkansas Ozarks so much that he started a company around it. He started Fayettechill while he was still in college. Now he gets to work with his best friends doing something they all love.

Fayettechill is now a million-dollar business that sells products in 16 states (as of 2018). They create Ozark Mountain inspired clothes for nature lovers around the world. Fayettechill wants people to enjoy the relaxation that comes from being in nature. Fayettechill strives to produce environmentally friendly clothing apparel. They say that they make “...*goods for the woods that are good for the woods!*”

Fayettechill gives back to local groups that protect our natural environment. They use money from Fayettechill sales to support the Buffalo River Foundation, Arkansas Climbers Coalition, Ozark Offroad Cyclists, and Trout Unlimited.

Melanie Hurley – Piggy Paint

Quick Facts

- invented by a teacher and mom
- didn't want to use traditional polish on her daughter's nails
- invented a kid-friendly, natural product

One day, Melanie Hurley, a teacher, was painting her daughter's nails. She put the nail polish on a foam plate. She saw that the polish ate through the plate. This caused her to worry about using it on her daughter's nails. Melanie decided to create a kid-friendly water-based product. Piggy Paint was born!

Melanie, who was not a chemist, worked hard to learn and to find people who could help her to create a formula for water-based polish. She had to learn about production, marketing, shipping and management. But she was determined. She hires retired teachers to help fill the jars and to package the products.

Melanie had no idea that Piggy Paint would turn into a business selling kid-friendly and environmentally safe nail paint in over 14 countries! Piggy Paint is produced in the United States and packaged in Lowell, Arkansas. She hires a lot of retired teachers to work part-time in her company. Melanie has become a serial entrepreneur. She is creating polish for adults and has a couple of other businesses in the works.

Say good-bye to harsh-smelling chemicals and hello to Piggy Paint . . . it's as Natural as Mud!

Peter and John Greene - Mountain Valley Spring Water

Quick Facts

- started by two brothers
- water from a natural spring in the Ouachita Mountains
- members of the Senate drink Mountain Valley Spring Water

In 1871 a **pharmacist** named Peter Greene bought a natural spring in the Ouachita Mountains with his brother John. They put the water from the spring in bottles and began selling it. They called it Mountain Valley Spring Water.

People visited Hot Springs, Arkansas to relax in the health spas. They drank Mountain Valley Spring water when they visited. They liked the water so much that they wanted to drink it at home, too! Mountain Valley Spring Water was sold from New York City to California. It was the first bottled water that you could buy from coast to coast. This special water from Arkansas even went to the White House! Today, members of the Senate still drink Mountain Valley Spring Water.

Even the horses who race in Hot Springs drink Mountain Valley Spring Water. The famous horse, Secretariat, drank it. Lots of famous people drank this special spring water also. Do you know the names Frank Sinatra, Elvis, or Joe Louis? They drank Mountain Valley Spring Water, too!

Mountain Valley Spring Water is still bottled at the original spring in the Ouachita Mountains in Arkansas.

Did you know that water can win awards for taste? It's true! And Mountain Valley Spring Water has won prizes in the Berkeley Springs International Water Tasting two times. It even won a silver medal in the 2018 competition!

Charles Murphy – Murphy Oil Corporation

Quick Facts

- loved reading and learning; learned from his father
- ran his own oil business as a teenager
- helped finance the first submersible oil rig, “Mr. Charlie”

Charles H. Murphy Jr. was born in El Dorado, Arkansas on March 6, 1920 when his father was 50 years old. Charles Murphy’s father owned 13 banks in El Dorado. Later, he sold 12 of those banks and used the money to buy land. He also owned a sawmill and a railroad to supply the mill with timber. He found oil on land that he owned. It was called Smackover field!

Charles loved to read and learn! Charles learned all about the oil business (and lots of other things) during summer drives with his father. As a teenager, Charles ran his own oil business. When his father had a stroke in 1941, Murphy had to take over his businesses.

Charles and his **siblings** started an oil company. That company would become Murphy Oil Corporation. The company discovered oil fields in several states. Murphy Oil Corporation helped finance the development of the world’s first **submersible** oil rig which could run in the open ocean. It was a brand-new idea and many companies thought it wouldn’t work. But Charles Murphy took a chance and it was a huge success! It changed the way that oil was drilled. Charles Murphy named the rig “Mr. Charlie” in honor of his father. Later, Murphy Oil Company would form other companies such as Deltic Timber and Murphy USA.

Charles Murphy continued his love of learning and wanted to share it with others. According to the Arkansas Business Hall of Fame, “[h]e served on the Arkansas Board of Higher Education, as a trustee of Hendrix College, a director of the Smithsonian Institution and chairman of the National Petroleum Council. He established the Murphy Institute of Political Economy at Tulane University.” Murphy Oil also funded the El Dorado Promise, a program that provides students who have attended El Dorado schools with money to attend college.

P. Allen Smith – P. Allen Smith Garden Home

Quick Facts

- created three award-winning television programs
- received a Rotary International scholarship to study in England
- founded the Heritage Poultry Conservatory

Paul Allen Smith, known as America's gardener, built a media company and design firm by combining the home and garden with his love of gardening, decorating and cooking. He was born in Little Rock, Arkansas and was the child of a florist mother and a nurseryman father. He grew up on a farm raising and showing livestock and poultry. This developed into his future career. He has led a life of promoting good **stewardship** of the earth. He introduced the farm to table concept and **sustainability** before they were popular. He is a **conservationist** and lifestyle expert who loves to learn and share the knowledge he develops. He hosts three television programs, publishes a blog and design and cook books, and operates a design firm.

Allen went to Hendrix College and received a Rotary International **scholarship** to study garden design and history in England. He was a private tour guide to European gardens. He started teaching gardening workshops which led to his television shows. His mission is to connect with people, cultivate health and mindfulness, and ultimately inspire others to live a more natural life. He originally broadcast shows from his home in the Quapaw Quarter of Little Rock. Then he developed Moss Mountain Farm, 500 acres on the Arkansas River, as his Garden Home Retreat for event and educational uses.

In 2006 Smith received the Garden Club of America's Medal of Honor. In 2009 he founded the Heritage Poultry Conservancy, an organization dedicated to the **preservation** of threatened breeds of domestic poultry. In 2014 Smith's television shows won four Taste Awards. In 2015 he was inducted into the Taste Hall of Fame and in 2017 his Garden Home won a 2017 Taste Award for 'Best Green or Organic Program'.

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