



Footprints

"Every man must leave tracks and they might as well be good ones." - Thomas Gilcrease

February 2026

President's Message

This month's collection focus has made me look back fondly on my docent training in 2020. Was that six years ago?! During that training I learned about the Freedom Train and Mr. Gilcrease's purchases of items that traveled on it. One of my favorite pieces in the museum is one that Mr. Gilcrease purchased after seeing it on the Freedom Train—*Signing of the Constitution* by Howard Chandler Christy. I like all the symbolism in it and the visual representations of the American principles of Liberty, Peace, and Justice.

In fact, when Director of Curatorial Affairs Alex Mann asked us to write about a piece in the Gilcrease collection that we found especially useful for discussion with visitors, I wrote about *Signing of the Constitution*. Not only because it's a meaningful artwork, but because it was one of the pieces I used in a practice tour during docent training that led to a bond with one of my fellow classmates. That's one of the reasons I'm so excited about the intern training coming up at the end of this year and the docent training that will follow in January and February 2027. I'm looking forward to meeting the new Gillies that will find their own "favorites" in the museum collection and bond with fellow classmates that hopefully will become friends for years to come.

If you haven't replied to Alex's request yet, see Alana's "Docent Corner" article. It's not too late, and she even shares an example, written by Nannette Tresner, that might help you get started.

*Becky Hatchett,
Gillies President*





Signing of the Constitution
by Howard Chandler Christy

“We, the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution of the United States of America.”

Preamble to the Constitution

Signing of the Constitution

From the Architect of the Capitol: <https://www.aoc.gov/explore-capitol-campus/art/signing-constitution>

“Howard Chandler Christy's painting of the signing of the United States Constitution was commissioned in 1939 as part of the congressional observance of the Constitution's sesquicentennial. Completed in 1940, the 20-by-30-foot framed oil-on-canvas scene is among the best-known images in the United States Capitol. It is on display in the east grand stairway of the House wing.

The painting depicts Independence Hall in Philadelphia on September 17, 1787. George Washington is the most prominent figure; he stands on the platform next to Richard Spaight of North Carolina, who is signing the document. Eighty-one-year-old Benjamin Franklin is seated in the center, with Alexander Hamilton leaning toward him, while James Madison appears farther to the right. In comparison to many of the historical paintings in the Capitol, the colors are bright and airy, and the brushwork is almost impressionistic in places. Christy used light and shadow to unify the individual portraits.

To achieve the greatest possible accuracy, Christy searched for portraits by the best artists of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, such as Charles Willson Peale and Gilbert Stuart. He located portraits of 37 out of the 39 delegates and the Secretary, William Jackson. Christy took some liberties in composing his scene: John Dickinson, whose signature was added by proxy, is included, and three men who were present but did not sign are not shown. He obscured the faces of the two signers (Thomas FitzSimons and Jacob Broom) of whom no portraits were found. He also researched authentic costumes, including a pair of George Washington's breeches borrowed from the Smithsonian Institution, and he depicted the furniture and artifacts used by the delegates. The books beside Franklin's chair were part of Thomas Jefferson's library; Christy borrowed them from the Rare Book Room of the Library of Congress and included them in the scene to acknowledge Jefferson's importance to the Constitution. He made the sketch for the painting in Independence Hall in September, at the same time of day as the signing, to show accurately the angle of sunlight in the room with its glass chandelier. The artist said that the flags he depicted are the Stars and Stripes, one from a Maryland dragoon regiment, and regimental colors from Massachusetts and New Hampshire.

Representative Sol Bloom, the director general of the United States Constitution Sesquicentennial Commission, first proposed that the painting be commissioned in 1937 as part of the 150th anniversary of the Constitution. Howard Chandler Christy, one of the most popular illustrators and portrait painters of the time, had created a historically accurate scene of the signing for the Commission to reproduce. *His first small painting included a maiden representing "We the People" and numerous other symbolic figures, but these were eliminated in the final version.* In the three years during which Representative Bloom worked with Christy to locate early portraits of the signers and to fill in historical details, he became aware that there was no scene of the signing of the Constitution in the U.S. Capitol, and few other paintings in existence included all the signers.

