

**A TRIBUTE TO**

**CHICOT COUNTY, ARKANSAS**

**Volume I**

**2000**

**Compiled and Edited by  
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P.O. Box 64  
Dermott, AR 71638**

**This book is dedicated to my family. I appreciate their patience, love and understanding as I worked long hours to complete this project. I could not have done it without them.**

**Sheila Farrell Brannon  
2000**

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I have endeavored to retype all these articles as accurately as humanly possible. If you find some words misspelled; punctuation wrong; or other errors, I may have missed these corrections. However, if the article had these in it and they did not affect the content, I left them in to maintain the integrity of the article. I am aware that some of the dates and possibly some of the facts presented here are not entirely accurate, but since this is a compilation of other authors, I did not attempt to re-write their work. This book is meant to be entertaining and also helpful from a genealogical standpoint. It is not to be taken as undisputed fact; but might be an aid in your research. The reader is encouraged to check the dates and facts to establish accuracy.

In 1973 Mr. Leroy Tyson and his family owned and published all three county newspapers: *The Dermott News*, *The Chicot Spectator*, and *The Eudora Enterprise*. The papers combined to produce a large Sesquicentennial Edition commemorating the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the formation of Chicot County.

All the articles in this compilation are reprinted from that special edition unless otherwise noted.

I would like to thank the following people for their help and cooperation: Mack Ball, Jr.; John Mitchell Baxter; Judge George K. Cracraft; Gladys Ellis; Jeri Helms Fultz; Edward G. Gerdes; Mayor Frank Henry, Jr.; Anne Saunders Holloway; Bryan Howerton; Abbott Kinney; Shirley Foster-McKinzey; Sue Lattin; Alvin Meyer; Katie Cracraft Miller; Steve Russell, publisher and editor of the *Chicot Spectator and Eudora Enterprise*; Wendy Savins; Patricia Ann Schiro; William N. Sessions; Joy Moon Shealy; Carol Simoneaux; Jeannie Cracraft Turley; and Jim White, publisher of the *Times-News*.

-Sheila Farrell Brannon, 2000



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## **COUNTY IS CREATED IN 1823, NAMED AFTER POINT CHICOT**

### **Reprinted from the Sesquicentennial Edition**

By act of Congress, Arkansas became a Territory on March 2, 1819, with the seat of government at Arkansas Post. The population of the Territory was approximately 14,000. General James Miller of New Hampshire, a hero of the War of 1812 was the first Governor, appointed by President James Monroe.

Chicot County was created by an Act of the Territorial legislature on October 25, 1823, from Arkansas County, and was named for Point Chicot on the Mississippi River. In the act creating the county, Joseph Boone, Thomas James, Abner Johnson and John Weir were named as commissioners to locate a permanent county seat. They selected the old town of Columbia which was later washed away by the Mississippi River, and in 1855 the seat of government was located at a place called Masona, at the head of Bayou Macon. It remained there only about two years, when it was removed to Lake Village, where a brick courthouse and jail were erected the same year. Among the early lawyers to practice in this courthouse were: Isaac N. Barnett, Edward A. Meany, William H. Sutton, Thomas N. Byers and Richard M. Gaines.

The earliest permanent settlers found homes near the Mississippi and for several years the settlements did not extend far inland. Among the pioneers were John R. and Charles W. Campbell, Isaac Adair, Oscar Bowles, William T. Ferguson, Benjamin P. Gaines, Madison Peak, Joel Offutt, Silas Craig and Sandford C. Faulkner. The first county officers were: John Clark, clerk; William B. Patton, sheriff; Richard Latting, coroner. William P. Duncan, the first county judge, was elected in 1829, and A. W. Webb, the first treasurer was elected in 1826.

The act of Congress that made Arkansas a State was approved June 15, 1836 over the signature of Andrew Jackson, President of the United States. Approval of statehood was based on the Census of the Territory of Arkansas for the year 1835. Under the provisions of a Territorial law, a census was taken every year by the sheriffs of the various counties. In 1835 there were 51,809 people in the Territory of Arkansas. The population of Chicot County was about 2,500, divided as follows:

682 white males, 481 white females, 7 free colored persons,  
and 1357 slaves. By 1840 the Chicot County population  
had become 3806, in the Townships of Oden, Old River,  
Franklin, Bayou Macon, Debastrop, Bartholomew and  
Louisiana.

In the Territorial General Assembly, the Upper House was called the Council, and the Lower House was, as at present, the House of Representatives. Chicot County was first represented in the Council in 1827 by John Weir of the 5th Territorial General Assembly in 1827. During the Territorial period there were 9 sessions of the General Assembly. In the 7th Session Chicot County was represented in the Council by W. B. Patton and in the House of Representatives of 1831 by John Gibson. In the 8th Session, the delegates were Thomas Anderson and T. J. Thurmond, respectively, and the records of the final session have been lost.

With statehood achieved, the 1st State General Assembly met in 1836 with John Clark in the Senate and D. L. F. Royston and A. H. Davies in the House of

Representatives.

An old Justice's record book, dated 1819 to 1825, faded and half illegible because of water stains, contains this notation of the fly-leaf: "Wm. Clark 50 miles above Marreta, Virginia to bring me choice fruit of apple trees next winter in Dec. 1823.

This notation was made by Justice Latting in 1821: "Mr. William Johnson was married to Widow Sarah Newman on the 27th of April 1821, witnesses present John Fulton, I. E. Roberson.

## **REAL ESTATE BANK CLOSES IN 1842**

### **Reprinted from the Sesquicentennial Edition**

The first bank in Arkansas opened its doors at Little Rock on December 12, 1838. It was called the Real Estate Bank. The bank opened a Southeast Arkansas Branch at the old river town of Columbia. Later it developed that the bank was a gigantic promotion, and that much of its funds were being wasted by its officials. The Real Estate Bank went under on April 4, 1842, costing citizens of Chicot County more than a million dollars.

One of the first economic blows to hit pioneer Chicot County was the closing of the Real Estate Bank at Columbia, in which early residents of this section had placed more than a million dollars. The families who had early made the most of the fertility of the Delta soil, and had begun to reap rich harvests from their investments and labor were severely penalized as a result of their confidence in Arkansas' first bank. Three of the county's better known men, A. H. Davis, Sandford C. Faulkner and Silas Craig were the trustees at Columbia. They found that little could be done to reclaim the assets of the bank.

The General Assembly of Arkansas took a hand in the closed bank's affairs on January 31, 1843, when it passed an act taking liquidation out of the trustees' power and provided a different plan. The plan of the Assembly did not meet the approval of the Real Estate Bank's stockholders, so on March 8, 1843, they met in Little Rock and passed the following resolution:

“After having read and duly considered the act of the legislature, passed at the last session, entitled ‘an act to settle and liquidate the affairs of the Real Estate Bank of the State of Arkansas’, the stockholders of the bank are agreed that they cannot in justice to themselves accept the provisions of said act, and, accordingly, they do refuse in any manner to recognize the act as the law of the land.” The stockholders of the central bank (at Little Rock) and of other branch banks quickly followed suit, and thus did the plan of liquidation, as arranged for by the Central Board of the bank, continue to stand.

The effect of the Real Estate Bank's failure is reflected in the quotation of the New Orleans Money Market on May 3, 1843: The New Orleans Money Market quoted Arkansas money (State and Real Estate Bank notes) as exchanging from 33 to 36 cents on the dollar in specie (U.S. gold and silver). The Arkansas rating was one of the lowest quoted by the market.

So unfavorable was the reaction of the people of Arkansas to the Real Estate Bank experience that in January 1845, the Governor sponsored an Amendment to the state constitution that had been approved by the General Assembly, providing that “no bank or banking institution shall be hereafter be incorporated or established in this State.”

## MCCONNELL ORGANIZES COUNTY CSA TROOPS

**Reprinted from the Sesquicentennial Edition  
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To Captain Jacob McConnell belongs much of the credit for Chicot County's efficient troops in the Confederate Army. It was he who, having attended a military school in Lexington, Kentucky, first took the men who knew a rifle for hunting only, trained them in the art of warfare, and made soldiers of them. At the beginning of the War Between the States he refused to be an officer, declaring that he could be more useful in training men. Nevertheless, the brave Confederate gave his life at Chickamauga.

Three companies were recruited and fitted out here, and all served with credit during the war. These were the "Chicot Rangers," "Chicot Guards" and "Chicot Rebels", all of which organizations lost their distinctive names after merging into commands regularly designated by the Confederate military command.

The Rangers were recruited early in 1861 by Capt. (afterward-General) Daniel H. Reynolds, who would later be gravely wounded by the loss of a leg in battle. They were ordered to Little Rock, and thence to Fort Smith, and were there, on June 14, mustered into Company A, First Arkansas Cavalry. The regiment served in Missouri and Arkansas until April 1862, when, with a large part of the Trans-Mississippi Army, it was transferred to Memphis, and thence to Corinth, and with the Army of Tennessee fell back to Tupelo, Miss. Then, it went into Kentucky, under command of General E. Kirby Smith. On the retreat from Kentucky it fell in with the Army of Tennessee and was part of McCown's Division until May 10, 1863, when the division was taken to Mississippi by Gen. Joseph E. Johnston.

As first organized, the commissioned officers of the Rangers were: Captain D. H. Reynolds; First Lieutenant Richard I. Shattuck; Second Lieutenant Abner Gaines; Third Lieutenant Jacob McConnell. When, in 1862, Capt. Reynolds was promoted, Major James McConnell became Captain in his stead, Lieutenant Shattuck then being a prisoner of war, and Lieutenant Gaines having resigned. Capt. McConnell was killed at Chickamauga; G. M. Henry, who had become lieutenant, was captain until he was killed at Dug Gap in 1864, after which Lieutenant Shattuck, having been exchanged was captain until the end of the war. Other officers worthy of mention were S. S. Fitzgerald, who was First Lieutenant at the close of the war; Lieutenant Turner, who was killed at Chickamauga, and Lieutenant A. J. Maxey, who was mustered out with the company, or the remnant that had survived.

The Chicot Guards were organized temporarily at Lake Village in February 1862, with James F. Robinson as Captain and Abner Gaines as Lieutenant, and rendezvoused at Jacksonport, on the White River in March, where they were mustered into Confederate service. Shortly after, they were ordered to Memphis, Tenn., where they encamped in the rear of that city for about two weeks; then with other companies from Arkansas, were formed into the Twenty Third Arkansas Regiment, with Charles F. Adams of Helena, as Colonel. The regiment was soon ordered to Corinth, Miss., and took part in the defense of that place, and on evacuation and retreat, it was halted at Tupelo, Miss., where it formed a part of Gen. J. C. Moore's Brigade, Maury's Division of General Price's Army.

The regiment was engaged in the movement on Iuka, Miss., in the spring of 1863, and was part of the attacking column at Corinth, in the same campaign. After that attack and discomfiture, the Twenty-Third was detailed for service at Port Hudson, to garrison that point, and took part in its defense. Upon the fall of Port Hudson, Miss., the company surrendered and was paroled, and that ended its service.

The Chicot Rebels were commanded by Captain James D. Imboden, and formed a part of the First Arkansas Battalion.

## ROSTERS FOR CHICOT COUNTY UNITS IN THE CIVIL WAR

These rosters can be found on an Internet website, *Edward G. Gerdes Civil War Home Page*. The URL for that site is: <http://www.couchgenweb.com/civilwar>. Edward Gerdes, (egerdes@bscn.com), Bryan Howerton (howerton@cswnet.com) and Jeri Helms Fultz (jfultz19@idt.net) have worked many long hours researching our Civil War units and then posting them to this wonderful webpage. They have given their permission for me to post the soldiers' names. There is more information about the individual soldiers on the website.

[Some men belonged to more than one unit.]

### **Chicot Guards Company G, 23<sup>rd</sup> Arkansas Infantry, CSA**

Alexander, George, Pvt.  
Alexander, G. W., Pvt.  
Avery, James H., Pvt.  
Baer, Francis, Sgt.  
Barnes, John, Pvt.  
Bergman, Louis, Sgt.  
Bledsoe, John C., 1 Sgt.  
Boles, William, 1 Sgt.  
Bowles, Joseph N. Pvt.  
Brandenburg (Brandonburg), David, Pvt.  
Brawner, George W., Musician  
Bremer, William, Pvt.  
Britton, John A., 2<sup>nd</sup> JrLt  
Brooks, John V., Pvt.  
Byrne(Byrnes), Thomas G., Pvt.  
Cahill, William, Pvt.  
Campbell, Clement S., Cpl.  
Carl, Charles, Pvt.  
Clark (Clarke), Green, Pvt.  
Cooper, Lewis (Louis) F., Pvt.  
Cracraft, George K. Cpt.  
Cunningham, Michael, Pvt.  
Davis (Davies), Harpin, Cpl.  
Dempsey, Elijah, Pvt.  
Dickerson (Dickinson), W. J., Pvt.  
Dodson, William E., Pvt.  
Emmons, Aaron, Pvt.  
Estell (Estill), Hugh T., Sgt.  
Estill, Napoleon B., 1 Sgt  
Estill, William F., Pvt.

Franklin, Benjamin, Sgt.  
Gaines, Abner, Cpl.  
Grifford, Thomas O., Pvt.  
Gurter, B. K., Pvt.  
Harmon, William, Pvt.  
Hay, Wilson, Sgt.  
Hempingstall, James, Pvt.  
Holmes, E. S., Pvt.  
Hunnicut, John, Sgt.  
Hutchinson, Henry B., Pvt.  
Jenkins, Hunter B. H., Pvt.  
Jeter, Benjamin F., Pvt.  
Jeter, Eleazer, 1 Lt.  
Jeter, John, Pvt.  
Kelly, Dennis, Pvt.  
Kent, Henry, Pvt.  
Lack, Berry, Pvt.  
Lavear, Charles S., Pvt.  
Lavell, Barnartd (Bernard), Pvt.  
Lewellen, Eugene, Pvt.  
Long, Rufus S., Pvt.  
Lynch, Patrick, Pvt.  
Malero (Molero), William, Pvt.  
Martin, Charles C., Pvt.  
Mathis, Oscar L., Cpl.  
Mathis, Walton H., Pvt.  
McSweeney, Patrick, 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt.  
Miles, Daniel, Pvt.  
Mills, William C., Pvt.  
Mitchell, Joseph W., Pvt.  
Mobley, William, Pvt.  
Molero (Malero), William, Pvt.  
Morris (Morros), Joseph A., Pvt.  
Moss, Alonzo A., Pvt.  
Oakley, Henry C., Pvt.  
Oakley, James W. H., Pvt.  
Parker, William, Pvt.  
Piercy, Charles, Pvt.  
Purvis, George P., Pvt.  
Quarles, Thomas G., Pvt.  
Read, Marion, Pvt.  
Ream, Abraham K., Pvt.  
Staton, Francis M., Pvt.  
Still, Frank, Pvt.  
Summers (Summer), Daniel, Cpl.  
Tanksley, G. W., Sgt.

Tanksley, J. M., Pvt.  
Tatum, Charles S., Cpl.  
Terry, Britton, Pvt.  
Thornton, William, Pvt.  
Vale, J. S., Pvt.  
Vessels (Vessals), Horace, Pvt.  
Wager, Peter B., Pvt.  
Waits, Dempsey, Pvt.  
Walker, Clement L., Pvt.  
Warner, William, Pvt.  
Williams, John C., Cpl.  
Wren, Isaac B., Cpl.

**Chicot Rangers**  
**Company A, 1<sup>st</sup> Arkansas Mounted Rifles**

Acker, Andrew W., Pvt.  
Anderson, John, Pvt.  
Bateman, Thomas J., 2<sup>nd</sup> Cpl.  
Beaks, Abraham, Pvt.  
Birch, William Austin, Pvt.  
Bowles, David Oscar, Pvt.  
Bozeman, Elijah Crider, Pvt.  
Brady, Nat K., Pvt.  
Brammer, John, Pvt.  
Bullock, Theodore F., Pvt.  
Bush, Abner G., Pvt.  
Bush, Philip E., Pvt.  
Cable, Francis "Frank", Pvt.  
Callanan, Patrick, Pvt.  
Carpenter, James Monroe, Pvt.  
Cason, Benjamin F., 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt.  
Coates, James C., Pvt.  
Cobb, W. T. G., Pvt.  
Cotton, Charles, D., Pvt.  
Coulter, O. H., Pvt.  
Daugherty, John A., Pvt.  
Daugherty, William, Pvt.  
Dean, Charles H., Pvt.  
Duggan, Jasper C., Pvt.  
Estill, William Frank, 4<sup>th</sup> Sgt.  
Farley, James, Pvt.  
Fearson, George Washington, Pvt.  
Ferguson, Charles C., 3<sup>rd</sup> Sgt.  
Findley, John D., Pvt.



Fitzgerald, Samuel Smiley, Pvt.  
Foote, Thomas H., Pvt.  
Ford, John Quincy, Pvt.  
Freeland, James A., Pvt.  
Freeman, Allen T., Pvt.  
Gaines, Abner, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt.  
Grace, Wiley A., Pvt.  
Graham, Moses, Pvt.  
Griffith, Alonzo, Pvt.  
Griffith, Thomas W., Pvt.  
Hamilton, James, Musician  
Harmon, Leander, 1<sup>st</sup> Cpl.  
Harper, W. W., Pvt.  
Harris, William D., Pvt.  
Henry, George M., Pvt.  
Hines, Daniel, Pvt.  
Hurley, John H., Pvt.  
Huskey, James C., Pvt.  
Keesee, M. C., Pvt.  
Kennedy, Patrick, Pvt.  
Kilburn, William W., Pvt.  
Knighton, Josiah "Joe", Pvt.  
Lamb, Thomas N., Pvt.  
Lawson, John W., Pvt.  
Leard, Samuel W., Pvt.  
Lemmon, Francis Marion "Frank", Pvt.  
Lemmon, George Washington, Pvt.  
Lephiew, Robert Monroe "Monroe", Pvt.  
Lyerly, James B., Farrier  
Lynch, Nelson M., Pvt.  
Lynch, Thomas J., Pvt.  
McBride, Patrick "Pat", Pvt.  
McConnell, Jacob, 3<sup>rd</sup> Lt.  
McKenzie, James A., Pvt.  
McLean, John, Pvt.  
Mabry, Andrew W., Pvt.  
Marlin, William C., Pvt.  
Mathews, W. M., Pvt.  
Mathias, Robert H., Pvt.  
Mathis, Belfield W., Pvt.  
Mathis, Dudley M., Pvt.  
Mathis, Oscar Lee, Pvt.  
Maxey, Abner G., Pvt.  
Mayo, Crawford A., Pvt.  
Merritt, Alexander "Alex", Pvt.  
Mock, John M., Pvt.

Molero, Edward G., Pvt.  
Neel, Martin V., Pvt.  
Neel, William, Pvt.  
Newton, Isaac, Pvt.  
Noonan, Thomas, Pvt.  
Peck [Peek], Francis H. "Frank", Pvt.  
Phillips, William D., Pvt.  
Raney, Marcus G., Pvt.  
Reynolds, Daniel Harris, Captain  
Rives, Robert B., Pvt.  
Robb, William H., Pvt.  
Roberson, Daniel, Pvt.  
Robertson, Francis, Pvt.  
Rogers, Pitt M., Pvt.  
Rose, J. F., 4<sup>th</sup> Cpl.  
Sanders, Erasmus I., Pvt.  
Sappington, John M., Pvt.  
Savage, Joseph, Pvt.  
Shaddock, James, Pvt.  
Shaddock, Richard J., 1<sup>st</sup> Lt.  
Simmons, John S., Pvt.  
Simmons, William M., Pvt.  
Simpson, Columbus, Pvt.  
Smith, Benjamin Francis "Frank", Pvt.  
Smith, Edward T. "Ed", Pvt.  
Smith, Peter J., Pvt.  
Stamps, Hiram C., Musician  
Stedman, Henry W., Pvt.  
Stephenson, David S., Pvt.  
Stuart, Samuel S., Pvt.  
Talbot, Thomas A., Pvt.  
Thurmond, Richard, Pvt.  
Trainer, Wiley D., Pvt.  
Truly, John H., Pvt.  
Turner, John W., 3<sup>rd</sup> Cpl.  
Turner, William C., Pvt.  
Vessels, John A., Pvt.  
Walker, James M., Pvt.  
Ward, Russell, Pvt.  
Wells, Eli T., 2<sup>nd</sup> Sgt.  
White, David H., Pvt.  
Whitten, James F., Pvt.  
Wilson, Charles B., Pvt.  
Wilson, Thomas J., Pvt.  
Wiseman, C. F., Pvt.  
Woods, Thomas, Pvt.