A Joint Resolution was first introduced in the House in 1937 to pay Christy \$35,000 to paint *Signing of the Constitution*. Heated debate arose, however: some members of Congress were in favor of memorializing one of the greatest events in American history, but others held deep reservations about spending the funds for art during a period of severe economic depression, and the bill did not pass. The Joint Resolution failed again in 1938.

Finally, in 1939, a modified resolution, P.R. 11, 76th Congress, was accepted to set up a commission consisting of the Vice President, the Speaker of the House, and the Architect of the Capitol to employ an artist to paint a 20-by-30-foot scene of the signing at a price of \$30,000. The contract with Christy was signed on July 24, 1939. On October 29, 1940, Congress approved \$1,500 for the purchase of a frame, which was accepted by the Joint Committee on the Library on December 26, 1940.

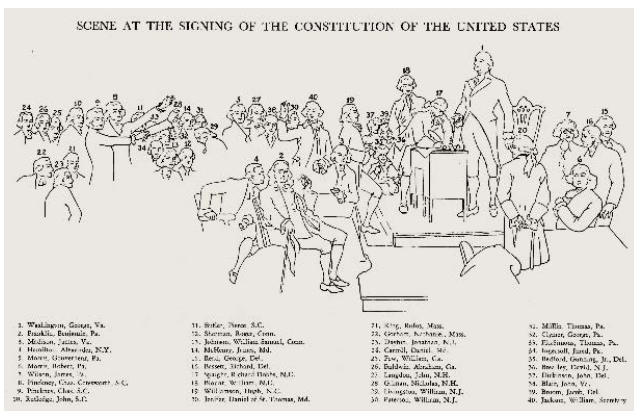
The huge 18-by-26-foot canvas was painted in the sail loft of the Washington Navy Yard [*this has been disputed*], where Christy at times used enlisted men as models for the figures. After five years of research and seven months of painting, the canvas was dedicated in May 1940 in the Rotunda of the Capitol, where it was on view for 16 months. The 20-by-30-foot frame, made in nine sections including the central eagle and crest, was hand carved and given a gold-leaf finish by Azeglio Pancani of New York. After much debate about where it could be hung, another painting was moved and the Christy in its frame was installed in the east grand stairway of the House, where it remains today.

In 1967 the painting was vandalized by being slashed along the bottom; the canvas had to be removed from the stretcher to be transported for repair in 1968. The fills made then were apparent, however, and over time dust, grime and yellowed varnish obscured the original brilliant colors. In 2006 the painting was cleaned and conserved in place by conservators working from a large four-level scaffold from mid-October through December. The cleaning of areas that had looked dull brown revealed lively expressions; detailed costumes; and impressionist colors, such as lavender and pink, applied with scintillating brushwork. The vandalized area was given special attention and is now barely visible. Finally, a new coating of clear protective varnish was applied.

The frame, which had been covered with bronze powder paint in 1968, was taken apart in sections and conserved off site. It was cleaned and repaired, regilded with 22-karat gold leaf similar to the color of the original metal leaf, and toned to complement the painting. The gold leaf will never tarnish and should remain beautiful for generations to come.”

From the Teaching American History website:

“Christy developed his idea of the signing scene inside Independence Hall while working on an earlier painting. This was a five by seven-foot work called “We the People,” portraying the spirit of Liberty, Peace, and Justice presiding over the founders as they affixed signatures to the finished Constitution. Christy completed this painting in 1937 and offered it, as his gift to the American people, to the Commission on the Sesquicentennial of the Signing of the Constitution. He had spent two years working on it inside Independence Hall itself. At the time, Independence Hall served as a collection of Founding material rather than as a replica of the original building. Portraits of the Founders hung from the walls, undoubtedly inspiring Christy’s attention to historical accuracy as he painted each founder. Sources also suggest that he did a lot of his preliminary sketches in Independence Hall during the month of September, in order to replicate the lighting of the room at that time of year...At the time of the Sesquicentennial of the Constitution, Christy’s painting was part of the display at Independence Hall, and his “We the People” draft of what would become a monumental painting of the Signing is clearly inspired by the presence of the Framers looking down on him from on high.”



Images: Sketch with numbered signers, photo of original painting on display in Independence Hall (From <https://teachingamericanhistory.org/resource/christy/>)

Howard Chandler Christy

From the Gillies Manual: “Howard Chandler Christy was born in 1873 in Morgan County, OH, and grew up on a homestead overlooking the Muskingum River. He showed early promise as an artist and received his first commission when he was ten years old, a sign for a butcher shop. Christy was less successful as a student and quit school when he was twelve. Eventually he was able to go to New York to study. In 1895 he sold a sketch to *Life* for six dollars and determined to give up his pursuit of fine art for the easy money of illustration. When the Maine was sunk in Havana harbor, Christy secured commissions from Harper’s, Scribner’s and Leslie’s Weekly as their correspondent in Cuba. Traveling with him on the ship to Cuba was Teddy Roosevelt, and the two became friends. It was during this assignment that Christy discovered a talent for writing, and many of his articles were published along with his illustrations. Well established as an illustrator, he turned to domestic scenes and created the “Christy Girl” that, in his words, “turned me almost overnight into a painter of some of the world’s most beautiful models.” During World War I the “Christy Girl” was featured on his posters for the Navy and Marines. The United States Naval Academy elected him a honorary member of the class of 1921, the only civilian ever to receive the honor. That year, at the peak of his career, he announced he was retiring from magazine illustration to devote himself to the painting of portraits. The most dramatic event of his career came at the end of the 1930s when he was commissioned to paint the Signing of the Constitution for the Capitol. He continued to paint portraits, historical paintings, and landscapes until his death in 1952.”

Among the works in the Gilcrease collection by Christy are 8 oils that include portraits of Chief Bacon Rind of the Osage, Will Rogers, Thomas Gilcrease, and Des Cygne Gilcrease Denney.

The Freedom Train

From the Gilcrease website: “The Freedom Train was the result of President Harry S. Truman’s desire to provide the American people, most of whom would never have the opportunity to visit the National Archives in Washington D.C., with an exhibition of patriotic objects documenting the nation’s heritage of freedom and the many sacrifices made over the years to preserve it. Between September 1947 and July 1949, the 126 items on display were seen in all 48 states. The exhibition traveled in seven cars pulled by the locomotive “Spirit of 1776,” and was guarded by 29 U.S. Marines who had seen combat in World War II. During the Freedom Train’s 15-month tour of the nation it traveled more than 37,000 miles, made stops in 326 cities, where 3,521,841 Americans saw items like the Declaration of Independence.” See an original newsreel about the Freedom Train [here](#).

Former Curator of History Mark Dolph created this [video](#) several years ago to describe the six objects, five documents and one painting, *Signing of the Constitution*, that Thomas Gilcrease purchased after seeing them on the Freedom Train.



Route 66 News

- Sapulpa, our neighbor to the west, has put their little town on the map with Route 66 attractions like the Christmas Chute. Renovations of Dewey Street prevented the town from installing the Christmas Chute in 2025, but the newly renovated Dewey Street was opened to traffic with a ceremony on January 16.