Worthington, Martin V., Pvt.  
Young, George E., Pvt.  
Yuill, James A., Pvt.

**Chicot Rebels**  
**Company B, 8<sup>th</sup> Arkansas Infantry Battalion**

Acree, W. C., Pvt.  
Allen, Edward G., Pvt.  
Alsup, Batholomew, Cpl. [spelling in probably incorrect]  
Arnold, William Wilkinson, Pvt.  
Barker, Richard A., Sgt.  
Beasley, Robert R., Pvt.  
Braswell, Wiley B., Pvt.  
Bunch, William H., Cpl.  
Butcher, B., Pvt.  
Carnahan, John T., 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt.  
Cutser, Isaac V., Pvt.  
Dickinson, Joseph, Pvt.  
Dotson, William, Pvt.  
Ellis, Felix H., Pvt.  
Ellis, Jesse F., Pvt.  
Emmons, Aaron, Pvt.  
Fowler, B. H., Pvt.  
Groves, Thomas R., Pvt.  
Hamblett, William, Pvt.  
Hill, Charles, Pvt.  
Hill, John, Pvt.  
Hughes, James H., Pvt.  
Hulsey, Robert, Pvt.  
Imboden, James D., Captain  
Jones, Batt L., Pvt.  
Logue, John, Pvt.  
Lyerly, James B., Sgt.  
McDermott, Benjamin S., Sgt.  
Mabry, Allen, Pvt.  
Mooney, G. W., Pvt.  
Norman, William, Pvt.  
Oliver, William D., Cpl.  
Perret, Pierre C., Jr., 3<sup>rd</sup> Lt.  
Phillips, Warren M. [or H], Pvt.  
Richardson, Jonathan, Pvt.  
Roane, Addison E., Pvt.  
Robinson, Derrick J., Pvt.  
Robinson, George M., Pvt.

Scarborough, Daniel B., Pvt.  
Scarborough, Washington H., Pvt.  
Stewart, Hugh, Pvt.  
Strader, J. A., Sgt.  
Truly, John H., Pvt.  
Truly, Joshua S., 1<sup>st</sup> Lt.  
Truly, William P., 1<sup>st</sup> Sgt.  
Tully, John, Sgt.  
Webb, Ashley W., Cpl.  
Young, John H. W., Pvt.

# THE CHICOT COUNTY SOLDIER FROM 1861 TO 1865

AND

## *Our Bounden Duty to Him*

AN ADDRESS BY GEO. K. CRACRAFT

[Contributed by his grandson, Judge George K. Cracraft]

*Before the Jacob McConnell Chapter of the Daughters of the Confederacy, at Lake Village, Ark., on the Third Day of June, 1908, the Anniversary of the Birthday of Jefferson Davis--the 100<sup>th</sup> Year.*

Daughters of the Confederacy, Comrades and Friends:

I deem it a great privilege and very great pleasure to meet the Daughters of the Confederacy on an occasion like this, but find it difficult to formulate a subject of proper scope or limit to satisfy myself. However, let us see if we have done our duty to our soldiery of '61-'65. Perhaps a review of some personal reminiscences would be quite appropriate at this meeting. If I understand the various objects and purposes of your honorable society, it is to preserve a true history of our local soldiery in the Civil War, and see that the part they took was worthy of a careful and correct record, and worthy of the county and State they battled for. "The great deeds men do live after them," and the courage, patience, and suffering of patriots are virtues to be emulated by our children, and our children's children, so long as free government and constitutional liberty are worth preserving.

It is not my purpose to rekindle the flame that lit up our Southland from '61 to '65, nor will I attempt a recital of the "woes unnumbered"--of the days of misrule or Reconstruction. These were worse than war. In war, lives were lost; the latter period were the days of tyranny and oppression; the days of mortification and humiliation arising out of the results of conquest and power. It was the time that *might* determined the right; when we were tauntingly told that we had one right left, and that was "to be hung." It was the reign of a satrapy worse than a Nero or Jeffries would appoint. It was not the opportunity of brave soldiers, but the time of unscrupulous charlatans, and adventurers--a set of political montebanks, who like vultures, followed in the train of the victorious armies. It was not the peace Grant wished for, and Lincoln promised. But, let the dead past be weighed in the scales of justice and the vivid light of an impartial future. Let us come in the spirit of a renewed allegiance, and say, "One flag, one land, one heart, one hand and one nation forever." Let us point to Joe Wheeler and Fitzhugh Lee as the highest types of the Southern soldier, who served both causes well and to the last had no apologies for the part they took in the Confederate struggle. They constantly asserted the consciousness of having done their duty.

But, let us not forget the noble soldiers of Chicot county, who went forth to battle,--who fell at the front,--who died in the hospitals, and those who will soon "cross over the river and rest under the shade of the trees."

At the outbreak of the war, I may say, there were some few in the county like Major W. B. Street, Dr. P. G. Sigmond, on the Macon Hills, and myself, who were inclined to view the situation like Augustus H. Garland of Little Rock, and Alexander Stephens of Georgia, who deprecated hasty legislation, and a resort to arms. But when

the State concluded to secede and join her sister states, we quickly found our permanent places in the bristling ranks of the Confederacy. Chicot county then became, practically, unanimous for resistance, and when the invasion of Virginia began, like an electric spark, the South became a unit. I went to Virginia and joined the "Richmond Howitzers", but afterwards had the honor of commanding the "Guards" from this locality.

Are you aware that Chicot county sent more men to the war than her voting population and of that number scarcely fifty are alive today? Of these, who can tell of their dreadful experiences? Peechy Talliafero, a bright and manly boy, from Rosmere was among the first to enlist. He could not wait the "slow delay," but hurried off to the front in old Virginia. His last battle was at Yellow Tavern, where he sleeps in an unknown grave.

Frank Paine Peak, than whom no better man went forth to war, enlisted in Burns' battery, attached to Morgan's cavalry. He distinguished himself, and was complimented and promoted "in orders." In the great raid in Ohio, he was captured and taken to Fort Delaware, where I met him--I having been captured at the fall of Port Hudson shortly before. He was one of the noblest specimens of patriotic manhood. He was quiet, cheerful and full of hope. All who knew him loved him for his Christian virtues, his manly courage, and tenderness of heart. By the vicissitudes of war, he and I were of the "six hundred" who were selected to undergo retaliatory measures, and put in a stockade on Morris Island, S. C., under the fire of our own batteries for a period of over forty days with rotten corn meal and pickles for our rations. Lieutenant Peak sickened and died like many others under this barbarous treatment. On October 2, 1864, far from his home on Grand Lake, this hero closed his eyes, never to open them again until the resurrection morn. About him stood the men in blue who were his enemies, and could not understand--they could not know, the great heart that ceased to beat. On the evening of that day, I helped to bury him in a shallow grave in the sands of that island. As we laid him to rest, the shot and shell from Charleston and Sumpter batteries sang his funeral dirge. He had gone to the stars--Peace to his ashes!

The Confederate army was composed of men like him; their fortitude, courage, and unswerving fidelity to duty during four long and bloody years of war is the proudest asset to American valor, and finds no equal in ancient or modern history. His old grey jacket was a patent of nobility far greater than ever conferred by mortal hands and he valued it as his life.

Of the 600 who suffered and died on Morris Island and Fort Pulaski, only 17 forgot their honor and took the oath of allegiance. All could have had their freedom at any moment if they would but desert their cause. Of these six hundred, only forty-seven can answer the call of the roll today. When the only way in which the victorious cause could commend itself to the "consent of the governed," was to wear out by attrition all who could not comprehend its beauty--when such a warfare

"Did like a pestilence maintain its hold,  
And wasted down by glorious death  
That race of natural heroes,"

that little band showed the world their part, the desolating tempest. In this martyrdom, patriotism pronounces a new meaning; principle a higher significance; and duty becomes glorified by such lessons of the Confederate soldier.

In the recital of these melancholy facts, let us bear in mind we are recording truthful history,--to set off the oft repeated charges of our cruelty to Federal prisoners. Right here let me say, Grant did not want an exchange. He said he "preferred to feed us rather than fight us." We were unable to feed our prisoners as we wished--the enemy always had plenty. But, in this galaxy of the dead, none is more conspicuous in my sight, none more brave, and earnest in my memory, than the noble Capt. Jacob McConnell, after whom your chapter is named who commanded a company from your town. He and his dashing Lieutenant Henry sealed their lives for their country on the bloody plains of Atlanta.

Shall we not teach our children this history, and urge them with pride to cherish this glory--this unsullied honor and dauntless courage of Chicot county's citizen soldiery from '61 to '65?

But then there are others:

On the bloody field of Corinth fell with dangerous wounds that crippled him for life, that fearless and intrepid soldier, Capt. James Imboden, who commanded a company from this county, and by him on the ramparts fell Sergeant John Bledsoe of my company.

At Port Hudson, in that dreadful siege, Corporal Wren, one of the finest types of the Kentucky gentleman, received the death-dealing bullet at my side. Then Fleener and others behind the guns dropped in the trenches--their final sepulchre! Late in civil life, what shall we say of the heroic conduct of our General D. H. Reynolds, who returned from the war with a most glorious career. In one of the last battles he was maimed for life, but he lived to find himself entrenched in the hearts of his countrymen and reap the laurels of the fight. In his last conversation with me, a few days before his death, he was full of hope in the restoration of the prosperity of his county and the acme of that prosperity he so earnestly and so long anticipated. He was a manly man in everything that makes for worth:

"His life was gentle, and the elements so mixed in him,  
That Nature might stand up and say, to all the world,  
This was a man."

Then, of those days whose memories and associations cluster closely, none shine out more resplendent than our genial Col. Carlton. His valor and patriotism were only equaled by his modest and quiet manner. I can say I was intimately well acquainted with him, and it was a long while before he told me of the frightful wounds he sustained in battle.

These reminiscences are treasured with a sad and tender memory, yet they will cling to me with holy reverence as long as I live.

Many others of our county contingent enlisted in other States and commands, but should be credited to her loyalty. Notable among these is Capt. Chas. W. Fry. We find him in the army of Northern Virginia, one of the most distinguished of her artillery officers. He was a commander of a battery from Orange county, Virginia, and surrendered at Appomattox Court House at the end. I could recount with a soldier's

pleasure the heroic conduct of many others, still living, but must let some other comrade do them justice. I will not pass, however, over a remark of General E. Kirby Smith, who told me that he never had in his confidence a staff officer more faithful and reliable than our Major James F. Robinson, who also raised a company from this county. Then let us put in history the fact of the gallant conduct of our comrade, Lieut. J. G. B. Simms, of the 17<sup>th</sup> Arkansas Mounted Infantry, who in his dashing way, captured the celebrated Neal Dow, of Maine, in his Louisiana campaign.

Again let me say at the siege of Port Hudson, in one of the hottest contested battles, I happened to be on the staff of General Province, and going down the line saw Capt. McMurrey and Capt. Shaw, one our quartermaster, and the other a commissary officer on the firing line,--loading and firing with their other comrades. Both of these officers had duties which excused them from this tempest of danger.

My time will not allow to further designate the special history of many others. Suffice it to say, they have left no stains as I know, on the roll of Chicot county soldiers in that fearful strife.

But have we no other duty to these dead, and is that duty to be postponed? Have we not a splendid manhood left to do greater honor to these heroes and perpetuate their memories? Have we guarded these sacred sepulchres as we should? Have we tired in laying garlands of roses as the only crown of homage? Have we ended our only duty in tears and love? What of the generations to come? No! No! We must say, in earnest silence on the returning anniversary of our greatest hero,--

"Without sword or flag, and with soundless tread,  
Once more we will gather our deathless dead,  
Out of their silent graves."

Yes! In such a holy communion with these holy spirits, let us tell them before another year, we have done our final duty. We have builded a monument to your heroism to endure forever; and as the stranger looks upon it with the evidence it reflects, of the glory of patriots--of the men of '61-'65, it matters not whether he be a Southern man, or a Northern man, it will be a testimony of the superb emotions of the great and loving people of Chicot county--a testimony of most magnificent memories, and the proudest legacies to her children yet unborn.

To you, the Daughters of the Confederacy, the surviving veteran soldier is chiefly indebted for such noble work. I submit to you, my comrades and fellow-citizens, that the movement of this intelligent and patriotic society deserves your notice and is eminently worthy of your earnest support and encouragement. It is said, that in the interpretation of a hieroglyphic inscription on one of the Egyptian monuments it reads as follows: "I speak to you who shall come a million years after my death." In all ages from time immemorial, mankind has evinced a laudable desire to recall the glories of the past, and to cherish the sacred memories of those times. Do you think there can be higher incentives to honor, virtue, or patriotism, than to look after the needy, and disconsolate,--who crave no other pension than your love;--to investigate and record a true history and preserve for coming generations; and last but not least, to build monuments to perpetuate the grandeur of their fame? Let me urge your chapter to build well a grand one for your fathers, brothers, and their comrades, and without delay. Let it grace the grounds of your



magnificent temple of justice and may it reflect the thought, that these men fought, bled and died and lost their all for the *Justice* and the *Right*. Then, let us all, on that eventful day in May, make our solemn pilgrimage, and as we lay our garlands at its base, let us bring Cypress and Laurel to their tomb--and bring Rosemary,--"that's for remembrance."

## **GEORGE KNOX CRACRAFT, C.S.A.**

[Information in this article was contributed by his great-granddaughter, Jeannie Cracraft Turley of Helena, Arkansas]

George Knox Cracraft, the son of George Atkinson Cracraft and Nancy (Knox) Cracraft, was born July 8, 1838 at Claysville, Alexandria, Virginia and raised at Tridelphia, Virginia (now West Virginia). He graduated from Washington & Jefferson University in 1854, studied law and opened his practice of the law in Lake Village. He was a member of the Chicot County bar until his death in 1909. He was in the firm of Robinson, Cracraft and Lewis.

When Virginia seceded from the Union he went into the Confederate Army with the famed "Richmond Howitzers" of which he had formerly been a member. He was wounded and captured during the "Pennisular Campaign", exchanged and elected Captain of Chicot County's Company "G", 23<sup>rd</sup> Arkansas Regiment. He joined this unit at Corinth, Mississippi and served with them until captured in July, 1863 at Port Hudson after the fall of Vicksburg. He was sent to Johnson Island prison on Lake Erie and then with 600 other Confederate officers was imprisoned on Morris Island, South Carolina under the fire of the Confederate guns defending Charlston. They were mistreated and starved as a retaliatory measure for claimed mistreatment of federal prisoners in Charleston. These men formed "The Immortal 600", so called because in spite of the misery on the island, they refused to take the oath of allegiance to the union which would free them on parole.

After the war he returned to Lake Village and resumed his practice of law and later became a planter. He married Mary Katherine Sigmond, daughter of Dr. Peter Sigmond and Martha E. Read Sigmond of southeast Chicot County. They made their home on "Readland Plantation", east of Eudora. They had two children.

Their daughter, Emma Cracraft Aldridge, resided in Boston. Her daughter, Martha Jane, still resides there.

Their son, George Knox Cracraft, was a prominent lawyer in Helena. He married Jean Scott of Helena. They had three children: Mary Katherine "Katie" Miller lives in Helena; George Knox Cracraft, a retired Chief Judge of the Arkansas Court of Appeals, resides in Little Rock; and Edward Scott Cracraft, a retired professor of accounting at Albion College in Michigan. Both of these grandsons also attained the rank of Captain in the military service.

After the Civil War, Captain Cracraft found himself unwelcome in his native West Virginia and remained in Arkansas. He was very bitter about the war and found Arkansas to be his home and Arkansans his friends. His burial and memorial services were held in Little Rock where he was honored by the surviving members of the

"Immortal Six Hundred". The Eudora Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy adopted his name which is inscribed on the statue in Lake Village.

When Jean Cracraft Turley, daughter of Judge George K. Cracraft, and her family visited Readland Plantation recently, they met the present owners of "Readland", Roger and Vickie Hensley, who assisted them in locating an old silo and pecan orchard that were still there: silent sentinels and reminders of a slower, gentler time.

## **HISTORY OF BELLAIRE, HOW IT GOT ITS NAME**

**by Mrs. Ray Bailey**

**This article is reprinted from the Sesquicentennial Edition**

BELLAIRE. How did it get its name is a question often asked by the curious. Hearing the name Bellaire, one envisions mountain streams, birds singing and spring flowers rippling in the breeze.

However romantic the name, it was acquired in a very prosaic manner, according to the story told by Mrs. Harvey Parnell. A man by the name of Bell once owned a large acreage in the community. At his death, the land became the property of his heirs. People in referring to this land spoke of it as the "Bell Heir" property, hence the name Bellaire.

An old family cemetery provides a clue to the early history of the community. It is located on what is now known as the Harry Daniels' farm just off state road 208. The burial plot measures approximately 24 by 14 feet, and is encased in an iron rail fence. A covering of cement over the grave gives additional protection to those who lie there. Evidently several persons are buried here, but only two headstones have withstood the ravages of time.

These markers, by thoughtful hands, have been embedded in the cement covering, and bear these inscriptions: "To Susan, Wife of J. A. Anderson, born August 27th, 1835; died April 18, 1881." The second reads: "Dick Wells, Son of C. F. and A. C. Wells, Born August 24, 1882; died August 17, 1893."

Captain J. A. Anderson was a native of Mississippi. During the Civil War he fought and won his captaincy with the Confederate Army. At the close of the conflict, Captain Anderson and his family moved to Southeast Arkansas, where he had purchased land. This became known as the Anderson Plantation. On the banks of Crooked Bayou, and on the site where the C. F. Brown home is now located, Captain Anderson built a two-story log house. So far as can be ascertained, this was the second house built in the community by a white man. In addition to his farming interests, owned and operated the first cotton gin to be located in the community. Teams of mules furnished power for the operation of the gin. Negroes were the principal source of labor for growing cotton, which, then as now, was the chief commodity.

Mrs. Anderson died soon after moving to Arkansas, and was buried in the family plot near her home. Sometime later, Captain Anderson was married to a Mrs. Winston, a widow of with a five year old daughter. This little girl was destined to become one of Arkansas' first ladies, Mrs. Harvey Parnell, wife of Governor Parnell.

After the death of Captain Anderson in 1905, and after her own marriage, Mr. and Mrs. Parnell purchased a large part of the Anderson Estate.

Though the Andersons were early settlers in the community, there is some evidence that they were not the first whites to settle there. Two Negro women, Emma and Viola Vickory, who now live in Halley, say that they were born in Bellaire. Their father was a white man who came from the North, their mother a Negress. They say that they were born in a two-story log house which stood where the Glen Adams home now

stands. This is thought to have been the first house in the community built by a white man. Emma, the eldest of the two women, gives the year 1878 as the year of her birth. They could recall no other white people in the community and were certain that, at this time, it was an all-Negro settlement.

A colored school was located in Hurd, but these women insist that the teacher was a white man whose name they could not recall.