- When you visit Sapulpa, be sure to see:
 - Gasoline Alley Classics at 24 N. Main St., a “nostalgic gift shop located in a historic Model T assembly plant on Route 66.” The décor is amazing; be sure to check out the restrooms!
 - The Sapulpa Historical Museum at 100 E. Lee. Be sure to visit the antique automobiles in the annex and the fire museum across the street.
 - For an amazing collection of antique autos, visit the Heart of Route 66 Auto Museum, west of town on Route 66 at 13 Sahoma Lake Rd. You’ll know you’re there when you see the 66-foot-tall gas pump!
 - The neon signs at the Teepee Drive-In (13166 W. Ozark Trail) and a new one marking the location of the historic Rock Creek Bridge on old Route 66 and the site of a new park near the drive-in.
- In conjunction with their exhibit, *Route 66: From Trails to Truck Stops*, Chief Curatorial Officer David Davis at the Cowboy Museum in Oklahoma City, will share information about the artifacts in the exhibit at a Brown Bag Lunch on March 12 from 12pm-1pm. Bring your lunch or purchase one at the Museum Grill. [Reservation](#) required, \$5 fee.
 - Make your plans for exploring Route 66 with these websites:
 - [TravelOKhttps://www.travelok.com/Route_66](https://www.travelok.com/Route_66) – Click *Route 66 Passport* to order this helpful booklet that can be stamped at 66 locations on Oklahoma’s stretch of Route 66
 - Oklahoma Route 66 Association [event calendar](#)



Gillies General Membership Meeting and Forum

Friday, March 20, 2026

Oklahoma Joe's BBQ

6175 East 61st Street, Tulsa

(Enter the banquet room through the back door.)

- 9:30 a.m. Meet and Greet
- 10:00 a.m. Call to order; Sondra Mullins will serve as Parliamentarian
Approval of the minutes of the General Membership Meeting, September 19
Secretary's Membership Report – Julie Gentz
Treasurer's Report – Nannette Tresner
Vote on 2026-27 Proposed Budget
Appointment of Auditor
Nominating Committee Report (Judy Howard) and Election of Officers
Approval of the 2026-27 Nominating Committee
- 10:20 a.m. Executive Director's Remarks – Brian Lee Whisenhunt
- 10:45 a.m. Forum Speakers – Steve Clem and Becky Hatchett, authors of *Route 66 in Tulsa*
- 12:00 noon Lunch

Buffet Menu

Chopped Brisket

Barbecue Beans

Fried Okra

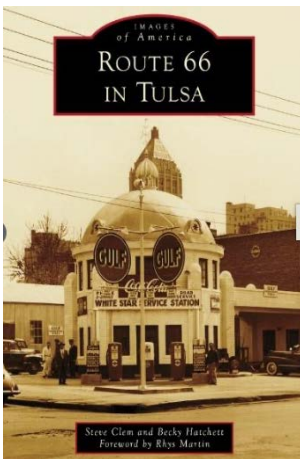
Salad

Bread

Water, Iced Tea, Coffee

Price: \$21.50 (includes tax and gratuity), pay at the register
If a soft drink is wanted, it will have to be purchased by the individual.

RSVP by March 17 to channonclark@prodigy.net



In celebration of the 100th birthday of Route 66, the Gillies will welcome a look at Tulsa's unique contributions to the iconic Mother Road at our Forum on March 20th. Our speakers are Steve Clem, a Route 66 "roadie" (aficionado), and our very own Becky Hatchett, president of the Southwest Tulsa Historical Society, volunteer at the Route 66 Historical Village, and Gillie. Steve and Becky are authors of the new book, Images of America: ROUTE 66 IN TULSA. As we welcome visitors from around the world in 2026, join us for Steve and Becky's visual exploration of Tulsa's, "the Magic City's", history in the founding of the road and the road's history of becoming "America's Main Street". As Rhys Martin discussed in our fall Forum, "Route 66 is a romantic idea for many people---a tie to the past when life was simpler and people took joy in the experience of travel." For many, particularly our overseas visitors, Route 66 is a living history museum with each stop offering conversations with everyday Americans. Our Forum promises to be a nostalgic look back at our city and a welcome to upcoming celebrations. JoAnne Goin, Forum Chair

UNCREASE

Make your plans for Uncrease and
register at my.gilcrease.org/uncrease
FREE

More detailed descriptions of the performances on each date will be available on Facebook as the date approaches. For example, here is the Facebook Events page for the Uncrease performances on [March 14th](#). Below is a short synopsis of the Uncrease programming lineup for all dates. Saturday performances are from 1pm-4pm; Thursday performances are from 7pm-9pm. Gillies will also be needed as volunteers to facilitate the events.

Saturday, March 14: Clay techniques demonstration, spinning methods/projects, original poetry/music concert, digital puppetry, performance art featuring paintings by May Yang, Chinese folk dance

Thursday, March 26: Participatory choreography demonstration, looped video screenings accompanied by audio recordings, demonstration of and participation in a rug tufting project

Saturday, April 11: Music performance featuring electric violin and synthesizers, concert celebrating American West and indigenous music traditions, a walking/reflecting experience in a portable labyrinth, audio-visual presentation sharing the natural features and history of Gilcrease, solo violinist performing classics, pop tunes, and original pieces

Thursday, April 23: Printmaking workshop, designing a nature journal with project ideas for connecting with nature, collaborative project to create a large comic book, improvisational dance.

Saturday, May 9: Performance by the Tulsa Symphony Orchestra Wind Quintet, workshop to improve your phone camera skills combined with a photo-walk on the grounds, “Roombog” (performance of woodwinds, percussion, and electronics using the acoustics of a specific room), interactive performance of Tulsa stories and legends using augmented reality, performance by Bandelier celebrating 15 years with Americana, folk, and Native traditions, tapping performance.

Thursday, May 28: Belly dance, poetry reading with instrumental accompaniment, performance by Girl Scouts of 20 songs chosen to appeal to a wide age group.

From the Archives

By Kathy Horne

It is such a pleasure to be a Gillie volunteer in HCAR. I've had a nice variety of assignments over the last few years, beginning with an inventory of the books in the research library collection. Recently, I've been working on an inventory of a different collection of materials – early museum newsletters.

From May 1964 to September 1978, the museum kept members updated on exhibits and activities through a newsletter – the *Gilcrease Gazette*. It was printed on the Cherokee Advocate Press, four to six times a year. Popular topics included gallery and exhibit changes, staff news, gift shop items, and names of new members.

The Gillies were featured for the first time in the June 1970 newsletter. (see below)

The Gillies

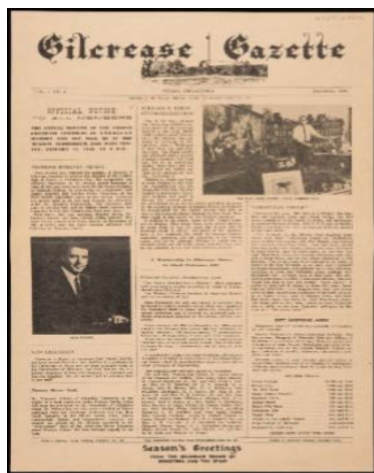
Ten intern members of the Gillies (Gilcrease Service Organization) graduated with the degree of “FFGM” – Full Fledged Gillie Member – May 15 at a brunch at the home of Mrs. Fenelon Boesche.* This degree is obtained by serving the required number of hours in volunteer work at Gilcrease for one season.

Mrs. J. Littleton Daniel**, president of the group, presided and presented diplomas and mortarboards to the graduates. The Gillies, a comparatively new organization, has already achieved an enviable service record. Since last September, the forty members have donated a total of 2,554 hours in various forms of service. They supplement the Junior League as docents in the educational program and are frequently called upon to serve at teas, openings, and other meetings. In addition, they assist gift shop personnel during busy hours, and work in the library and membership office.

A lot has changed for the Gillies in the last 55 years, but there are a few things that remain the same from 1970 – primarily our dedication to serving the museum!