There was a cabin in the community where religious services were held by the people. This, the first Primitive Church, was located on what is now the J. B. Griswood farm. They did not know whether their father owned the land which he farmed, or was an overseer for an absentee landlord. When Emma was 10 years old, her father returned to New York, where he died. During this period of early history, Chicot County had many Negroes holding public offices. The Sheriff was a Negro named Holland. J. A. Richardson, a Negro, was postmaster in Hurd, and also owned a general mercantile store which he operated. Negroes were serving on the school board, and at this time Negroes seemed to have owned much of the land in the county.

In 1905, the M. R. Haisty family, accompanied by the families of Frank Bowmen, Lige Nolan, William Sims, and Hiram Russell, moved from Cominto to Bellaire. Mrs. Herbert Lemley, daughter of M. R. Haisty, recalls that after her father purchased land in the Bellaire community, he and the aforesaid men chartered a freight car. This car was loaded with household furnishings and farm equipment of the five families and shipped to Hurd. Here, due to a heavy rain which had been falling for days, the new families unloaded their possessions in what appeared to be a sea of water. Surely not a happy introduction to a new home. In 1907 the Porter Brothers, Ed, Walter, John and Charles, purchased the Bellaire or Anderson plantation, and employed T. J. Lamb to manage the farm. Within the next few years, other families began moving into the community. among them were the Lee Bakers, the Mode and Rial Collins families, and the Williams and Ellington family. In 1919, the Griswood and Donaldson families moved into Bellaire.

Recreation and entertainment facilities such as we enjoy today were unknown to early residents, but as we listen to senior citizens tell their stories of these happy, early days, we agree that they were unnecessary. Many were the pleasant hours spent together as the young people gathered in a home for the weekly singing. Parties, too, were frequent and enjoyed by young and old. The women of the community found pleasure in their quilting bees, and no doubt tongues flew as fast as needles. Hunting and fishing were popular sports for men and boys. In fact, fish fries held on the banks of bayou or lake were outings especially enjoyed by the entire community. During Christmas week, it was the custom for families to pack their festive goodies in baskets, and spend the day at the home of one of the neighbors. This would be repeated throughout the week until every family in the community had been visited.

Road conditions in the early days were primitive. Usually mere trails cut through forests, Mrs. Harvey Parnell relates a story told by her grandmother, Mrs. Fannie Emmons. The family came by oxdrawn covered wagon from Collingston, Miss., to Southeast Arkansas. Many times, as they stopped and made camp for the night, they could look back over the route traveled that day and see smoke rising from the smoldering fire of the camp they had left that morning. For several years the family supplies were purchased from the riverboats plying the Mississippi, and docking at

Gaines Landing.

Doctors practicing in early days well knew the meaning of hardship. They traveled by horseback, buggy and frequently on foot as they ministered to patients living in rural areas. Doctor S. C. Riley of Halley is said to have developed a unique mode of travel. Using a bicycle equipped with four wheels, grooved to fit the two rails, he would travel as far as possible toward the patient's home. The machine would then be lifted from the rail, and he would continue on his way on foot, or perhaps riding if he could get the loan of a horse. Many times a relative or a friend of the sick would wait beside a rain-swollen stream with a horse to ferry the doctor across. Dr. J. A. Thompson was another pioneer physician, practicing in the Bellaire community at the turn of the century, and well acquainted with road conditions of that day. George Kelley of Halley remembers his father purchasing the first automobile in Halley. The machine was bought in Little Rock and two days were required to drive it home.

It was the custom of the family before setting out for a drive to include a shovel and several rubber boots, along with the spare tire. These were necessary aids to travel in those days. Even so, many were the nights spent in Dermott hotels when an unexpected rain made roads impassable for the return home. Once in a fine mood for adventure, the Kelleys set out for a drive to see how far they could travel in one day. They made it to Winchester. Mr. Kelley also recalls a man named Bowie having lived in Halley for a number of years. Legend has it that he was the brother of the famous Jim Bowie. (Ed. note: this was Rezin Bowie, after whom the township is named.) another legend tells of an old chest being unearthed by a Negro plowing on a farm in the vicinity. It was filled with ancient coins and pieces of jewelry. When, or by whom, it was buried remains a mystery.

By 1907 there were several children residing in the community of Bellaire, so the first rural white school was organized. A vacant log cabin was used, and the first teachers were two sisters, Carrie and Nonie Joyce from Star City. When the weather was extremely warm classes were often held out of doors beneath the shade trees. Here, too, was the beginning of the first Sunday School for whites with Mode Collins, the elected superintendent.

In 1908, M. R. Haisty donated land on which to build the first white rural school in district 7, Bowie Township. He was also the first white director to serve on what had been, until 1907, an all-Negro school board. The contractor who built the school, assisted by two others, was Preston Berryman, the helpers being Flowers.

Mrs. Mamie Jones of Dermott taught the first term of school in the new building in 1908. In 1910 Miss Annie Gibson, who in 1911 was to become Mrs. Tom Lamb, taught the second term. In 1911, U. C. Barnett, superintendent of schools in Dermott, taught summer school in Bellaire. Part of the time he rode a horse from Dermott to Bellaire, many times he walked. In these early school years, Mrs. T. J. Lamb wrote all the contracts and warrants for the seven colored schools and the white school in the township. In 1921, Act 215 of the General Assembly brought about the consolidation of the Bellaire school with the Dermott school. Through efforts of Bellaire residents, the community obtained a lease on the old school building, to be used as a house of worship.

As we have seen, the religious life of the community dates from its early settlement. In 1911, Reverend N. C. Denson, who had organized the Baptist Church in Dermott, came to Bellaire and preached once a month. He would come by train to Hurd

on the old "Pete Robinson" passenger train, as it was called in honor of its popular engineer. Here a member of his Bellaire congregation would be waiting with buggy and horse to complete the journey. Rev. Denson held a revival at Bellaire that summer.

Seven years later, in 1918, Reverend E. C. (Clark) Sims organized the Bellaire Baptist Church. Mr. Sims was, at that time, pastor of both the Dermott and Eudora churches.

This founder and organizer of Bellaire Baptist Church, Mr. Sims, was born in Cedartown, Georgia, in 1886. He moved with his family to Ashley County when nine years of age. He was a graduate of Southwestern Theological Seminary and Ouachita Baptist College. He married Miss Willie Gaster of Collins in 1908. He died in 1918 in Dermott, a victim of the deadly influenza epidemic of that year.

Mr. and Mrs. T. J. Lamb and members of the Haisty family are among the known charter members of the church. So Bellaire Church, beginning in 1907, as a small Sunday School, purchasing its first literature through the sale of eggs, which a little girl, Maud Haisty, and her teacher, Miss Annie Gibson, had collected from the families in the community, has grown and prospered through the years. Credit is due many - to Mode Collins, its first Sunday School Superintendent, to early pastors so faithful in service, and to early church members, the Haistys, Collins and Lambs. Too, we would give credit to one whose life, since coming to Bellaire in 1919, has been so closely interwoven with the life of the church and community, J. B. Griswood. Mr. and Mrs. Griswood made it a practice in those early years of poor roads and isolated living conditions to furnish transportation to any who could and would attend church services. To see the community grow and prosper not only in a material way, but also in the spiritual realm has been their chief concern. With the dedication of the new modern church building in January, 1951, Mr. and Mrs. Griswood saw the fulfillment of their lives for so many years.

In addition to the church, the school and homelife, an important factor to the community has been the mail service. The first rural mail service out of Dermott was begun in 1914. This was Route 1, serving Bellaire. Mail carriers, in order of service, were: Will Splawn, McFadden, Cecil Mathis, and Laron Offutt. All of these carriers rode horses to deliver mail on the route. For the past 44 years, the mail has been carried by the Perry brothers. In 1920, Merving Perry began carrying the mail. Two years later, in 1922, Collins Perry took over the route, and was the first carrier to use a buggy with a top (truly this was high fashion for Bellaire). W. B. Perry began his 38 years of service September 1, 1925, using an automobile. At that time the route was 19 miles long, and was providing mail service to 80 boxes and about 400 patrons. Today the route is 83 miles long, with 246 boxes, serving 378 families or 1510 persons.

Time has brought many changes to the community. Once it was sparsely settled. Today there are 56 families living in the community, most of them owning the land which they farm. There is a modern rural church with a membership of 200 serving not only the community, but extending out into the surrounding areas.

A pastor now lives on the field and a complete church program is carried out. Good roads make year round travel possible throughout the community. School busses transport the children to Dermott schools. Later, many of them will seek college education.

## **GAINES LANDING ONCE IMPORTANT RIVERPORT**

### **Reprinted from the Sesquicentennial Edition**

One of the most important points on the Mississippi River during pioneer days was Gaines Landing.

Major William Gaines from Kentucky entered land along the Mississippi River in Chicot County, Arkansas in 1833, in 1836 and in 1839. With others, he built a landing on his plantation.

He made a road from the landing through the plantation, lining it with stems of young trees, and later with planks, and placed houses along it for collection of tax from travelers.

The landing became the gateway to Southeast Arkansas. Immigrants came from the southern states, and settled along the rivers and bayous, and back in the hills. They brought slaves, carriages, extensive libraries and rare pieces of furniture. It also became the gateway for the through route from Virginia and the Carolinas to Texas.

The landing grew to be the first shipping point between Helena and Vicksburg, with the finest wharf boat on the River up to 1861. Bales of cotton that had been carried in on oxwagons were piled high on the steamboats for New Orleans.

It was linked with a stage coach route with Independence, which became Monticello, and with Camden.

During the Civil War the landing was guarded by Confederate soldiers. The Chicot Rangers, with Captain Daniel Reynolds commanding, steamed from there for a rendezvous at Pocahontas. They became a part of General Thos. Churchill's Mounted Rifles.

The railway was built from Chicot City to Collins about 1872, the river station being removed to Arkansas City in 1878. With the coming of the railway, the service of the landing closed.



## **GRAND LAKE IS BIG RIVERPORT**

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In June 1866 Herman Weis was operating the only mercantile establishment at Grand Lake.

Capt. C. P. Bennett had been the owner of the (later) Fiebleman plantation before the Civil War.

At that time the Weis store was operated under the name of H. Weis and Company. It was owned by Herman Weis and his brother in law Abe Cahn, who had operated a store there prior to the Civil War.

There were but four white families in Grand Lake in 1866.

In 1868 a man by the name of J.G. Morgan opened a store but he died a few years later and his business establishment went out of existence. In 1869 or 1870 I. Drewfus and A. Meyer opened a partnership store.

About 1872 the Mississippi River formed a "land bar" in front of Grand Lake, making it impossible for the boats to bank at the usual landing. A new town was started about a mile north of Grand Lake, and it was known as Barnard. Some of the Grand Lake stores moved to the new landing, but H. Weis and Company continued to operate at their original location. However, they did establish a branch store at Barnard. About two weeks after the founding of this new town and river landing, the river banks began to cave badly at that place until finally the business houses were forced to relocate at Grand Lake.

A few years later the River played the same havoc at Grand Lake. The caving and sluffing finally forced the business houses to seek new locations. So, in 1885, the H. Weis & Co. store was moved west of Rush Bayou on the Eudora road. From the close of the Civil War up to the beginning of the Twentieth Century, Grand Lake was the largest shipping point in Arkansas south of Memphis, except Helena. Farmers and merchants as far west as Hamburg, southwest into Morehouse Parish, and almost to Bastrop, in Louisiana, and south into Carroll Parish to Old Floyd had to haul their cotton to the Grand Lake merchants or shipped it by boat to commission merchants in New Orleans. In turn, they purchased their supplies at the trading point. The farmers who purchased at retail hauled their personal supplies to their respective homes, while the "back country" merchants purchased their supplies at wholesale and hauled their purchases to their interior stores. Numerous steamboats plied up and down the River carrying passengers and freight; mail, including newspapers, came to Grand Lake three times a week and usually from twenty-four to forty-eight hours behind schedule.

There were also two star mail routes leading out of Grand Lake after the Civil War, and continued until about 1873. One of these routes led through "Boueff Swamp buckshop" to Hamburg, and the other to Delhi, La. It took the mail riders three days to make these trips.

## AN HISTORICAL MANUSCRIPT OF CHICOT COUNTY

**By Mrs. Leona Brasher, (1840-1918)**

The original copy of this History is in the possession of Katie Cracraft Miller (Mrs. Thomas G.), 303 South 9th Street, West Helena, Arkansas.

I was born in Lake Village in 1920. My brother, George Knox Cracraft, who is presently a Judge on the Arkansas Court of Appeals, was born there in 1922. Our parents were George Knox and Jean Scott Cracraft. We lived in Readland before moving to Helena. My grandparents were George Knox and Kate Sigmond Cracraft. My great grandparents were Martha Read and Dr. Peter Sigmond. My great, great grandparents were Francis Boyd and Katherine Proctor Read, all mentioned in this history.

Mrs. Brasher lived for some years with my grandmother. She was living there when she wrote this. She says in her history that she was 75 at the time she wrote this, and she was born in 1840, so we can assume this was written in 1915.

I hope this will interest someone in Chicot County. It certainly interests me.

Katie C. Miller

[Mrs. Katie Cracraft Miller has very graciously given her permission for this article to be included in the book.]

## Pioneer and Present Times

Chicot County, on or before the county was established by Act of Congress, was settled by squatters who first occupied and cultivated their claims without legal authorization: while these settlers were illegally occupying these lands, they were doing, unconsciously, what the Government desired - developing our country - therefore Congress gave these squatters the first right to buy what they had settled on when the lands were offered for sale. I think it was called a Preemption Right, afterward known as the Squatters Land Law. When these lands were paid for the government gave a deed called a Land Warrant or Patent.

In 1819, when Arkansas was admitted into the Union as a Territory, there were many men in this territory who had no intention of settling, only built huts where they fancied; cleared a small tract of land for a garden, and here they remained till game became scarce, then left, hunting homes where wild game was found in abundance - then settled again as formerly.

When the Preemption Law was passed by Congress in 1814 a class of speculators used this act of Congress to their own advantage. They hunted these squatters, bought their Preemption Right for a small sum of money, located their claim and forced the Land Department of the United States to a settlement.

In its primeval days Chicot was a dense forest: its alluvial lands covered with a dense forest of huge trees: oaks, gum, cottonwood, hickory, pecan, elm, cypress, pine and other varieties of forest growth. This wilderness was almost unpenetrable by large dense breaks, a variety of luxuriant vines, wild grape, muscadine, and other non-bearing fruit ones. Some of the trees were of enormous size, especially the cottonwood. It took a stout heart, much bravery to enter and establish a claim in this dense wooded wilderness, but the hunters of wild game let nothing daunt their search for suitable locations for their camp grounds. In this solitude were found very worthy, cultivated people, as well as some very bad characters.

In Mountain View there is a Mr. C. G. Rosa who has in his possession a walking cane that is 131 years old. This cane was cut in the woods of Chicot County in 1784 by a Captain Cook who, at that time, was running a Keel Boat on the Mississippi River from Cincinnati to New Orleans. In the early days of our County this was the only accessible route; later, when people had forged their way through the wilderness; paths through the woods were blazed by chipping bark from trees - forming bridle paths through this dense forest so horseback traveling was practical. This mode of traveling was much indulged in by both men and women. I can well remember, as late as 1847, seeing young ladies with their attendants, riding horseback to visit some distant relative or friend. In these days of horseback traveling the wardrobes had to be taken in a "Carpet Bag"; suspended to the right horn of the side-saddle by each lady. As so many of our present generation do not know about a "Carpet Bag" I must explain its construction. In shape it was something like the present traveling bag - it was made from a stout piece of carpet, strongly stitched without bottom, just folded together with a finished top of lock and key and a handle on each side, similar to our present traveling bags - used to hang on the right horn of the side-saddle. Notwithstanding all of these drawbacks there was never a more healthy, refined, intelligent and happy people.

Our present generation, with all their home and traveling conveniences, both by

electricity and steam, can poorly realize the trials and hardships of our forebears.

### **The Formation of Chicot County**

Chicot County was the tenth county formed out of the Territory taken from Arkansas County, and was established October 25th, 1823. It is claimed the name Chicot was given to the County from Point Chicot, a point of land on the Mississippi River. It is an Indian name meaning "a stump", perhaps taken from the ancient "Chisca" the name of an Indian Village founded by DeSoto, situated on the Eastern banks of the Mississippi River below the place where DeSoto crossed with his men in 1541.

Chicot County is situated in the extreme Southeastern corner of the State, running parallel with, and bounded by on the east by the Mississippi River, south by Louisiana, west by Ashley County, north by Desha County. Its area is about 820 square miles, or 528,800 acres. By the same Act that formed this county Commissioners were appointed to select and locate a seat of justice. This was composed of John Weir, Thomas James, Ennis Bogy, Joseph Boone and Abner Johnson. The first place selected was near Point Chicot as this was already a settlement of French and Spanish. The Commissioners called the new site "Villemont". Considerable improvement was made here. John C. Jones built a large hotel, also a handsome residence at a cost of \$5,000.00. Other improvements were under way when it was found that no Patent had been secured for this land, it being located on a grant made by Baron de Carondelet to Don Carlos de Villemont, Spanish Commandant at the Post from 1775 and for whom the site was named.

The writer has heard her parents speak of this place and its people, who were neighbors and friends, the de Villemonts, Estelle and others; as this was the home of their early married life.

There being so much discontent and no harmony in securing definite titles to the lands of Villemont, that in 1838, or about that time the County Seat was moved several miles up the river and called "Columbia" (complementary to America's discoverer). Here it remained about 12 years. In order to secure a more central location, the Judge A. H. Davies of the County appointed a committee to select a new place of Justice. This committee settled on a point on Bayou Macon, which was considered the most central to reach from all points of the County. They named it Masona. The Circuit Courts met in March and November; to reach Masona during the months of rain, through dense woods and large cane brakes by a bridle path over swampy roads; the court officers and people at large entered a protest, and begged that a location on high land, not so difficult to reach, and in a more open country. Another committee was appointed, they chose a site on what was then known as Old River Lake - at the present time it is called Lake Chicot - a location on the lower end of the Plantation of Mr. John Sumner - my father - was selected.

Mr. J. Sumner gave lots to the county for the courthouse and jail, assisted with the material and labor in building a large courthouse and commodious Jail of brick. This town was called Lake Village - and was established in 1855. Mr. John Sumner sold many lots, built and sold a number of residences and houses used as offices for different branches of the County's business. Improvements were slow, some lovely homes and a few churches built. The Public School occupied the first house built for church service

under the control of the Methodists. This building was situated a short distance above the town location and was built on a lot given by Mr. John Sumner, who, it might be claimed was "The Father of the Town of Lake Village."

The population of Chicot being mostly agriculturing people this town grew very slowly. The War Between the States put a stop to all improvements, and a "Rip Van Winkle" nap was taken by Lake Village till the entrance of the first railroad - M.R. & H.R.R., which awakened the inhabitants and new progress followed. New people created a demand for more houses. A large area was added, lots sold and many lovely homes built along the banks of the beautiful Lake Chicot, a body of water, crescent shaped - (said to have been in ages past the main channel of the Mississippi River - abounding in numerous game fish, the sportsman's delight. Intelligent, refined, good, good people are found on the banks of this lake, living in most modern homes and bungalows - Lake Village has a population of 2,000 or more inhabitants: ministers, doctors, lawyers, people of culture were found among its inhabitants. A new courthouse, erected where the old building - (On the same lots given by Mr. John Sumner to the county in 1855 for public buildings) stands modern in structure, large and imposing. In front, in the center of a small park is a beautiful monument built in the memory of the Confederate Soldiers of '61-'65. This monument was erected at the cost of \$3,000.00 by the U. D. C. of the county - finished and donated to the county in 1910. In this county there are two chapters of the U. D. C. The first, organized at Lake Village in 1905, called the McConnell - the other at Eudora, called George K. Cracraft, organized in 1908 by Mrs. J. B. Johnson. Our lands are very productive of all vegetation, our climate mild and salubrious, though handicapped by bonds issued in the early '70s our county has made rapid strides towards improvements in every line. This bond indebtedness was instigated by the men in charge during the reconstruction period when one of their tools was County Judge J. W. Mason, a Negro. Bonds were issued in the amount of \$300,000.00 to build railroads running from Little Rock to New Orleans. These bonds were sold for cash in New York. The money was used by "Carpet Bag" graft and not one cent went into any railroad. We are now paying a 5-mill tax each year toward this debt, have on hand about \$55,000.00 in local banks, carrying a small interest. When this \$240,000.00 is paid our county will be free of debt once more and greater improvements in every way will mark this era.

### **Pioneers**

The deVillemonts, Estelles, Sumners were among the settlers of Point Chicot as early as 1820. The deVillemonts were Spanish; when in 1825 the county seat was moved these Spanish left the point for Arkansas Post, which had been established and governed by Spanish Officials. This, in early territorial days, was a place of importance, but has sunk to decay.

John Sumner came to Villemont in 1820 from South Carolina. He was a descendant of William Sumner, who came from England to Massachusetts in 1636. The two younger sons of this William Sumner, with their widowed sister, went South in 1669, settling in or near Dorchester, South Carolina. John Sumner, a descendant of these Sumners was born in Union County, South Carolina in 1796, left home at an early age, served in the War of 1812, was in the Battle of New Orleans 1815, age 19 years. He came to Chicot County in 1820, married Miss Nancy Stringer in 1827, had a large family

of children - five boys and five girls, all born in Chicot County. He lived on the East side of Old River Lake (now Lake Chicot) where he owned and cultivated considerable land. Later he moved to the West side of this lake. His second son, Daniel Sumner, was elected surveyor of Chicot County for a term of years 1854 to 1858. Ten years later he was again elected to same office, served 1868 to 1870. John Sumner died at his home on Lake Chicot 1877. His wife 1881. The only remaining one of this large family is the writer of this article - she is the widow of Dr. Asa Davis Brasher, and was born February 29th, 1840- Dr. A. Davis Brasher was born in the lower end of this county near Carmel (now Eudora) in 1835, June 2nd, educated at Oakland College, Port Gibson, Mississippi, received his medical education in New Orleans and St. Louis, practiced medicine from 1856 to 1863, married in 1858 Miss Leona Sumner, served in War Between the States, left home with the Chicot Guards. At Corinth, Mississippi Dr. A. Davis Brasher was Acting Surgeon of the 3rd Louisiana Infantry, Whitefield's Brigade, Price's Division of the West. He was furloughed on account of wounds caused from a fall, sent home to Lake Village, Arkansas where he sickened and died on the 3rd of December, 1863.

Dr. A. W. Webb was a practicing physician at Columbia in 1835 to 1890. He removed to Little Rock in 1844. J. Van Matre was a lawyer, following his profession at Columbia, then Villemont 1829 to 1830. Peter Haynes, who married a Miss Ann Gaines moved to Little Rock. There were four brothers of the Gaines all coming from Kentucky, living at one time in Chicot County; William F. Gaines on the Mississippi River at Gaines Landing moved to Hot Springs where he lived and died near 1905. He was contestant for the property representing the Gaines or Belding Claims for a long time. The two brothers, Gen. R. M. Gaines and Major Benjamin Pollard Gaines had large plantations; Gen. R. M. Gaines living on Macon Lake where he had a very handsome home; Major B. P. Gaines lived on his plantation near Gaines Landing. He also owned a palatial home, called "Homestead". He was born November 10th, 1803 in Boone County, Kentucky. He married a Miss Matilda Kinkaid February 5th, 1824 - died November 8, 1878. They were the parents of four daughters. The first daughter, Elizabeth Priscilla Gaines was born April 6th, 1825. She married Johnson Chapman August 22nd, 1843. They commenced their married life in Columbia, afterward moving to a large plantation on Old River Lake (now Lake Chicot) and named their home "Red Reuben". Mr. and Mrs. Johnson Chapman were well known throughout the State. In 1838 he was made clerk of Chicot County which office he held for a number of years. In fact he was known as one of the best clerks in the State. He commenced the practice of law in partnership with Thomas N. Byers of Columbia, who left Columbia when Mr. J. Chapman moved to his plantation still practicing law. He was a citizen of this State for 30 years and in every capacity was fully trusted. He died at a friend's in Columbia August 1868 in the 54th year of his age. He left a wife and seven children. Mrs. Chapman reared her children to adults, seeing all married and settled in life. She made her home with her youngest child where she lived a benediction to all her children and grandchildren. She died at the home of her daughter, Mrs. R. M. Gaines, Lake Village, Arkansas July 20th, 1909 in her 84th year.

Gen. R. M. Gaines lived on his plantation home, Macon Lake. He was a lawyer and a close friend of Gen. Andrew Jackson. He married Elizabeth B. Hutchins of Natchez, Mississippi on May 27, 1830. They had two sons and one daughter; descendants still citizens of this state and county. His grandson and namesake, Richard

M. Gaines, Jr. married Mary Chapman, youngest daughter of Johnson and Elizabeth P. Chapman at Lake Village May 23rd, 1888. They had five children, one girl and four boys. All reside in Lake Village. George Read, a direct descendant of the signers of the Declaration of Independence; born October 12, 1812 - married Susan Chapman July 12, 1844. Miss Susan Chapman was the oldest sister of Johnson Chapman. He owned a grand home on the East side of Lake Chicot with modern conveniences of that time. Their grand and great grandchildren still live in this County.

Mr. William Brawner from Virginia came to Chicot County in 1878; was born in Virginia July 4th, 1827 - died in Little Rock June 29, 1895. William Brawner married Drusila Sumner, oldest daughter of John and Nancy D. Sumner, who was born at Villemont November 15, 1828, died at the old home of John Sumner November 18, 1885.

Sanford C. Faulkner was an early resident of Chicot County. In 1844 he moved to Little Rock where he died August 4th, 1874. He was the author of a humorous composition which has given him much notoriety, "The Arkansas Traveler". He represents in this piece the primitive state of life among our backwoods pioneer.

At Columbia lived, in the year 1852, two brothers - Dr. Raleigh and Dr. Joseph Holston, both practicing physicians. Dr. Joseph Holston was married, with one child, a daughter. Dr. Raleigh Holston was unmarried. Both died at their homes - Dr. Raleigh Holston at Columbia, Dr. Joseph Holston on his plantation "LaTrobe" near Columbia.

Above Columbia lived the Craigs, their large plantation and elegant homes on the banks of the Mississippi River. John Anderson Craig was a Judge of the County 1846 to 1848. His nephew, Joshiah M. Craig was a large planter and merchant in Columbia. He held the office of Treasurer of the County for five terms from 1844 to 1854. He married Miss Elizabeth W. Connell of Kentucky. She died in Cairo, Illinois in 1864 when returning from Washington City, where she had been to have a brother released from Yankee prison where he was confined after capture while a paroled soldier of Port Hudson. Her sister, Minnie Martin, married Capt. James McMurry, who was a member of the Chicot Guards. Col. Llewellyn was another pioneer of Chicot County living on his plantation between Luna and Gaines Landing.

Anthony H. Davies came to this County when the State was admitted into the Union. He came from Pulaski County and was a delegate with John Clark when the convention met in Little Rock January 4th, 1836. He was born in the State of Connecticut in 1798. He was a member of the State Legislature in 1836; was County Judge for two terms, 1850 to 1852. Four years after he was again elected and was Judge for two terms, 1856 to 1860. Judge A. H. Davies was twice married. After the death of his first wife he married Miss Mildred P. Gaines, sister to Gen. R. M. Gaines and William P. Gaines, in 1846. He died in 1862, age 64 years, leaving a wife and five children. Mrs. M. P. Gaines lived to see all of her children grown and died in 1902. Both died at their plantation home, "Lake Hall". This home is now owned by their son, Walter F. Davies.

General David H. Reynolds settled in Chicot County in 1858. He was born in Ohio December 14th, 1832. He raised the first company that left for the War Between the States, called The Chicot Rangers. He continued in this war till the end when he had risen to Brigadier General, lost a leg at his last Battle, that of Bentonville March 19th, 1865. General Reynolds died at his home 1906, leaving a wife and five children. Mrs. Reynolds and her aged mother - 90 years - are living at this time at their home in Lake Village.

Colonel E. Worthington was the owner of four large plantations, one on the Mississippi River, the other three on or near Lake Chicot. He died after the war, leaving no immediate relations; his landed possessions have passed into other hands.

Major William McDowell Pettit was born in Kentucky 1799, married Annie Madison Cook in 1828. He died in 1858, leaving three children, all girls. He owned a most elegant home on the South end of Lake Chicot, surrounded by a large park of fine trees. This park was the home of deer, rabbits, squirrels and many different birds. His two oldest daughters married sons of Mr. Claiborn Saunders, who came from Alabama. His plantation was on the Mississippi River just below Luna. Here he built a most elegant and large house where he and his wife lived till their deaths.

Major W. B. Street came to Lake Village in 1858 from Maryland. During the War Between the States, while in the army, he married Miss Julia Reed of Louisiana. He owned a plantation on the Mississippi River, the old home of Dr. Joseph Holston, "LaTrobe", near Columbia. He practiced law in Lake Village till his death, 1898, which occurred in Pine Bluff where he had gone for medical treatment; left a wife and two sons. Mrs. Julia Street died 1913.

Mr. Felix G. Davis lived near Eudora on the Macon Hills, became a minister in the Methodist Church the last years of his life. He was the son of Dr. Davis, who was one of the pioneer settlers of that part of the county. Mrs. Watson was another pioneer settler of that part of the County. Descendants of both families are still living in the County.

In the year of 1857 F. Boyd Read moved from Crittenden County to Chicot. He bought and cultivated a large place in the front of Macon Hills. Mr. F. B. Read was one of Arkansas' pioneers. He, his wife, Miss Martha Proctor, all of his three daughters were born and reared in Arkansas. He moved from this County to Texas during the late War Between the States when(where) he and his wife died.

His descendants are still residents of this County. Mr. F. B. Read was from Virginia, and related to the signers of Independence. He was surveyor for Crittenden County for four terms from 1832 to 1836. Two years afterwards he was elected Treasurer of same county, served two terms, 1838 to 1842.

Captain George Knox Cracraft came to the county in 1858 from Alabama. He was born in Virginia, and was the first to leave, accompanied by Peachy Taliafero (a son of Mrs. George Read of "Rossmere" plantation on Lake Chicot, east side). Captain G. K. Cracraft joined his old command, The Richmond Howitzers, was taken prisoner, released and went South to Corinth, Mississippi where he was put in command of the Chicot Guards (The third company leaving Chicot county for the seat of War) as Captain; held his position till the surrender of Port Hudson; when the privates were paroled the officers sent to Northern Prisons.

He was selected as one of the officers who was put under the fire of the guns of the Southern Soldiers on Morris Island, South Carolina in 1864 by order of E. M. Stanton (seat of Federal War) in retaliation for imagined cruelties to the Southern Soldiers. Captain G. K. Cracraft was a member of the Immortal 600 - men who could suffer and die for principles of Justice and Right, but no torture could induce them to surrender their true spirit of the Confederate Soldier, who represented the army of the Southland. Captain G. K. Cracraft was born on July 8th, 1838; married in 1890, January 18th to Miss. M. K. Sigmond, grand daughter of F. B. Read, and daughter of Dr. P. G. Sigmond



and wife, Martha J. Read; died at his Readland Plantation home on November 19, 1907. He returned to Lake Village after the War and resumed his law practice. He became interested in planting, moved to his plantation below Grand Lake.

Dr. Peter G. Sigmond came to Chicot County from Jeffersonville, Indiana in 1858; married Martha E. Read, youngest daughter of F. B. and Martha Read; followed his profession of Dr. of medicine till his death, except the years he was in the War. He was surgeon of 6th Louisiana Reg., McNair Brigade.

Major James F. Robinson was from Pennsylvania, a practicing lawyer, lived on his plantation, "Deerfield" near Lake Village. He married Miss Mary E. Gaines, (only daughter of Gen. R. M. Gaines who died in 1866, leaving her husband and five young children. Major J. F. Robinson married the second time a Miss Maggie Chapman, daughter of Johnson and Elizabeth Chapman. He died in Greenville, Mississippi in 1911.

On Grand Lake, in the lower end of Chicot County, were the homes of the Peaks, Paynes and Johnsons. Mr. James S. Peak came to this county in early pioneer days from Georgetown, Scott County, Kentucky. He was born October 2nd, 1798, died October 1st, 1878 - 75 years of age. he married Emeline Payne, who was born March 18, 1810, died March 6th, 1851.

Mr. James S. Peak had large land interest on Grand Lake, built a large brick house (the first one built in this county) and outbuildings in 1857, one of the present landmarks of antebellum times. This house is now owned by C. Warfield, whose father came here in the late 90s. Mr. J. S. Peak's home was visited by the Yankee Soldiers of Steel's Division in year of 1864. These soldiers did much damage, plundering and burning homes of prominent people, living on the way through which they passed. Fortunately they spared the handsome home of Mr. James S. Peak. The sons of Mr. James S. Peak held the land which had been divided into three large plantations as late as 1913. All is now owned by different people. The wife and descendants of Captain George Knox Cracraft own what was the middle plantation which fell to the namesake of old Mr. James S. Peak.

Mr. Isaac Hilliard owned and cultivated a large plantation just below Grand Lake post office. Mr. Isaac Hilliard was a delegate from Chicot County to the secession convention which met at Little Rock, March 4th, 1861. At this convention the State of Arkansas passed out of the Union and was admitted into the Confederacy May 6th, 1861. Henry M. Rector was the State Governor.

Mrs. Leona Sumner Brasher was born on the west side of what was known at that time as "Old River Lake" on February 29th, 1840. This was the third daughter of John and Nancy D. Sumner - the only one left of a large family. Her life was short in this county, the school attended was that of a private tutor, Mr. W. L. Maulding when very young. She attended public school near Luna on the Mississippi River 7 miles from her home on Lake Chicot, riding horseback behind one of her brothers. This school was taught one short term by Mr. Limerick. Mrs. Maxwell taught the next term. Mr. John B. Brandon and his wife, Mrs. Jennie Brandon taught a number of terms. Miss Leona E. Brasher remained at this school three years. In 1855 she was sent to Sommerville, Tennessee to attend the "Young Ladies Model School", remaining one year. In 1858, the 17th of August, she was married to Doctor Asa Davis Brasher of Lake Village. Dr. A. D. Brasher was also a writer of some note. Mrs. L. S. Brasher made her home with her parents, Mr. John Sumner and wife. During the year of 1863 she made a trip to

Washington City, effected the release of a brother who was a prisoner at Fort Morton near Indianapolis, Indiana and who was captured while a parole soldier. In 1862 she commenced to teach as a private teacher. In 1885 she accepted a position in the public schools, taught a number of years in Lake Village, taught five terms in Grand Lake. Returning to Lake Village, she taught two terms as assistant teacher in the primary grades, two terms at Scaife and one term at Empire. Chicot County was her last school. Mrs. L. S. Brasher is now an old lady of 75 years. She makes her home with a friend, Mrs. G. K. Cracraft, on Grand Lake, near Readland.

### **Institutions**

In territorial days we had no public buildings. Courts of Justice was held in the most convenient and accessible homes. There was no public school in the early days of our county. Generally school was started in the community as the settlement enlarged. Pupils had to ride long way horseback, remaining all day. Books were very scarce, accommodation very poor. The teacher was expected to be educated and in every way fitted to discipline and develop their pupils' minds. As early as 1841 a public school was taught in the settlement in which my parents lived by a William M. Harrison. History says that W. M. Harrison taught at Columbia, but I can well remember my parents allude to him and his school as being situated near what is now known as the Heiner Place on the east side of Lake Chicot. My sister, aged 13 years, and two younger brothers were pupils of Mr. W. M. Harrison, and walked the distance each school day. After my parents moved to the west side of Lake Chicot the 16th Section of school Land bought for school purposes was located near Luna Landing, about two miles above Columbia. On this land was a very comfortable house built for the home of the former owners. This house contained four large rooms, a front and back hall. The first teacher I remember, was a Mr. Lionwick. Pupils who lived too far to walk rode horseback, generally two on one horse through woods, guided over this path by blazed trees. This teacher was succeeded by Mr. Maxwell who taught two terms. As the County was improving its educational system, looking forward to better schools, about 1852 this house was made more comfortable with additions and outhouses. The Directors employed Mr. and Mrs. John B. Branden to teach. This good couple established a dormitory in connection with their school and had pupils from quite a distance, making quite a full school. A few years before the County Seat was moved from Columbia to Lake Village the Methodists erected a building for a church on the lower end of my father's plantation (he giving the lot). This church was used by different denominations on Sundays and as a public school during the week. After Lake Village became the County Seat more interest was evinced in educational matters. A building for schools, both white and black, were erected all over the County, or buildings for schools were rented from private persons by School Directors for school use when such buildings as belonged to the County became too small, handsome commodious durable homes were erected. At this time these large schools can be found all over the County, with grounds for foot and basket ball, numerous gymnasiums are attached as well as necessary buildings for light and water systems.

The first Church was built in the lower end of the County on the front of the hills near the town of Carmel in 1845, or near that time. It was called Mt. Carmel and erected

by the Presbyterians. The first minister was Rev. Benjamin J. Shaw, who had charge of this church and preached to all the settlement a number of years. He and his wife are buried in Mt. Carmel cemetery. A monument of handsome marble was erected to their memory by a grateful congregation and people at large. Rev. B. J. Shaw died the 5th of May, 1853, aged 54 years. He was born in 1799. His wife was born April 3, 1813 and died November 6, 1854. They left one son, Matthew Shaw, who became a minister; left Chicot County at the beginning of the War and located elsewhere when the War ended.

As we have said Chicot County was formed October 25, 1823 while the State of Arkansas was only a Territory which began its existence the 4th of July, 1819. James Miller, Territorial Governor. During these early days our inhabitants were quiet families of French people who came from the Colonies of Louisiana when France claimed that section of the United States. These French people became dissatisfied with the title to their land and left, some returning to Arkansas Post, others going elsewhere. They were followed by a sterner class of Anglo Saxons who were eager to get beyond the noise of civilization. They could not bear the restraint of the city nor the noise of factories. They did not take in consideration perfect deeds nor titles to lands. They loved hunting and trapping; the cries of wild animals was music to their ears; a hut in the dense forest of heavy trees covered with luxuriant vines of wild grape, muscadine, the almost impenetrable cane brakes along the Mississippi River, and in the interior, appealed to them. One historian has said of the game "Sufficient buffalo, deer and other game could be found to feed all the savages one century of use without waste in the Territory of Arkansas." In these early days canoes, perouques, rafts and keel boats (this is a boat that floats with the river current and is brought upstream by oars and poles to push it along) were used on the water routes; horse and covered wagon were the means of land traveling where roads were found. Stagecoaches, carriages, steamboats and railroads were not dreamed of in those days. Between settlements vast swamps, streams without bridges, prevented frequent intercourse or business of the people. Only roads marked by blazed trees to form a "bridle path" led through this dense forest. To be lost and compelled to spend the night surrounded by wild animals, listening to their cries, was a frequent occurrence. None but the brave-hearted could endure such a life of hardships. It is to these sturdy pioneers we owe the heritage of our present civilization. Should we not revere their memory and try to prove worthy of their self-sacrificing principles? I can well remember the long horseback rides to and from school, or a visit to a distant relative or friend.