And, just so you know, by the mid-1970s, female Gillies were written about using their own names, not their husband's. ☺

*Martie Boesche **Janice Daniel



“Gilcrease Gazette”
newsletter with article
about an exhibit of
William R. Leigh’s studio
recreation and paintings on
permanent display at
Gilcrease Museum,

December 1964

Gillies Travel to Shawnee
By Cindy Strasheim, Travel Chair

Native Wonders of Oklahoma
Wednesday, February 11, 2026

Please register by 2/5/26 for assurance of docents for tours

8:00 Leave Tulsa in private cars
10:00 Mabee-Gerrer Museum guided tour (NARM or
\$2.50) 90 minutes **Potawatomi Tribe**
Special Exhibit: *Madonna and Child; Medieval to Modern*



11:30 St. Gregory's Abbey 30 min
12:30 Firelake Frybread Tacos (reservation for 20)
1:30 Citizen Potawatomi Nation Cultural Heritage Center guided tour.



2:30 Citizen Potawatomi Nation Eagle Aviary
3:45 Absentee Shawnee Tribe Educational event
4:30 Leave for Tulsa *As always in private cars, you may leave as you need to.*
6:30 Arrive Tulsa

Reply to me if you wish to carpool or have people ride with you.
Be sure to bring some \$5 bills in case you wish to leave a donation.

402-469-5357 cindy.strasheim@gmail.com

Places to Go

Interesting exhibits are coming up in area museums this spring and summer, but many do not open until March. Sitting at my computer on this snowy day, I thought our “Places to Go” this month might go virtual. So—here are a dozen amazing museum collections that you can visit for free from your recliner.

[The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York City](#)

[The Art Institute of Chicago](#)

[National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC](#)

[The Getty Museum, Los Angeles](#)

[The Museum of Fine Arts, Boston](#)

[The Detroit Institute of Arts](#)

[Philadelphia Art Museum](#)

[The Louvre, Paris](#)

[The British Museum, London](#)

[State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, Russia](#)

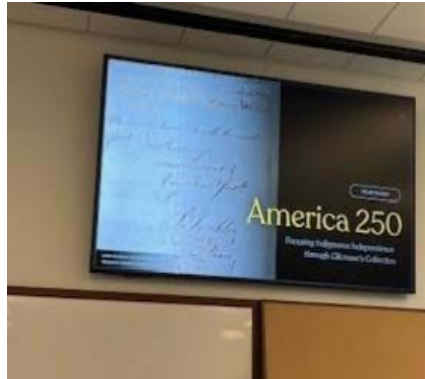
[Museum del Prado, Madrid](#)

[National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, DC](#)



Gillies/Docent Meeting, January 9, 2026

What a crowd turned out to hear Dr. Billy Smith and Dr. Aaron Schoenfeldt on January 9! Billy spoke about plans for the *America 250* exhibition in HCAR, and Aaron reviewed his research into the aftermath of the Tulsa Race Massacre.





Gillies Cook!

Chocolate Covered Cherry Cookies

Contributed by Becky Hatchett

This is a great holiday cookie—especially for St. Valentine’s Day. What makes it easy is that the frosting gets baked right on the cookie.

Ingredients

1-1/2 cups flour
½ cup cocoa powder, unsweetened
¼ t. salt
¼ t. baking powder
¼ t. soda
½ cup butter softened
1 cup sugar
1 egg
1-1/2 t. vanilla
1 10-oz. jar maraschino cherries
1 6-oz. pkg. semi-sweet chocolate pieces (or ½ of a 12-oz. bag)
½ cup Eagle Brand milk



Directions

In large bowl stir together flour, cocoa powder, salt, baking powder, and soda. In mixer bowl beat together butter and sugar on low speed of electric mixer till fluffy. Add egg and vanilla; beat well. Gradually add dry ingredients to creamed mixture; beat until well blended. Shape dough in 1-inch balls; place on ungreased cookie sheet. Press down center of dough with thumb. Drain cherries, reserving juice. Place a cherry in the center of each cookie. In small saucepan combine chocolate pieces and sweetened condensed milk; heat until chocolate is melted. Stir in 4 t. of the reserved cherry juice. Spoon about 1 t. frosting over each cherry, spreading to cover cherry. (Frosting may be thinned with additional cherry juice, if necessary.) Bake at 350 about 10 minutes.