After the Territory was admitted into the United States May 6, 1836 and laws had been promulgated regulating the safety of lives and property emigration from Virginia and Kentucky, Missouri, Alabama and South Carolina brought a better class of people, who possessed intellect, energy and law-abiding principles. Slave holders came with their Negroes opening large farms and plantations. These slaves were protected by their owners whom they loved and obeyed. Free from care, no thought of food nor clothes, they knew they had comfortable homes and would be cared for in time of sickness or distress. The lands were alluvial and fertile, cotton and corn were the principle crops. Corn was mostly consumed at home. The planter generally owned a grist mill. He had regular grinding days; ground the corn into fine meal for bread and course meal for grits and chicken feed. Those who did not own a grist mill took their corn on the back of a horse to a mill on grinding day, which was generally known throughout the community.

The cotton was hauled over rough roads on wagon drawn by mules to some shipping point on the Mississippi River; the trip covering from one to four days. This was sent to New Orleans, where all cotton was sent in pioneer days. It was sold for so much a pound or exchanged for necessary articles, such as cloth for plantation clothes, shoes, flour, sugar, molasses and other articles the home needed. The wagons loaded with heavy loads of cotton, when reaching a deep, swift bayou, were crossed from bank to bank on a Choctaw raft. This raft was made by securing three or more very porous logs together, securely fastened-these would hold up heavy weight without sinking in the water-and were used as a ferry boat.

In the lower part of the County is a high ridge of land which is called Bayou Macon Hills. This high section of country runs parallel with Bayou Macon, hence the name. In early days there was an intelligent, refined and religious people who lived throughout these hills. The first Church of the county, with cemetery attached, was found near the town of Carmel. This church and town have passed away from the ashes of Carmel. Eudora, a very prosperous town has risen. This Church was built by Presbyterians but used by all denominations. The young people organized and conducted a literary society, called Mt. Carmel Literary Society. I have seen the Secretary's Book which was kept in the best manner and order. The cemetery is still used as "God's Acre". A stroll through these sacred grounds will reveal the names, birth and age of many prominent persons of the early days.

The farmer and planter along the banks of the Mississippi River began to build better homes. The yards began to assume appearances of small parks with the beautiful trees, both foreign and domestic, gorgeous flowers, ornamentations of different types were much in evidence. Art, Music and a more solid education began to assume a good and lasting power over the people.

Cotton, the monied product, was best adapted to the low alluvial lands of Chicot County, so the cultivating of this commodity took precedence over all other, and, before the War the cultivation was so great and universal throughout the South that the saying "Cotton is King" was created.

Before the invention of the cotton gin the separation of the lint from the seed was done by hand; this was slow work, so slow as to make raising a not very profitable branch of industry. In the year 1794, or near that period the cotton gin was invented by Whitney - the inventor is a disputed question between historians of the present day. Some say Watson was the inventor; Whitney improved his ideas - This invention pushed the cotton industry to the front, and the manufacturing and building of gins was another branch of valuable industry. Before the invention of the screw press cotton was put in long bags; later a press worked by a lever. The screw press was invented by William Dunbar of Mississippi - then followed oil from the seed - so, we see, one improvement leads to another, resulting in a great and general increase of work and trade followed by corresponding comfort and even greater progress in the country.

This was conditions of the inhabitants of our county till the War Between the States. This War nearly exhausted the South's resources. All able bodied men had gone to field of bloody actions, leaving superintending of all crops to the women and faithful servants, and these were subjected to Yankee raids, plundering and pillage. Our weakened soldiers, after four years of hard camp life, returned to their ruined homes; then followed the reconstruction days in the hands of Northerners who worked more for self-

gain than a peaceful settlement of public affairs. Immigration had ceased, agriculture was almost abandoned; but, in time, men began to rebuild and by hard work, close economy, they tried and succeeded in gaining what was lost or wantonly destroyed. Plantations were repaired and the work of recuperation started; but before this era of growth for improved conditions many a fine plantation was lost by the death of the owner, passing into other hands. Thus we see many great changes in people, their manner of living, in the pioneer and the present day.

The coming of railroads, the telephone and automobile have wrought magic in bringing the agriculturing people and the outside world close together. Mails reach distant points in a remarkably short time, and at a minimum cost compared to pioneer days. Then mail was rare and far between. A common letter was ten cents issued by government during Fillmore's administration. Later five cent rate for a letter within 500 miles; beyond that number of miles ten cents was demanded. This was followed in time by a five cent rate to all distances. Later a three cent rate. Now we have a regular ten cent and penny postal cards. It is said by historians that the United States stand ahead of all countries in the postal service.

We own lands capable of producing vegetation of any temperate zone, and our climate is such that each will make a profitable yield with proper attention and cultivation. Our winters are mild which makes stock, hog and cattle raising a branch of industry.

It is known that railroads are a great factor in developing a country, especially an agriculturing community, bringing about a revolution in handling crops, freight rates less, transits to market are within reach of each producer either by railroad or steamboats; the latter accommodating the farmer or planter living on the banks or near the Mississippi River.

What would our pioneer parents think of our present railroads, steamboats, telephones and automobiles. All of these modern improvements have wrought wonderful changes in and throughout our country.

The crops are handled with much more ease than in former years. The telephone puts us in communication with outside markets and the business world. The automobile brings us nearer our neighboring friends giving the convenience of cities as well as the pleasure of country life.

The homes on the banks of rivers are protected by high levees, and revetments of caving banks by the Federal Government. This levee system also protects a long area of Louisiana.

Drainage has been agitated and where adapted found to be of practical value. This subject has yet to receive equal share with other improvements.

A good road movement is interesting the minds of prominent people and soon an automobile road will connect Little Rock with the extreme end of Chicot County.

The growth of improvements, the number of inhabitants of this county, have been phenomenal in the last.....PAGE 54 OF THE MANUSCRIPT IS MISSING FROM THE ORIGINAL COPY.

In the lower end of this county, about twelve miles below Lake Village, lived one of the most noted families of pioneer times. They occupied and cultivated a large tract of valuable land and were very prosperous. This was the Johnson family from Kentucky. Mr. Cyrus Johnson, Mr. Lycurgus Johnson and their widowed sister, Julia J. Johnson.

Their homes adjoined and they had the handsomest home, at that time, in our county; very large houses surrounded by highly cultivated grounds. They were very prosperous in every sense of the word; lived like foreign nobility, highly cultivated, possessing noble traits of character and had friends in all classes of society. Mrs. Julia J. Johnson lived on her handsome plantation home till after the War Between the States; she then lived in New York with a niece, Mrs. John C. Calhoun, who was reared in Chicot County. Mrs. Johnson never relinquished her interest in her home plantation though she died in New York. Mr. and Mrs. Lycurgus Johnson lived on an adjoining plantation where every necessity and luxury were at command. They had six children who spent their lives under the home roof till the deaths of their parents. Mr. Johnson died a number of years ago, followed in recent years by his wife. Both died at their home in this county. They are interred in the family lot in the cemetery in Louisville, Kentucky. Their descendants are still in this county. The youngest son owns and lives with his family at the old home "Lakeport". Mr. Cyrus Johnson and wife died at an early age. Their only child, a son, was reared under the supervision of his aunt, Mrs. Julia J. Johnson. He was educated at the University of Virginia in Law. He lives in this county at this time.

Written by Mrs. Leona S. Brasher, the fifth child of John and Nancy D. Sumner, born 29th of February, 1840 on the east side of Lake Chicot (then known as Old River Lake), was educated in Arkansas, Missouri, and Tennessee; married Dr. Asa Davis Brasher 18th of August, 1858; Dr. A. D. Brasher died from the effects of wounds received at Corinth, Mississippi on December 8th, 1863. At the time of his death he held the position of Assistant Surgeon in the 3rd Louisiana Infantry, Armstrong's Brigade.

## EARLY SETTLERS AND LAND OWNERS OF CHICOT COUNTY

### Reprinted from the Sesquicentennial Edition

Early settlers of Chicot County, as it was bounded prior to 1878, listed in Goodspeed's History of South Arkansas, were as follows:

Down the west bank of the Mississippi River to the Louisiana state line- John R. Campbell, Charles W. Campbell, Isaac Adair and Oscar Bowles were settlers in the northern sector. William T. Ferguson located above Gaines Landing, on the site of Eunice, a town some time out of existence by 1890, Richard M. Campbell, Ben P. Gaines, R. M. Gaines and William Gaines settled at Gaines Landing. Below Gaines Landing a plantation was established by John P. Walworth, who lives at Natchez, Miss. Henry R. Collins located in Island 82. Opposite, on the mainland, was John R. Llewellyn. M. P. Peake and Joel Offutt located a little lower down. Between Llewellyn and Peake lived Sanford C. Faulkner, the original "Arkansas Traveler," a land speculator, admirer of good horses and a more or less accomplished amateur violinist, who, on one of his trips, came upon a fiddle scraping squatter in the woods, and held with him a conversation which has since become celebrated in story, song and drama.

Below Offutt was "Old Si" (Silas) Craig, who traveled extensively on foot throughout Chicot and Phillips Counties, compass in hand, and selected and located much valuable land. Horace F. Walworth had two places - one at Point Chicot, and one at "Patria." Si Craig settled two plantations at Bellevue and Yellow Bayou. Felix Taylor settled Luna Plantation, and was succeeded by H. and Richard R. Sessions. Taylor also settled "Patria," long the Claiborne W. Sanders plantation. In 1890 all of Luna and part of Patria was owned by the Sunnyside Land Co. The Latrobe plantation was settled by Drs. Joseph and Rollah Holson. It passed to the ownership of Mr. Street, and subsequently to the Sunnyside Land Co. The Leland plantation was settled by Benjamin L. Miles, who was succeeded there by James Miles. Mr. Miles and Horace F. Walworth had considerable litigation over a part of Leland and a part of Pt. Chicot. The difficulty was afterward compromised, and Leland passed to the ownership of Joshua M. Craig.

One of the earliest settlers on Pt. Chicot was Carlos Villemont, who claimed the property under a Spanish grant to his father in part payment for the construction of a military road from Pt. Chicot to Arkansas Post. The Supreme Court of the U. S. decided adversely to his claims, and the property was taken up and transferred. This locality is distinguished in the county for two important things. It gave the county its name, which means "stumpy", and was first applied to the point by men passing up and down the River, and it was there that Isaac M. Parker, was born - the first white child born in the county.

"Vaucluse" was settled early by Samuel Walker. The first owner of "Sunnyside" was Abner Johnson, who sold it to Elisha Worthington, who, in turn, transferred it to "Prince John" Van Buren, of the family of U. S. President Van Buren, a brilliant and eccentric man, once well and widely known in America's highest social and political circles, who, however, was never a resident of Chicot County. Since the Civil War, this property has passed to the Starlings, and was by them sold to the Sunnyside Land Co., in 1862.

“Lakeport” was made a plantation by Joel Johnson, and remained in the Johnson family for a long time. Lycurgus Johnson, son of Joel Johnson, a good citizen and able business man, died about 1890. Then the place became the residence of Mrs. Julia J. Johnson, widow of Governor Johnson of Louisiana, and was partly owned by Mrs. John C. Calhoun, of New York, wife of a grandson of John C. Calhoun of South Carolina.

The Ford Place was settled by James Ford, and later passed to his daughter, Mrs. Alice Huntington of Weathersford, Connecticut.

“Florence” and “Tecumseh” plantations were opened up by Ben Johnson, once Judge of the U.S. District Court of Arkansas, and Richard M. Johnson, once Vice-President of the U. S., both brothers of Joel Johnson.

The Goodloe tract was improved by Archibald Goodloe. That and Tecumseh passed to the proprietorship of Francis Griffin in 1860, the largest grower of cotton in the world. In 1869 it passed to William B. Street and General D. H. Reynolds, and the widow of Mr. Street.

“Belle Island” was purchased by Ben Johnson. It was later owned partly by Sutton & McGinnis, and partly by Gen. Reynolds. “Harewood’s Island” was settled by Thomas Harewood and passed to Henry H. Hawkins, and through his estate to the Florence plantation. The “Rossback” place was opened up by Nathan Ross, and later belonged to Dr. Kiger of Mississippi. The Hunt place was opened up by a member of the Vick family, after whom Vicksburg, Miss., was named, and now (1890) belongs to the estate of Richard J. Hunt. George W. Polk, brother of President Polk, entered property below the Hunt place, which was washed into the River. The Bernard place, with the town of Bernard afterward built upon it, met the same fate. Isaac Hilliard opened up the Hilliard property, which he purchased from several parties.

The Flournoy property was opened up by Victor M. Flournoy, and passed to the Honorable Kenneth Rayner, member of Congress from Mississippi, and since Solicitor General of the U. S. Treasury, and from him to George K. Cracraft.

The Thomas Bradford property, opened up by Thomas Bradford, later was owned by H. W. Graves. The Woolfolk place, the last plantation north of the Louisiana line was opened up by William W. Woolfolk, and sold under execution by James A. Seddon, Secretary of War in the Confederate States Government, and is now owned by H. W. Graves.

The properties on Lake Chicot now claim attention. Stuart’s Island in the Lake was opened up by Charles C. Stuart, of Chantilly, Virginia, whose father Charles Calvert Stuart was a personal friend and adviser to General Washington. It was, in 1890, still owned by the Stuart family.

The Hyner place, “in the bed of the lake” was settled by Abraham Hyner, and eventually was owned by the Sunnyside Land Co. “Rossmere” was opened up by George Read, and was, in 1890, owned by the Read family. “Lake Hall” was opened up by A. H. Davies. The....who, at the turn of the century was said to be the oldest man in the county. John P. Walworth opened up “Sunnyside”, which became the property of the Sunnyside Land Co.

Opposite, on the south side or outer bank, is “Redleaf”, which was opened up by Elisha Worthington, and later became the property of Ford Worthington. The Sanders place, now (1890) the property of Richard M. Gaines, was opened up by John H. Sanders. The Pettit place was opened up by W. McD. Pettit, and later became owned by J. C. Head



of Greenville, Miss. "Holly Ridge" was opened up by W. W. Rose, and afterward owned by Richard R. Sessions, and still later by T. K. Lee. "Deerfield" was opened up by John Drennen, and later owned by James T. Robinson. The place next door to Deerfield, also opened up by John Drennen, lies just above Lake Village and is owned in parts by George Read, John G. B. Simms and Gen. Reynolds (1890). General Reynolds calls his home "Lakeside".

John Sumner opened up land near Lake Village, which was later divided among William G. Streett, Gen. Reynolds, Kate Reynolds and the Sumners. The Brawner tract was settled by Wm. Brawner. The Chapman place was opened up by Reuben Smith, and was once known as "Red Reuben", with reference to the color of its owner's hair. Part of it was later owned by the Chapman family, part by Wm. P. Halliday and part by John C. Connerly.

Goodspeed alleges that Charles C. (Rice) McDermott and C. C. McDermott settled in the southwest corner of Bowie Township.

On Grand Lake, in the southeast part of the county "Eureka" was opened up by Romulus Payne. It was later owned by Ben Johnson from whom it passed to W. W. Johnson. James S. Peake opened up the Peake place. The "German Ridge" was opened up by Thomas Bradford, and passed to J. A. Joslyn, and later owned by the latter's daughter, Mary E. Joslyn.

In January 1885, Col. John C. Calhoun of Lake Village was an Arkansas delegate to the National Agricultural Convention in New Orleans.

## **CHICOT COUNTY HISTORY**

**by Sarah Merrit**

On rafts, propelled by long poles, pioneers worked their way down the Mississippi to establish a settlement on Point Chicot that in years has faded, but given life to the whole of Chicot County.

The first settlers largely consisted of squatters, and they did not remain to do much toward improvement. Some of them were remembered as Royal Bills, Amos Moore, Mallronc, Lefebvre, Hatsell, Joseph, Bogy, White Henry Baker, David Clary and James Russell.

### **DESCENDANTS LIVING**

But there were also prominent families who planted the seed from which our county has grown, and whose direct descendants are living here today.

One of the first of our permanent and productive early settlers was "Old Si" (Silas) Craig, who with his compass in hand, traveled on foot in order to survey the lands of this region. It was he who first divided our county, or a part of it, into separate divisions. Old Si settled Bellaire and Yellow Bayou. Joshua Craig, who was the owner of Leland after Benjamine and James Miles settled it. There are yet to be found mounds containing the remains of the early family of Craig where is now Panther Forest plantation. Such a method of burial was used to protect the graves from the adjacent waters on the Mississippi, which overflowed almost annually.

Gaines Landing derived its name from Ben P. Gaines, R. M. Gaines, and William H. Gaines, who settled it. Gaines Landing became from 1850 to 1880, one of the chief river ports on the lower Mississippi.

### **ORIGINAL "TRAVELER"**

Henry R. Collins was the first to locate on Leland Eighty Two. Across on the mainland were the plantations of John R. Llewellyn, one of the most prominent settlers. Madison Peak and Joel Offut lived nearby. In that section, now known as Walker Place, lived Samuel C. Faulkner, the original "Arkansas Traveler." Faulkner moved to Little Rock in 1858. The Walworth family owned places on Point Chicot and also owned "Pastoria". Felix Taylor was one of the largest holders of land, owning Luna Plantation and "Patria" Plantation.

An early family of true distinction was the Johnsons. Abner Johnson was the first owner of "Sunnyside", which increased in acreage to such an extent that at one time in the '90's it was the largest plantation in the South. "Lakeport" was made a plantation by Joel Johnson. A portion of this place now known as the Cook place, was the property of Governor Johnson of Louisiana. "Florence" and "Tecumseh" plantations were opened up by Ben Johnson, once judge of the United States District Court of Arkansas, and Richard M. Johnson, once Vice-President of the United States, both brothers of Joel. In 1860 "Tecumseh" passed into the proprietorship of Francis Griffin, the largest grower of cotton in the world.

## **FIRST COUNTY OFFICERS**

In 1823 at the founding of Chicot County, need created three county officers. There were sheriff, clerk and coroner. Our first representative in the Territorial Government was chosen in 1827. The office of county judge was filled later.

When LaSalle first came down the Mississippi River, before De Tonti established Arkansas Post in 1686, the intrepid Frenchman stopped on his journey toward the Gulf at a point northeast of present day Lake Village. He and his men named the place "Isles de Chicot", Island of Stumps. From this came the name Pointe Chicot.

In 1763 the Mississippi River country, of which this was a part, was ceded by France to Spain by treaty. In 1790 Don Carlos de Villemont was made commandant of Arkansas Post. De Villemont had been an officer in the royal armies of Spain.

Five years after Don Carlos de Villemont became a commandant at Arkansas Post, the King of Spain, through Baron Carondelet, on the 17th of June, 1795, granted him a tract of land embracing two square leagues, with two leagues frontage on the Mississippi River, southward from that point La Salle had named Isle de Chicot. The Spanish grant to De Villemont was poorly described but was bounded on the north by a "stumpy swamp", a condition that had no doubt prompted La Salle's men to apply the name "Chicot" to the neck of land that was formed by the hairpin bend in the Mississippi at that point.

## **INDIANS HOSTILE**

Because of the hostility of the Indians, no attempt was made by de Villemont immediately to settle his grant. In 1800 Spain re-ceded to France this territory, largely because from Napoleon. (Three years later, of course, Napoleon sold to the United States the vast tract of land in the "Louisiana Purchase.") De Villemont was no longer in charge of Arkansas Post, but he continued to make his home there. Between 1800 and 1823, while Don Carlos loafed at Arkansas Post, American settlers, poling their way down the rivers, landed on the de Villemont grant and created out of the southeast portion of the Territory of Arkansas a new county, the tenth subdivision of the Territory.

## **BIG IN BEGINNING**

At that time of its original formation, Chicot county extended westward from the Mississippi River to the Saline and Ouachita Rivers, a distance of about 56 miles. Its southern boundary was, of course, the Louisiana state line, but it extended northward to within ten miles of the mouth of the Arkansas River, taking in the lands now in Desha, Drew and Ashley Counties. The present cities of Arkansas City, McGehee, Monticello, Hamburg and Crossett are on land at first within the boundaries of Chicot County. The Settlers on de Villemont's grant on the Isles des Chicot formed the nucleus of a town on the west bank of the Mississippi which was named for Don Carlos de Villemont. When Chicot County was created this town was made the county seat. Its population is estimated at about 150 in 1823.

Court records disclose that no court house was erected at Villemont. Court was held in private homes and detailed county records kept in long hand by clerks. Some of these old records are yet filed in the present county court house in Lake Village, faded and yellow, but legible with study.

## **VILLEMONT THRIVES**

Villemont thrived as a river port. Its population grew, and it became the trading point for not only those who opened up the early farm lands of this county, but also for pioneers who had settled inland as far west as present day Camden, who came to Villemont once or twice a year by ox drawn carts. They came to get their mail from the river packets and to take provisions back into the interior. Villemont became a town of 500 population.

The current of the Mississippi ate into the banks of Point Chicot where the town of Villemont was located, slowly crumbling the county seat into the river. Finally, in 1847, all that remained of Chicot County's first seat of government caved into the mighty river.

The county seat was moved to Columbia when Villemont became no longer usable, but it, in turn, was devoured by the rushing waters of the river.

The next effort to establish a permanent seat of government was the choice of a sparse settlement named Masona, on the banks of Bayou Macon. This apparently was not a happy choice, since within two years the county seat was again relocated to Lake Village, its present site. This was done in 1855 to 1857. Bereft of county administration, Masona nevertheless developed into the town of Chicot, which prospered after the Civil War and became in the 70's probably the most thriving community in the county. Its decline subsequently was caused by the abandonment of saw mills, its chief business.

## **FORMED IN 1823**

Chicot County was formed October 25, 1823. Its boundaries were defined by an act passed by the Territorial General Assembly on November 2, 1835. This act clipped a ten mile strip on the western boundary, putting it into Union County. This was the only change at that time in the original area of the county. In December 1846 part of the northwestern Chicot County was attached to a newly formed county, Drew. On January 19, 1861, more of the western portion of the county was taken by the legislature, from which was made Ashley County. On November 30, 1875, a bit more of Chicot County was given to Drew County, and in February 1879 a northern section was attached to Desha County. No further change in the boundaries of Chicot County has occurred, but the Chicot County of 1880, as it finally emerged, had an area of but one-third its original size. Chicot County, is, on an average, 15 miles wide, and 39 miles long. Its southern boundary, the thirty-third parallel of latitude, has never changed. Its eastern boundary, the Mississippi River, is constantly undergoing minor changes.

## **THE MURRELL GANG**

From 1835 to 1857, John A. Murrell and his gang of cutthroats rode and raided, robbed and terrorized the Delta country. From all accounts, Murrell was the most daring and brazen robber who ever stripped a defenseless man or cut an innocent throat.

## **“WHISKEY SHOOT”**

About 1855 “Whiskey Chute”, the channel of water that formed Stuart's Island, got its name.

A steamboat laden with whiskey was held up on the way down the river off Point Chicot, near Greenville, by a small, dirty craft manned by Murrell's river pirates from

Robbers' Nest. By the time the two drifting boats had reached the mouth of a narrow willow covered channel that led to the Nest, the whiskey had been transferred, and the pirates cut loose the moorings, and departed.

While the robber craft lay securely anchored in the chute, and the men were celebrating in drunken revelry, a band of silent, stern-faced men with muskets quietly made their way toward Robber's Nest.

### **END OF GANG**

These men were settlers who had grown weary of the outlawing and plundering that had been going on about them, and were determined to end it. They probably had observed the looting of the whiskey boat and knew that the influence of liquor in the case would be a great aid in their attack. It proved to be true.

Not one of Murrell's men survived. The boat with the whiskey was set afire, to settle to the bottom of the narrow channel that is known as "Whiskey Shoot."

In 1830 a family named Pettit chose the west bank of Old River Lake, now named Lake Chicot, upon which to settle. At that time, they found the land, on which the present town of Lake Village stands, a massive cane brake. They cleared a site for their home, and began to cultivate a farm. Other pioneers followed the Pettits and a small settlement was started at the present site of Lake Village.

In the County Court records, written in the long-hand of County Clerk James Blaine is found that, during April of 1830, a permit for a ferry across Old River Lake was granted to one Mary Mayo. She was to pay \$2.50 to the sheriff for the privilege of operating the ferry.

The Chicot County court meeting in Villemont during 1830, began appointing road commissioners to provide roads entering the interior of the county from the Mississippi River settlements. That the Pettits and their early neighbors were not long without means of travel is shown by the appointment of five men: John Danby, Samuel Wallace, and B. L. Weir, to lay out a road "commencing at some point on Bayou Bartholomew near Brinkley Ward's place and running thence to Old River Lake.

That William Rose was an early settler is shown in old court records. Stokely Ward was appointed as overseer of a road "from John J. Bowie's (place) to Wm. Rose's place on Old River Lake."

By the latter part of 1830, several ferries operated across Old River Lake (Lake Chicot) is clearly shown in an old record of county court proceedings. On Aug. 7, 1830, Hugh White was given a permit to operate a ferry across Old River Lake. In October, 1830 Hugh White absorbed the ferry permit previously granted to Mary Mayo.

At the same time, "on petition of the sundry inhabitants of the County of Chicot, it was ordered by County Judge Wm. B. Duncan that the rates for ferriage across Old River Lake would henceforth be:

"For man and horse 37 1/2¢

Loose Horse or footman 18 3/4¢

Head of cattle, hogs or sheep 12 1/2¢

2 wheel carriage & team \$1.00

4 wheel carriage & team \$1.50

Baggage or freight other than such as is crossed in carriages, 4 1/2¢ per

hundred weight, exclusive of the first hundred pounds.”

In the same month, the county judge ordered a road to be built from Lakeport to Wm. Rose’s place on Old River Lake and then continued to the “ferry landing” of Daniel K. Mayo. Thus it appears that some sort of road was built in the fall of 1830 from Lakeport around the southern part of Old River Lake to near the present site of Lake Village.

County records give the names of four families who lived on the shore of Old River Lake early in 1831; Isaiah Haskins, John Mathis, William Rose and Samuel Estill. These four men were named judges from Old River Township for an election.

In 1833 a road was built from Columbia to the mouth of Yellow Bayou on Old River Lake.

These entries on the old court records serve to indicate that during the 1830-33 period settlement and improvement of the Lake Village sector of the county had begun.

For twenty years there was little reason for mercantile establishments on the western shore of Old River Lake. It is known, however, that a small settlement formed here while old Arkansas Post was still a trading post for Indians and white adventurers. this settlement was called Old Lake in those days.

The land on which the present city of Lake Village has been built was owned, about, 1850, by John Sumner, a distinguished Kentuckian, and John Drennan. Sumner owned the northern part of what is now Lake Village, Drennan the southern part.

Just prior to 1856, John Sumner donated a part of his land toward the founding of Lake Village.

On Jan. 8, 1856, the Probate Court of Chicot County was, for the first time, held in Lake Village. Then, in 1857 the county seat was moved from Masona (later called Chicot) to this city. A brick courthouse and jail were immediately constructed. While the first brick courthouse was being built, court was held in the small frame building later used as a restaurant.

The courthouse of 1857 was built where the later structure (1940) was erected. At this additional business houses began to be located in the vicinity, in a block south of the courthouse, fronting the lake.

From 1860 to 1890, Lake Village was at a virtual standstill, as far as progress was concerned. Toward the end of the century, a few additional stores, doctors’ and lawyers’ offices and a frame hotel were built. there was a saloon started by Joe Frame, and a livery stable located across from the old courthouse, later in 1940 the site of E. P. Tony’s office. Two general stores did practically all of the town’s business then, that of Tom Henderson and N. W. Bunker, Sr.

At the turn of the century, Lake Village had a population of about 150 people. Its business district was confined to two blocks along the lakefront, one block south and one block north of the courthouse.

When, in 1903, the Memphis, Helena & Louisiana Railroad entered Lake Village the present Main Street with the depot at its foot, came into existence. New life throbbed in the old county seat. New business houses were built on the town's new Main Street. A new jail was built, and a street opened through the old courthouse-jail yard. Stores and offices encircled the courthouse square. In 1907 the fifty year old courthouse was razed and replaced by another.

On July 7 of that year, the city's most disastrous fire drove more buildings onto Main Street. Two entire blocks burned, one on the north side of the courthouse square, and the other to the south. The principal losers of property in this fire were S. and N. W. Bunker, C. M. Matthews, Mrs. K. Connerly, A. N. McDaniel, S. Epstein and the law firm of Bolton and Kirten.

During the ensuing five years there continued much growth and building in the city. In 1912 Main Street was paved. Then in 1918 the Arkansas-Louisiana Highway was paved through Lake Village along the lakeshore.

So, by 1920 the present town was developed on the land where, eighty years before, the Pettit's settled in a reclaimed canebrake.

## **TELEPHONES MAKE DEBUT IN COUNTY IN 1900**

### **Reprinted from Sesquicentennial Edition**

Telephone service is only one-third as old as Chicot County this week since it was 1900 before the first simple yet crude telephone system was established in Lake Village, Eudora, and Dermott.

While both Dermott and Lake Village had their own small switchboard located in town, Eudora's telephone system operated out of Greenville, Miss. The lines were installed at Old Grand Lake about two miles east of town. The Eudora telephone story is discussed in another article in this issue.

### **Lake Village**

Telephone service was established in Lake Village in 1900 by the Valley Telephone Company which later sold the property to the Southern Telephone Company.

A small type switchboard was installed above the Post Office and later moved to a residence known as the Taggart home. Only 25 customers were connected to the system when it was first made operational.

Prior to 1910, a Western Electric switchboard was purchased and moved to an office on the second floor above the Tushek Jewelry Store.

In 1911, the Southern Company was purchased by Southwestern Telephone and Telegraph Company, predecessor to Southwestern Bell.

### **Dermott**

The early years of telephone service in Dermott parallel those at Lake Village. The same company, Valley Telephone, owned and operated the company until eventual purchase by Southwestern Bell.

President of Valley Company was Henry Thane with W. G. Savage managing all their properties in Chicot County.

Today, about 75 per cent of all homes in the exchange - including many lake houses and rural residences - have telephone service and the figure increases annually.

Because of the growth, Southwestern Bell continues to spend many thousands of dollars each year in dial switching equipment, poles, wires and cable to improve and update the local and long distance service.

And who knows what kind of service we'll have when Chicot County celebrates 200 years of existence?

One thing for certain, it'll be quite different from what we now take for granted as the best communications service in the world.

When service was first offered to Dermott residents in 1900, there were 16 original subscribers plus three rural lines. The wires were suspended on native poles with grounded iron circuits.

The first switchboard was installed in a store owned by E. R. Remley at the corner of Main and Iowa Streets. It was later moved to 106 South Main Street.

The first long distance service was established to Collins, approximately 8 miles



from Dermott. Later a line - for only one call at a time - was built to Pine Bluff, Monticello and Arkansas City.

### **10 P. M. Closing**

In all three towns, if you wanted to talk to someone you were forced to place the call before 10 p.m. The operator in charge closed down the system at that hour in the early years and reopened the next morning.

Surprisingly, rates for telephone service have not risen as much as might be expected since the turn of the century. For instance, a business phone cost \$2.75 per month and an extension was \$ .75. While residence telephone service was \$1.75 and an extension was \$ .50.

### **Luxury to Necessity**

Through the years, the demand for telephone service has grown from a luxury enjoyed by only a wealthy few until almost everyone now has telephone service.

Just since 1945 the growth of telephone users in Chicot County has been somewhat surprising. In 1945 only about 20 per cent of the residences in Dermott and Eudora had telephones. The figure was higher in Lake Village at the end of the second world war - 33 per cent.

## COMMUNICATIONS OF CHICOT COUNTY

Reprinted from the Sesquicentennial Edition  
1973

### DERMOTT NEWS

The Dermott News was founded in the summer of 1910 by J. A. Watkins.

During the next year it was published successively by C. T. Kennedy and by W. S. Daniel and W. A. Riley. In September, 1911, the News was purchased by Gilbert Earle Kinney who edited and published the paper for 27 years until his death in September, 1938.

In December, 1939, the Dermott News was purchased from the Kinney family by Joe W. Sitlington. Sitlington published the weekly until September, 1946, when it was purchased by a group of local citizens operating as the Dermott News Publishing Company. In September, 1947, it was sold to W. W. Mundy.

Mundy published the News for over 10 years, selling in 1958, to F. N. Carnahan publisher of the Eudora Enterprise. In February, 1961, the paper was purchased by Mr. and Mrs. LeRoy Tyson who had formerly been with the Augusta Advocate and Atkins Chronicle. The Tysons continue to publish the News with Mr. Tyson as editor.

### EUDORA RADIO

The Eudora Radio was a short-lived weekly published and edited in the mid-20's by P. A. Tims.

It appeared on Thursdays and at one time had a circulation of 550.

### ENTERPRISE

The Eudora Enterprise was established on November 29, 1934, by J. R. Massey with the equipment he had formerly used to publish the Junction City News.

Massey was succeeded the next year by Jeff S. Henderson, who took in as a partner Charles S. Field. In 1937 Henderson's interest was purchased by Field's son, Sheldon E. Field. Sheldon Field took over complete management of the Enterprise in 1946 when his father retired.

In 1948 the Eudora weekly was sold to a company with Jack E. Halter, Jr., and Francis Neal Carnahan as the major stockholders. Carnahan purchased a full interest in the Enterprise in 1951 and continued to edit and publish the paper until his death in 1967. Mrs. Alice Carnahan operated the weekly until 1971 when it was sold to Mr. and Mrs. LeRoy Tyson of the Dermott News and James R. Tyson of the Chicot Spectator in Lake Village. James Tyson became editor of the Enterprise, which is published on Wednesdays and has a circulation of over 2,300.

### SPECTATOR

The Chicot Spectator was founded in Lake Village in 1906; D. C. McCan was an early editor and publisher.

J. D. Miles published the paper for about three years, selling to R. P. Sponenbarger in 1910. A. B. Avery bought the Spectator in 1915 and continued to edit and publish it until 1937 when he was succeeded by his son, Marsden Avery.

Early in 1942 the Lake Village weekly was purchased by Dixon T. Gaines and D. T. Henderson; a few months later Gaines assumed full ownership. In 1945 Gaines sold an interest in the Spectator to Lester W. Mansur who became editor and later publisher. In 1952 Charles W. Mansur bought an interest in the paper.

In 1969 Lester Mansur sold the Chicot Spectator to James R. Tyson who is its present publisher and editor.

## MISCELLANEOUS ARTICLES

### Reprinted from the Sesquicentennial Edition, 1973

The writing below is taken from the oldest of the territorial records now at the Chicot County Courthouse in Lake Village. The entry was made by Andrew Latting upon his assuming his duties as Justice of the Peace in 1819. The entry reads as follows:

From a commition ishude  
from Robert Crittendon Secretary  
and Acting Governor of the Territory  
of Arkansas Dated 3rd Day of August 1819  
Duly authoresing me as Magistrate  
for the Township of Point Sheco  
and sworn into office on the 5th August 1819  
by the Honrable Robert T. Letcher  
I do, thereby proceed to the Dutys  
of my office.

Andrew Latting, Justice of the Peace

\*\*\*\*\*

### Newspaper Editor's Note about the Supplement to the Paper

We are indebted to many who made contributions to the Chicot County sesquicentennial edition.

Capt. John C. Hammock, U. S. Navy (Retired) of Dermott spent many hours in compiling and assembling historical material with the full cooperation of Miss Clara Henry, circuit clerk, and others at the courthouse.

We are also thankful for the many who gratefully gave us permission to reprint articles presented at County Historical Society meetings or previously published in one of the three county newspapers. We are also grateful to the advertisers in this issue.

We regret that a shortage of newsprint prevented the publishing of as much historical material as originally planned but feel that enough is enclosed to provide a representative history of the county.

Copies of the edition are available at The Chicot Spectator, Dermott News or Eudora Enterprise for 50 cents each.

\*\*\*\*\*

Stuart's Island, a large island in Lake Chicot, comprising about 1,000 acres, was early acquired by Charles C. Stuart of Virginia, whose father Charles Calvert Stuart, was a close personal friend of George Washington.

B. F. Miles, an early figure of importance in the beginnings of Chicot County arrived at Point Chicot in 1816.

At the time of de Villemont's grant, on Point Chicot, the colonial population of Arkansas consisted of 196 individuals, in 1785.

In January 1833, Henry Smith was paid \$10 by Chicot County for auctioning town lots in Columbia.

The Pine Bluff and Chicot railroad ran its first train into this county on June 8, 1875.

\*\*\*\*\*

The monument in front of the county courthouse at Lake Village, erected by the Captain McConnell and George K. Cracraft Chapters of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, is very fittingly inscribed: "To the Confederate soldiers of Chicot County, the record of whose sublime sacrifice and undying devotion is the proud heritage of a loyal posterity."

\*\*\*\*\*

The Dermott-Halley-Gaines Landing branch was one of the oldest pieces of railroad in the state, part of it believed to have been laid before the Civil War.

Between the Mississippi River and Halley numerous pieces of the narrow gauge track have been found with much of it bent into a "U" shape. The explanation is that the union army tore up the track and after heating bent it around trees to make sure it was not relaid by Confederate forces.

Several short pieces of the track are in the possession of Lee Parker of Dermott.

\*\*\*\*\*

The first jury in Chicot County recorded in County Court records consisted of the following "good and lawful men of the vicinage.": H. S. Smith, Hugh White, Wm. Humphries, H. H. McGary, Joseph B. Fulton, Wm. B. Patton, Daniel Slagle, Samuel Jenkins, Squire Ward, Wm. K. Estill, and John C. Jones.

\*\*\*\*\*

Earliest county officials of Chicot County were: County Judge W. B. Duncan 1829-31; County Clerk John Clark 1823-25; Sheriff William B. Patton 1823-27; Treasurer A. W. Webb 1836-40; Coroner Richard Latting 1823-25; Assessor Wm. Smith 1869-70; Surveyor Wm. Hunt 1829-36 and Circuit Clerk R. E. Alcorn 1910-14.

\*\*\*\*\*

Don Carlos de Villemont was the commandant of the Spanish garrison at Arkansas Post until the successive changes of administration to France and then to the United States in 1803. He had been born in 1767. After the Louisiana Purchase he maintained his residence at Arkansas Post and at Point Chicot, later in Chicot County. He married circa 1800, and died at Arkansas Post on August 9, 1823.

One of his daughters, Matilda, married Doctor John Gibson of Point Chicot on Aug. 9, 1826, the ceremony being performed by Judge S. P. Eskridge. Another daughter died at Point Chicot in 1835.

## DERMOTT DIARY 1910-1920

As recorded in the first ten years of the *Dermott News*.  
Reprinted from the Sesquicentennial Edition, 1973

June 17, 1910

Vol. 1 of the *Dermott News*. 6 columns. \$1.00 per year; J. A. Watkins, Editor and Publisher, using equipment of the former Bradley County Leader, printed in Warren temporarily by the *Dermott News*.

Dermott pastors listed in the first issue: Rev. N.C. Denson, Baptist; Rev. W. T. Tims, Presbyterian; Rev. R.R. Moore, Methodist.

June 22, 1910

Dermott had two hotels: the Moss and the Wilkerson.

Nov. 4, 1910

*The Dermott News* was leased to D. L. Newman.

Feb. 9, 1911

*The Dermott News* was changed to 4 columns, W. A. Riley and W. S. Daniel, Publishers.

Dermott had nine daily passenger trains in addition to local freight trains which also carried passengers.

Dr. W. K. Baker dies.

Mar. 16, 1911

J. H. Hammock and his son, E. G. Hammock of Little Rock moved to this city and will engage in the practice of law.

Apr. 21, 1911

Third Annual Meeting of the Southeast Arkansas Literary and Athletic Association was held in Crossett; star athletes from Dermott were Lee Woolfolk, Will Duerson, John Tims, and A. G. Cavaness.