Docents' Corner

February 2026

By Alana Trisler, Docent Chair

Dear Gillies and Docents,

Friday, January 6 is our next Gillies/Docents meeting. Chelsea Herr will join us to share an overview of the on-going curatorial work in the new museum. This presentation will be the first meeting (more to follow) that will form the knowledge base we Gillies and Docents will need to serve in the new space. Once the museum is close to its opening timeline, the museum and the Gillies will provide a more formal short training program; HOWEVER, these on-going curator-led Friday programs are important opportunities for learning the content of the new space. Please try to attend.

Place: The PACCAR classroom in HCAR

TIME: 9:30 Refreshments - 10:00 Meeting begins

The following is a response to Alex Mann's request for you to share a museum piece that most speaks to you or that you like to share with patrons. If you haven't replied to our request, please email it to me – atrisler09@gmail.com – it is not too late:

What is a piece that is special to you? **The Cobbler by Richard LaBarre Goodwin.**

Why is it special to me? It depicts a skilled craftsman. My undergraduate teaching degree is a vocational degree and equipping students with marketable skills was a goal. I also respect skilled workers as my husband and both sons are employed in some aspect of manufacturing. This painting elevates a person we often take for granted.

The man in the painting also has a very calm countenance. He doubtless experienced turmoil in his life, but he looks very content in his workshop. (The gray in his hair and beard are clues to his age.) There are studies that show the beneficial effect of hobbies and crafts on mental health.

The talking points on this painting are numerous:

- He is literate. Notice the Bible and newspaper.
- There are references to the past (slavery), present (free employed former slave?), and future (Bible open to the book of Revelation).
- The artist was a white Union soldier and wounded in the Battle of Bull Run.
- Discuss Black Wall Street in Tulsa and the businesses and skilled workers.
- Discuss the Black Towns that were established in early day Oklahoma and the push to establish a Black State.
- Oklahoma has a nationally respected system of Career Tech schools that continues to prepare students for skilled vocations.
- The newspaper in the painting is The National View published by the Populist Movement. The Populist Party represented "the common folk" rather than corporations, big city politicians, etc.
- There is a copy of a photograph of Lincoln taken by Alexander Gardner days before Lincoln delivered his Gettysburg Address

Secretary's Report

There were no changes to the roster in January. The total membership number remains at 131 Gillies. [Glenda Kilmer requested to be moved to Associate status.]

A get well card was sent to Janelle Swearingen. Sadly, Janelle passed away recently. A sympathy card was sent to her husband, Bruce Swearingen.

Please send changes in contact information (address, phone and email) as well as news about a Gillie who is ill to Gillies Secretary Julie Gentz at julie.gentz55@gmail.com.

Mark Your Calendar

Friday, February 6	Executive Committee Meeting	8:30	Jackson/HCAR
	Gillies/Docent Meeting	10:00	PACCAR/HCAR
	Refreshments	9:30	
Thursday, February 12	Board of Directors Meeting	10:00	Zoom
Friday, March 20	Membership Meeting and Forum	10:00	Oklahoma Joe's
	Refreshments	9:30	

Gillies Service Hours for January

Service Area	January Hours
Anthropology	0
Archives	43
Board of Directors	28
Conservation	21
Continuing Education	31
Digitization	12
Docent Training/Preparation	80
Executive Committee	6
Footprints Newsletter	17
General Mbrshp. Mtg./Planning	3
Gilcrease Forum	1
Intern Education	3
Public Programs	6
Speaking of Gilcrease Presentations	32
Travel	8
TOTAL	291