Dec. 14, 1911

G. E. Kinney became editor of the *Dermott News*. Rev. George H. Kirker became the Presbyterian pastor. Account of the wedding of Miss Alma Daniels and Professor U. C. Barnett.

Dec. 21, 1911

H. L. Van advertises Old Charter Whiskey for \$1.50 per quart; Bowden & Bowden sold it for \$1.65.

Dec. 28, 1911

D. Kimpel got a Victor Victrola for Christmas.

Jan. 4, 1912

Ernie Kimpel returned to Arkadelphia to resume his school work.

Jan. 25, 1912

Harvey Parnell has a stray gander which he says he wishes the owner would call and get.

Feb. 22, 1912

J. H. Hammock was chosen mayor in the municipal primary election.

Feb. 29, 1912

J. A. Bennett publicly states that he will resign as City Marshal.

Col. R. A. Buckner announces that he will run for Chancellor to oppose Judge Z. T. Wood.

Mar. 7, 1912

J. A. Bennett reconsiders his decision to resign as city marshal.

Mar. 14, 1912

New moving picture theater under the management of W. T. Alexander opened last week. It will show pictures three nights each week. It's name is the Alex Theater.

Dermott's first telephone directory is printed.

Hon. Joe T. Robinson speaks at the High School Auditorium.

Mar. 21, 1912

On Monday, at the spacious Hammock home, Mrs. Maude Bussy entertained in honor of her sister, Miss Hammock of Monticello. In the receiving line were Mesdames Bussy, E. G. Hammock, Gaster, the honoree and Mr. Hammock. The guests were Misses Hammock of Monticello, Byrd, Foster and Morrow, and Messrs. Armistead, Clark, Byrne, Ahrens and Reynold.

Apr. 11, 1912

E. G. Hammock and D. J. Anders were elected delegates to the Democratic State Convention which meets in Little Rock on June 6th.

Apr. 25, 1912

Announcement of the death of Mrs. R. A. Buckner.

May 2, 1912

Mayor Hammock has posted notice to warn all vagrants to get work or "vamoose". Dermott has too many without any visible means of support. This applies to all loafers.

May 15, 1912

Fourth Annual Meeting of the Southeast Arkansas Literary and Athletic Association was held in Dermott.

July 4, 1912

J. N. Robertson was pastor of the Baptist Church, and Father Matthew, Priest of the Catholic Church.

Sept. 19, 1912

E. G. Hammock is appointed a delegate to the 7th Annual Convention of the Lakes-to-the Gulf Deep Waterway Association to be held in Little Rock on Sept. 24-26.

Sept. 26, 1912

Dermott has a new theater---The Dixie.

Oct. 17, 1912

An account of the wedding of H. D. Elliot and Miss Barbara Chambers of Nashville, Tenn.

Nov. 7, 1912

Dr. L. A. Buckner and Attorney E. G. Hammock have the honor of having been appointed members of the reception committee to greet Champ Clark and Joe T. Robinson at the State Fair at Hot Springs.

Nov. 28, 1912

The Dixie Theater announces that it will discontinue Moving pictures and present only vaudeville and opera.

Dec. 12, 1912

Rev. J. Z. Haney was called as pastor of the Presbyterian Church. Rev. A. M. Shaw is the new Baptist minister.

Feb. 6, 1913

Judge J. H. Hammock, who was elected Mayor of Dermott last April, resigned from that office last Monday.

The South East Arkansas Baseball League consisted of Dermott, Monticello, Warren and Wilmar.

Feb. 20, 1913

The most disastrous fire in the history of Dermott occurred on the evening of the previous Sunday. It started in the kitchen of a restaurant and totally destroyed the new brick railroad passenger station (which was nearing completion), the recently enlarged railroad freight station house, the Wilkinson Hotel (two saloons, two restaurants, a barber shop and a railroad section house.)

The two saloons burned were Van's Saloon and Bowden's Saloon, on the east and west respectively of the Post Office Cafe, where the fire started. Barely saved were the old Annex Hotel and the Chicot Liquor Co., the latter being across Arkansas Street from



the Wilkinson Hotel to the westward. Also endangered in the block of Iowa Street between Arkansas and Freeman Streets were the Exchange Bank and the Moss Hotel, and, to the south of Arkansas Street, Porter Brothers and Kirkpatrick General Merchandise Store, the Dermott Bank building, the Alex Theater and the Annex.

March 27, 1913

The Altrurian Club met in the home of Mrs. D. Kimpel, with Mrs. E. G. Hammock in the chair for the business session. Then followed a formal debate on the subject: "SHOULD WOMEN VOTE?". For the affirmative were Mesdames R. L. Woolfolk, Henry Bordeaux, George Newman and ME Beauchamp; the negative side was argued by Mesdames Luther Hawkins, E. G. Hammock and C. C. Cowling.

## 1927 FLOOD EDITION

*from DERMOTT ARKANSAS REPUBLICAN*  
MAY 2, 1927

[Contributed by John Mitchell Baxter]

### Actual Facts

Seven eights of town is covered with water; no one drowned; no one starving. About one third of people are cheerful and happy, no matter what they lost. They are the people who will get the town back to normal.

The Committees have things well in hand, and in a few days will be able to get around to everything.

Yes, we are going to eventually have electric lights, as soon as we can get a Dynamo, and hitch it up, but this does not mean that you are going to have your houses all lit up like a man with a few shots of corn liquor. If you use more than the official light allowance, it will be your hard luck, because they will have to cut you off entirely.

Yes! We are always going to have plenty of water for drinking and cooking, but that does not mean that drinking water is to be used for bathing.

Officially the water is just five feet deeper than it was during the 1916 overflow, which only came to the edge of town.

Theoretically, if no more breaks occur on the Arkansas River levee, water should come to a stand by tomorrow.

From a fact and figure stand point, the water came just one inch higher than it was figured that it should come.

### They Say Column

That we are going to have six, eight or twelve airplanes for relief, and to carry the mail.

That we are to get four new Out-board Motors.

That we are to get eight more boats for relief to bring in the balance of families that are spending their idle time sitting on their roofs waiting to get to dry land.

Also that Monticello has ten thousand Refugees, and is taking care of them.

### Odds and Ends

We cannot give you any news of the outside world, as the last Newspaper that the writer saw was printed April 23, 1927.

Two Negro families, exhausted from yelling for help from the roof of their houses, were brought to Dermott late one evening. The next morning, bright and early, they hunted up the owner of the plantation, and asked when the boat was going back, as they were tired of town, and wanted to go back to their roofs. These are facts--not hearsay.

There are many people who are scaffolded up to within two feet, of the ceiling,

for sleeping quarters, who have no intention of leaving. All they have to do is to imagine that they are on a summer vacation. Fishing is not at the best yet, but they can shoot hogs, and rabbits, and they can climb up to the upper berths every night, just like rich folks. And just think of the stories that they can tell until they die!

The women folks that are staying here now, are not doing so because they have to--they are afraid to leave because something new might happen and they would not be here to see it.

Can you imagine a woman's line of conversation at a party, (she having been out of town during the flood) while the balance of the crowd were retelling just what happened while they stayed here?

There is one thing we can say and that is, that there were more tears shed by the women and children because they were sent out of town, then there ever will be shed by those who stayed.

Yes, men now go to bed with the chickens, and get up at the break of day, as we are just a little shy on tallow candles, and our light plant got some water in the carburator, just about four feet deep.

The folks who said they knew the water was not coming in to Dermott, have already left town.

For a hundred years old Gum Ridge, a range of high ridges at the North of town, has held the water off of Dermott, but it got old on the job, and just to get itself appreciated for what it has done in the past, turned a flood of water loose on us this time in such a volume, that it made our famous 43 Ditch, between here and the River, ashamed of itself as a water carrier.

The water ran up hill on Gum Ridge, faster than it ever ran down hill in Ditch No. 43. Water is now from one to two feet deep on top of Gum Ridge, which is itself about seven feet higher than Dermott. When the water falls in the Arkansas River four feet, the water will stop running over the Ridge, and Dermott will get some quick relief.

From the crest of water in the break to Dermott, the water has a thirty foot fall, and the distance is thirty three miles, practically due South.

If the Mississippi River Levee breaks, who would get the water? The people below Scott, Mississippi. Why? Because the water is higher on the land side here than it is on the River Side.

This is the greatest flood, all over the Delta, since the white man first settled here, two hundred years ago. In as much as we never spent any money for protection, regardless of the fact that every man, woman and child, has known all these years that the Arkansas River Levee positively will not hold high water, never has held high water, and unless built somewhat better than it is now--never will hold high water.

Remember that the Mississippi River levee on this side, in our territory, has not broken in fifteen years, and this is a pretty good average.

### **DON'T COLUMN.**

Don't believe on half that you hear. Don't ever believe that we are going to have from five to fifteen feet more of water on account of the break at South Bend. Why? Simply because there is not that much water left in the Arkansas River. The Arkansas River is only one mile wide.

Our present overflow from the Mississippi Levee to the hills, is twenty five miles. If they put a dam in the Arkansas River, and foist it all down on us, there would not be fifteen feet additional, and if the Levee on the Mississippi River should happen to go out between Yoncapin, and just North of Arkansas City, the water would run from here into the Mississippi River.

The people can come back to Dermott and say that those living south of the Warren Branch and west of the Main line, will never be overflowed--Why not again? Because we can get the M.O.P. Railroad to raise a small amount of track between the depot and the electric light plant, up to the Depot level, and then spend five hundred dollars on a cross levee three feet high, and one half mile long and the water will have to get higher than it has in the last two hundred years to put it in this town. There was some talk of getting every one in town out and building this levee at Dermott, after the levee broke at Pendleton, but there were not quite enough people who realized the amount of water in sight.

Mayor Burks had already done the Surveying and run the levels, and posted a notice accordingly in McCroskey's.

In a couple of weeks when the water goes down, we will wash off the stains of the battle with the Muddy Arkansas River-- get the flivers down from their present high roosts of porches and platforms--start to planting corn and cotton, and ride around to adjoining towns, then realize how very little the damage to the residence and business section here was, compared to other towns.

As usual, the big plantations and the manufacturing industries got caught for some awful losses. If the U.S. Government does not do anything else, they ought to furnish free cotton seed as all of it was destroyed.

The Red Cross rescue boats are rescuing more people every hour, than all Uncle Sam's Life Saving Crews on the entire Atlantic Ocean ever have a chance of rescuing in a year.

The big wave of water that is supposed to hit this town, "that is trying to imitate Venice", is going to fail to materialize. Some body got his wires crossed sadly, for us to get from five to fifteen feet more water is a joke--no matter who tells it to you--and there is no use in every one getting panic stricken either. We have our sincere doubts whether we get that many inches. The only possible danger we have to contend with now is sickness, and fire, so be very careful.

There are a thousand times as many chances of our town burning down, as there is of it washing away. And a hundred times as many chances of your getting sick from wading in and drinking this muddy water, as there is of your drowning.

Don't loose your sense of proportion. Remember there are horses and wagons still traveling the streets of Dermott.

The losses here in Dermott will run all the way from the man who lost two nights sleep, to the man who lost fifty thousand dollars.

The man who lost sleep will never get over the flood.

R.W. Marks, Editor.

A.L. Shemwell, Ass't Editor and Printer

## DERMOTT BUSINESSES OF YESTERYEAR

**I found a copy of the following article. From the content, it appears to have been written around 1929. The title at the top of the pages was Southeast Arkansas in Pictures and Prose. Some of the words have faded beyond recognition, which accounts for the ellipses. If anyone knows its author or origin, I will gladly give them the credit they deserve for writing this informative article.**

When the practical man has in view a new location, he considers its climate, its healthfulness, its business opportunities, the industry and thrift of its inhabitants, its social features, schools and churches, and the resources, advantages and attractions of the place.

No community in Arkansas has more to offer in these crucial attributes than Dermott, the metropolis and leading commercial center of Chicot county, one of the most fertile regions in the entire Mississippi Valley.

Dermott is a thriving and wide-awake little city of nearly 4,000 inhabitants consisting of a high spirited, hospitable and progressive people who are working for the greater development of Dermott and Chicot county.

Dermott is substantial because of its geographical location, its transportation facilities, its industries, its educational and religious institutions, its modern business houses, beautiful homes, well kept lawns, productive farms, stock raising and poultry and dairy interests and its progressive citizens and business men.

The first impression one has of Dermott is its broadness and comp....., which speaks well for builders and early settlers, who builded perhaps more wisely than they knew. The streets are wide and well surveyed; the business houses are modern in construction and in good repair, everything bespeaking ..... pride and generous spirit to a marked degree. One feels that Dermott has on her "Sunday clothes" every day and is ready to entertain guests with a genuine hospitality and hearty good will that is not characteristic of places which have allowed a mad rush for personal gain to blind their eyes to the fact that the outside world was coming their way with a purpose.

Dermott has builded on a level basis, allowing no development to progress at the expense of something else of equal importance. The executive officers have at all times watched with jealous care the general trend of things and have kept every feature of improvement well balanced. The business concerns of Dermott are for the most part owned by local capital. They have builded their business on a solid foundation that is vitally connected with every interest in Dermott and Chicot county.

Dermott is located on the main north and south line of the Missouri Pacific Railroad between New Orleans and Little Rock. It is also the junction point of the Warren Branch of the same road. This gives Dermott exceptional passenger and freight service to all parts of the country. The city is also on asphalt highways 165 and 35 extending north, south and east, with hard surfaced highway under construction leading west. Its highway system is one of the best in Southeast Arkansas. Rail transportation is supplemented by efficient bus service to all surrounding towns and villages. The city has miles of sidewalks and much paving; its churches are progressive while its school system is equal to the best in the Southeastern section of the state. It has a class A high school

based on North and North Central Association standards.

Dermott is not only an important trading center .....prosperous agricultural community, .....has prospered as well through the manufacturing of hardwood products. Two veneer ..... a hoop factory, a handle plant, a spoke factory and two barrel stave factories are among its well established and prosperous industries. The city also has two large wholesale grocery houses, bottling plants, cotton gins, machine shops, foundry, ice cream factory, ice plant, two banks with resources of approximately \$900,000.00, canning factory, modern dairies, first class newspaper and job printing plant, scores of good retail stores, several ranking with the best in Southeast Arkansas, a number of garages, automobile sales and service concerns, wholesale and retail oil firms, three hotels, theatre, lumber yard, efficient light, power and water service, telephone exchange and other lines of business of more or less importance.

There is an unusually high percentage of good land in Chicot county, representing the most desirable types commonly found in Southeast Arkansas (mainly rich alluvial) and the county is practically all level and is drained by the Mississippi river and Bayous Mason and Bartholomew and their tributaries. It has extensive levee and drainage improvements and the principal agricultural crops are cotton, corn, clover, alfalfa, rye, barley, cow peas, all forage crops, soy beans, watermelons, cantaloupes, ribbon cane, sorghum, peanuts, Irish and sweet potatoes, cucumbers, tomatoes, beans, onions, cabbage, and every other farm crop or garden vegetable that can be grown in the Southern states. The citizens of this section also grow fruit to a more or less extent, including peaches, pears, figs, plums, berries, etc. Unlimited opportunities are offered in Chicot county for the successful growing of paper shell pecans. There are a number of small groves in this section that are returning their owners a handsome revenue each year.

Dermott is located in one of the best dairy communities in Arkansas. Although the dairy industry is in its infancy in this section, it gives promise of becoming as important as any of the leading agricultural crops of the county. There are several herds of fine dairy cows in this community, mainly Holstein and Jerseys. Chicot is also an ideal livestock, hog and poultry raising section. Additional information concerning Dermott and vicinity may be had by addressing the Chamber of Commerce. its membership includes practically every progressive business and professional man of the city.

**Joe Weisman**  
Dermott's Leading Store

The past accomplishments of any man may be taken as an indication of what he may do in the future and from the past work and results of Joe Weisman, in Dermott, there is every hop and confidence that his store will always be cognizant of the wants of the local people, and be alert to meet them, possibly before the public fully realizes what it wants in this direction. Mr. Weisman carries one of the largest and most carefully selected stocks of its kind in this section. This stock is purely a stock of quality and consists of dry goods, ladies' and gents' ready-to-wear, notions and shoes for the whole family. The prices offered have always been as low as those of any store in Arkansas.

From a small beginning in 1910 this store has grown into large proportions and built up an enviable reputation for honesty and fair dealing. Mr. Weisman occupies two spacious salesrooms at the corner of Iowa and Freeman Streets. He also owns the Boston Bargain Store, situated on Iowa Street and a real outlet for bargains in dry goods, clothing, furnishings and shoes. The latter was opened for business in the fall of 1927. Mr. Weisman is one of the most progressive of Dermott's younger business men and has helped to put over everything that has meant progress in this community.

**Dermott Land & Lumber Company**

The achievements of Dermott in all branches of commerce have been such as to make it one of the most advanced cities of its size in Arkansas. Very prominent among the concerns that have contributed toward the development of the city and county is the Dermott Land & Lumber Company, located in their own substantial two-story brick building, opposite Hotel Dermott. This company formerly operated one of the largest mills in Southeast Arkansas, but after using the major portion of its merchantable timber, the mill was discontinued, although the company owns immense tracts of cut-over land also 3,000 acres of virgin timber. They have 28,000 acres of the best cut-over land in the state, 25,000 acres, being situated in the eastern part of Drew county, along Bayou Bartholomew which is conceded as fine land as may be found in the Mississippi valley, also 3,000 acres in Lincoln county. They have both improved and unimproved land also valuable city property here in Dermott. The business was founded in 1906. H. B. Lusch of Chicago, Ill., is president and C. R. Bates of Dermott, is secretary and manager. Mr. Bates is also president of Exchange Bank & Trust Company and general manager of the Industrial Machinery Company of this city. They are both men of the highest standing and have contributed much toward the upbuilding of Dermott and vicinity.

**Industrial Machinery Company**

A wide and important field of usefulness is covered by the industrial Machinery Company, located in the Dermott Land & Lumber Company building. This is the only concern of its kind in the United States. They are engaged in buying and liquidating industrial plants and machinery of every description. They publish a catalog in which they list the various industrial plants and machinery which they have to offer and this catalog is sent to thousands of prospective buyers in all parts of the United States. A

specialty is made of sawmill machinery. The business is owned by the Dermott Land & Lumber Company. The affairs of both concerns are under the able management of C. R. Bates, president of the Exchange Bank & Trust Company, one of the foremost financial institutions of this section.

### **Silbernagel & Company**

With a view to faithfully portraying the present development of Southeast Arkansas, and in order to fully set forth the advantages with which our community is so richly endowed, we may be permitted to call attention to the character and magnitude of a few very representative concerns. In this connection it is fitting that we make mention of Silbernagel & Company, prominent wholesale dealers in groceries, grocery sundries, flour, meal, feed and grain. This company maintains its headquarters at Pine Bluff where it has been established for 15 or more years and is one of the leading wholesale firms of that city. The Dermott branch was opened March 14, 1927, and since that time has developed a business connection of which the management has every reason to feel proud and which places it among the vigorous and successful enterprises of Chicot county. They handle a number of special and celebrated lines, among them being the justly famous "Silco" products, which includes Rolled Oats, Mince Meat, Canned Corn, Salt and Mixed Feeds. The firm handles everything needed to completely stock a retail grocery store and furnishes local dealers a class of service not generally to be had outside of the large cities. They employ four salesmen at this point and have 2 one-ton Ford trucks, 2 two-ton Graham trucks and one 2-1/2 ton Graham truck, enabling them to handle all orders on the shortest possible notice. The warehouse is situated on the tracks of the Missouri Pacific, enabling them to unload cars in any and all kinds of weather. This firm is composed of M. Silbernagel and Dan Silbernagel. G. C. Southerland is local manager and W. J. Kirby is cashier and assistant manager. They are all men of business ability and high integrity and are real live boosters for the territory in which they are operating.

### **Southern Motor Company**

The position that may be won by the representative garage which pioneers the way in the smaller cities may well be illustrated by a glance at what has been accomplished by the Southern Motor Company, dealers in the world-famous Buick automobiles, the best that money and experience can command. Buick cars have been on the market ever since automobiles came into general use. They have stood the test of time and increased steadily in popularity due to the fact that the Buick manufacturers have always lived up to their slogan "When Better Automobiles Are Built Buick Will Build Them." This firm also handles a general line of parts, accessories, Goodyear tires and tubes, Atwater Kent and Radiola radio sets and supplies, motor oils, greases, etc. and maintain a well equipped service department, presided over by mechanics of the highest ability and integrity. They also furnish storage by the day, week, or month at reasonable rates.

The Southern Motor .....are the oldest Buick dealers in Arkansas, .....the second



oldest automobile concern in the .... having been engaged in the sale of Buicks .....for the past ten or more years. They ....a brick building, about 40x110 feet in size which is located just opposite the Missouri Pacific depot. This business is managed by R. P. Stinson. He is one of the best known men in Chicot county; is a live wire and a man with whom it is always a real pleasure to deal. He is public spirited and has contributed much toward the material and civic betterment of Dermott and vicinity.

**A. Prothro**  
Jeweler and Optometrist

In buying anything one always likes to feel that his dealer is of the highest integrity and that his business policy is based on honest methods, but this is perhaps true in regard to the jewelry business more largely than in any other retail line, because only an expert is able to determine the real value of jewelry. A house here of the highest possible standing engaged in the jewelry and optical business and one which ranks with the most complete and up-to-date jewelry stores in Southeast Arkansas, is that of A. Prothro. This store occupies a convenient location on Iowa Street. The stock carried consists of both high and medium grades of diamonds, jewelry, watches, clocks, glassware, gift goods and a full line of optical goods. Mr. Prothro is a man of the ....sort of experience in his line, having been established here approximately 20 years and has made a success through his own efforts and natural business ability. There are few men in Dermott who are better known than Mr. Prothro and none more dependable for a square deal. He stands for advancement in his home town and has contributed his full share toward every worthy project that has been put forward for the greater development of Dermott and vicinity.

**Bank of Dermott**

One of the well known and successful financial institutions of Southeast Arkansas, and standing as a monument to the enterprise and growth of the progressive little city whose name it bears, the Bank of Dermott stands out conspicuously as one of Chicot county's most sound and substantial institutions.

Conveniently located in the heart of the business district, near the Missouri Pacific Depot and occupying its own substantial and attractive quarters with all the latest and most modern devices for the successful handling of the splendid business it enjoys, this is an institution whose importance to Dermott and surrounding territory is second to none. With total resources of \$452,727.09; capital \$75,000.00; surplus \$10,000.00, undivided profits \$3,417.38 and deposits of \$314,309.71, this establishment does a general banking business exercising all the functions usually incumbent upon first-class institutions of this nature. Its relations to the people throughout this territory is of that nature which assures all who have dealing with it of the most courteous and honorable treatment at the hands of its officers and employees. This bank was organized in 1922. Although not the oldest bank in this section, it has no leader in point of progressiveness, and as a matter of fact the figures telling of its rapid growth would do credit to any bank

in Southeast Arkansas.

OFFICERS: A. B. Banks, President; C. B. Bowman, Vice President; S. B. Meek, Vice President; M. C. Magness, Vice President and Cashier; Angus McDermott, Assistant Cashier; Hammett E Porter, Assistant Cashier.

DIRECTORS: A. B. Banks, S. B. Meek, R. M. Scott, John Baxter, C. B. Bowman, D. Kimpel, M. C. Magness, Joe Niven and Vann M. Howell.

The officers and directors are business men of the highest type of progressiveness and are always first to aid worthy projects advanced in the interests of the community and its people.

### **Central Drug Store**

Coupled with the medical fraternity of every community, is the modern drug store. One of the outstanding concerns engaged in this line and one of the oldest established in this section, is the Central Drug Store which was established in Dermott about 16 years ago. This store is located at the corner of Main and Iowa Streets. It is provided with first-class fixtures and completely stocked with pure drugs, druggists' sundries, toilet articles, stationery, fine candies, school books and supplies, magazines, cigars, tobacco, etc., also equipped with a modern soda fountain together with neat serving tables. Two of their special lines are Nyal family remedies and Eastman Kodaks. They also handle Victrolas and records. The prescription department is presided over by H. D. Elliott, the proprietor, who is a registered pharmacist of wide experience and thorough knowledge of this line. He is one of Dermott's best known and most progressive business men and his name is everywhere identified with upbuilding of this community.

It is said that the family doctor comes nearer to the inner life of mankind than any other man on earth unless it is the physician of the soul. But what of the druggist who measures out the drugs and potions which mean instant death if not skillfully weighed and compounded? It is at once apparent how necessary it is that an apothecary should not only be a man of education, but careful and well experienced, and one who takes an interest in his profession on account of the wide field it presents for study. It is with pleasure that the writer refers to Mr. Elliott as a druggist who is capable of filling the above requirements, and he employs only the most competent and careful assistants.

### **Orr Hardware Company**

The fact that a business has continued to thrive in one community for nineteen years is evidence enough that it was conducted on sound principles and this is the record of the Orr Hardware Company, located on Arkansas Street, and devoted to the sale of hardware, harness, household necessities, furniture, groceries, flour, feed, etc.

This business occupies a modern brick building 50x100 feet in size with large balconies, and the stock carried has been selected with great care and good judgment, representing the best to be had from the foremost manufacturers and jobbers of the country. They also have a well equipped undertaking department. In the latter they have the best of facilities, including auto hearse and all other modern conveniences for caring for the dead in the proper manner, also carry a full line of caskets, robes and funeral

supplies. This business is managed by S. E. Orr. When he started in business in Dermott in 1909 he adopted the policy of giving every customer a full dollar's worth of goods and service for every dollar invested at his store. He has lived up to this policy from the outset and has made friends as fast as he has made customers. Mr. Orr is one of our most highly respected citizens and has contributed both time and money toward the onward march of progress of the town and county.

### **H. E. Courtney**

The wide-awake and progressive little city of Dermott owes its strong vitality and great popularity to the enterprise and active spirit of its business men who are putting forth practical effort to aid its growth in every line of industry. Prominent among the number thus employed is H. E. Courtney, located on Iowa Street. He is a dealer in staple and fancy groceries, fruits, vegetables and fresh and cured meats. This store will be 24 years old January 1st next and has always followed the policy of carrying the best goods in the above line and selling same at a moderate figure. It is one of the largest, best equipped and most sanitary stores of its kind in the county and a credit to its owner as well as the city. Mr. Courtney is a man of broad practical experience in the grocery and meat business and keeps his stock up to the requirements of discriminating patrons. He is a man of liberal civic pride and is strong for any movement that tends to benefit his home town, county and state.

### **COCA-COLA Bottling Company**

Coca-Cola, America's most popular beverage, is sold in Southeast Arkansas by the Coca-Cola Bottling Company, who maintain headquarters at Pine Bluff and a branch at Dermott. The local branch is situated in the southern part of town, on the Missouri Pacific tracks and Highway 35. From this point they serve dealers in all parts of Southeast Arkansas and enjoy one of the largest trades of any concern of a similar nature in Arkansas. The bottling is handled at Pine Bluff, the products being hauled to this city by immense auto trucks and in turn distributed throughout this territory. The Pine Bluff plant is one of the largest and most modern in Arkansas, if not the entire South. The firm has built its business purely on the strength of the quality of its products and service to dealers. L. F. Bellingrath is proprietor and general manager and F. M. Bellingrath is assistant general manager, both of whom are prominent citizens and business men of Pine Bluff. The affairs of the Dermott branch is in the hands of Herman Watts, a local citizen of the highest standing and one of the real live wires in the commercial circles of Chicot county.

### **Morgan & Lindsey**

There is to be found in every branch of trade, in every community, some house that stands out from the common level illustrating in its own way the high possibilities of its particular line, and as an example of this fact we take great pleasure in calling

attention to the enterprising firm whose name adorns this sketch. This is a branch of one of the foremost independent chain store concerns in the South. Morgan & Lindsey maintain their general office at Jasper, Texas, and their buying office at New Orleans, and own and operate 32 well stocked stores in Texas, Louisiana, and Arkansas. The Dermott Store is situated on Iowa Street. It is completely stocked with variety goods of every description, a specialty being made of merchandise retailing at from 5 cents to \$1.00. This store was opened for business in 1927. It was given a substantial patronage from the beginning and is today one of the vigorous and successful retail stores of the city. This business is under the capable management of F. D. Massey, a young man of pep and business acumen who has many friends in all walks of life. He is courteous and obliging and employs only competent and courteous clerks and assistants.

### **Dermott Motor Company**

It is a well recognized fact that the modern automobile is one of the most important factors in the business life of every up-to-date community. There are a number of well known makes of cars sold in Chicot county and one which stands at the head of the list, is the well known and popular Chevrolet, sold locally by the Dermott Motor Company. The Chevrolet is one of the best popular priced cars that has ever been offered to the public and gives the most positive satisfaction from every point of view. This firm also handles parts, accessories, Goodyear tires and tubes, Pierce Pennant Gasoline and Oil, Magnolia gasoline, Quaker State motor oil, etc. Another department of their business is automobile repair work of the highest possible class, all work being guaranteed to give the customer absolute satisfaction.

The Dermott Motor Company has been established approximately three years and was formerly known as the O. K. Service Station. The service afforded is equal to the best to be had anywhere and their prices are always right. The business is located on North Main Street (Highway 165). J. N. Pearson is the alert and progressive proprietor. He is a young man who enjoys a broad acquaintance; believes in a fair deal for everybody and consequently has many friends who are pleased to see him prosper.

### **Schneider Stave Company**

In the final analyses, the permanent prosperity of any city is mainly a matter of the steady weekly wages that go to the working men and are in turn spent by them with the merchants in the purchase of necessities of life. Chicot county's commercial future will always glow with assured promise so long as the community is able to retain within its confines a sufficient number of industries of the magnitude of the SCHNEIDER STAVE COMPANY, located in the northern section of the city, on Highway 165 and Missouri Pacific tracks. This is one of the largest industries in the town or county. The plant and storage yards cover approximately eleven acres and the mill has a capacity for producing forty-five thousand staves per day and furnishes remunerative employment to about 60 workmen. It is devoted exclusively to the production of Slack Barrel Staves which are shipped in car-lot to cooperage factories ....all parts of the United States also shipped to foreign countries. They have a modern ....Gould which has a capacity of 40,000 staves per day and which furnishes employment to about 50 workmen and another

at McGehee which has a capacity of 25,000 staves and requires the services of about 20 workmen. The payroll of this company and its large outlay for timber is a factor in helping to make Dermott a thriving business center. This is one of the pioneer industries of this section, having been in operation about 20 (?) years and has contributed much toward the upbuilding of this section. It is a local enterprise, ably managed by O. A. Lowe. He is a progressive citizen and a man who stands justly high in both commercial and social realms of Southeast Arkansas.

### **Pick and Pay Cash Grocery**

An instance of what fair dealing and progressive business spirit can achieve is shown in the substantial patronage that has been built up by the Pick and Pay Cash Grocery, located on Iowa Street. It is provided with fixtures of a modern type, enabling them to display their stock to the best of advantage and conceded one of the most sanitary grocery stores in Chicot county. The place is filled to overflowing with pure food groceries, table delicacies, fruits, vegetables, produce, flour, etc., and the prices quoted are as low as those of any dealer in this section. This store was established about 11 years ago by Z. V. Freeman, the present owner, and about one year ago was changed from a credit to a cash and carry store, and has since become one of the most popular grocery stores in Southeast Arkansas. Mr. Freeman is of that type of progressive business man who, while looking out for his own interests, is not blind to those of his home town and supports all movements for the general welfare and progress of Dermott and vicinity.

### **Dermott Machine & Boiler Works**

Modern equipment, scientific methods and efficient service to patrons are characteristic of the Dermott Machine & Boiler Works, located on North Main Street. This firm started operations in May, 1928. Although comparatively new in this field the business has had a steady and gratifying growth from the first and is today one of the substantial enterprises of the city. The plant is equipped with the latest and best of machinery to be had for this line of work, the firm having the only completely equipped machine shop in the county and also do acetylene gas welding, boiler repairing and everything else pertaining to a first-class establishment of this kind. The manager of this concern is N. L. Vaughn. He is an expert mechanic; employs only competent assistants and guarantees his customer absolute satisfaction.

Mr. Vaughn is a man of pleasing personality and business acumen and aids all enterprises that have a tendency to better conditions in the town in which he lives. When in need of anything in his line you cannot go wrong in giving him a trial.

### **Kimpel Motor Company**

Look back through the years and count the number of automobiles that have been introduced and forgotten. Through all the ups and downs of the industry, and the days when an automobile was a curiosity--and right on through the days when the automobile

became a beneficial and enjoyable necessity, the Ford has not only endured, but has steadily grown in popular favor. The popularity of the Ford is demonstrated by the fact that there are more Fords in use than all other motor cars combined. The New Ford is without doubt one of the best popular priced cars that has ever been placed on the market and for some months to come the supply will not be equal to the demand. These well known cars together with the Lincoln and Fordson tractors are sold in Dermott by the Kimpel Motor Company, located near the Missouri Pacific Depot. They also carry a big line of genuine Ford parts, accessories, tires, tubes, oils, gasoline, etc., and maintain a first class service department. The latter is in charge of highly skilled mechanics who are capable of handling any and everything pertaining to this line.

Starting in business in April, 1925, this concern has developed into one of the foremost automobile sales and service firms of Southeast Arkansas. E. B. Kimpel is manager. He is a young man of keen foresight and unquestioned standing and has shown his faith in the future of Dermott by giving freely of his time and substance in helping in the onward march of progress of the city and district.

### **Dermott Service Station**

In the van of the rapid advancement of Dermott's business interests is the Dermott Service Station, the oldest service station in the city and an institution that has won and held the confidence of the public by deserving it. It is situated on Main Street (Highway 165, two blocks from the principal retail section of the city. It is equipped with every up-to-date convenience embodied in the best of service stations in large cities and has been conducted along lines that cemented permanent relations with patrons. They handle the well known and popular Texaco gasoline and Quaker State, Veedol and Texaco motor oils, the best that money and experience can command, also the famous Fisk tires and tubes and a line of parts and accessories and execute repair work on cars of all makes. All repair work is handled by mechanics of wide experience and every job turned out is of such a satisfactory character as to be a standing advertisement in the firm's favor. They also deal in fancy groceries, confectionery, cold drinks, tobacco, etc. The active head of this business is J. J. Sumner. He is courteous and obliging, always in a good humor and has the esteem and confidence of the masses.

### **Downey Housefurnishing Company "Pay-As-You-Can-Plan"**

Civilization advances or falls back with the rise and fall of the home. Anything that makes for the betterment of the home makes for the progress of the race, and those concerns which cater to the best interests of the home should receive all honor. If they strive to combine art with comfort, all the greater should be their credit. In this class should be noted the Downey Housefurnishing Company. They have an exclusive furniture store and everything that goes to embellish the home is handled in profusion.

Occupying quarters, 50x105 feet in size and carrying a large stock of both high and premium grades of furniture, rugs, linoleums, stoves, ranges and house furnishings, this firm is considered among the foremost leaders in its line in Southeast Arkansas. It is located on Arkansas Street. From the outset it has been given a substantial patronage and

has won an enviable reputation by selling the best goods at a moderate figure. This is the third year that they have been open .....and the house has become widely known as a most safe and satisfactory place at which to trade. It is ably managed by T. M. Downey. He is a conscientious and progressive businessman and one who takes part in all movements that have a tendency to benefit the town, and county in any legitimate way.

### **Bimel-Ashcroft Manufacturing Company**

No link in the chain of industrial activity in Dermott is of more importance to the welfare of this community than its woodworking interests. Foremost among the concerns engaged in this line in Southeast Arkansas, is the Bimel-Ashcroft Manufacturing Company, extensive manufacturers of oak and hickory tool handles, single trees, neck yokes and automobile and wagon spokes. This is one of the largest concerns of its kind in this section, its output being shipped in car-lots to all the principal commercial centers of the United States also exported to foreign countries. The business has been established about 20 years and is located in the northern section of the city on the tracks of Missouri Pacific railroad and Highway 165. The plant is modern in point of equipment and furnishes remunerative employment to between 100 and 150 workmen. Its payroll is an important factor in the progress of the city, amounting to \$1,500 or \$2,000 per week. They also pay out large sums for timber, obtaining their supply from the hardwood forests of Chicot and adjoining counties. This business is managed by C. Helmstetter. He is a citizen of good standing; is thoroughly posted in this line and contributes to everything that promises desirable improvement in conditions in the town and county.

### **Howard & Wisner**

Among the firmly established and successful enterprises of Dermott and one that is affording its patrons the best of service at live and let live prices, is that of Howard & Wisner, located on North Main Street. This firm does a general blacksmithing, body building and wood working business; handle the widely known and popular B. F. Avery & Son farm implements also have a department devoted to Acetylene gas welding. In the latter branch of their business they are prepared to weld, anything made of metal, from an article the size of a teaspoon to a heavy pump or engine cylinder. This business was established five years ago by W. H. Howard and about one year ago J. C. Wisner bought an interest in the firm. They are both expert mechanics and personally superintend every department of the establishment. They are men of unquestioned integrity who value more highly a satisfied customer than temporary profits and consequently have many friends in all walks of life.

### **Kimpel & Lephiew Gin Company**

Among the first-class institutions that are contributing their full share toward the growth and material betterment of Dermott, who .....slight prominence must be accorded the Kimpel & Lephiew Gin Company who operate a large and modernly equipped gin and furnish farmers a good and active market for cotton and cotton seed. This is the

largest concern of its kind in this section. The gin is modern in point of equipment and has a capacity for ginning eighty bales per day. During the ginning and marketing season it is one of the busiest places in Chicot county.

The Kimpel & Lephiew Gin Company have been operating her about ten years and have gained an enviable reputation for furnishing superior service at right prices. the members of this well known firm are D. Kimpel and W. E. Lephiew, two of the most far-seeing and progressive men of this community whose names have always been prominently identified with movements for the greater development of Dermott and vicinity. Mr. Kimpel is also a stockholder and director in the Bank of Dermott, one of the leading financial institutions of Chicot county.

### **Peoples Lumber Company**

Of all the great staple branches of business represented in Southeast Arkansas, not one is more richly developed than the lumber and building material trade. Standing conspicuously in the foreground among the greatest enterprises of this kind in this locality, is the Peoples Lumber Company, a branch of the Barton-Mansfield Lumber Company of Jonesboro, who operate well stocked yards throughout a large and prosperous territory. The yard has been established a number of years and the present company assumed .... in September, 1928. It is the only lumber yard in the city and fully fills the needs of the local public. They carry an immense stock of lumber, shingles, roofing, builders' hardware, paints, in fact, everything necessary to build a house complete, and are always glad to submit estimates and assist customers in their plans for building and improvements. This business is managed by J. D. Crook. He has had a wide experience in this line, keeps well abreast of the times and guarantees his customers the most efficient and reliable service. Mr. Crook is a gentleman of unfailing courtesy and by his straightforward methods he has gained the fullest confidence of all.



## HISTORY OF THE TELEPHONE DERMOTT, ARKANSAS

Reprinted from the Sesquicentennial Edition  
1973

The first telephone exchange was established in 1900 by the Valley Telephone Company.

The switchboard was a Kellogg Magneto type board and opened up with 16 stations or 3 rural lines and 2 local stations.

The outside plant was built with native poles and grounded from circuits.

The original owner and employees were-

Mr. Henry Thane	-	President
Mr. W. G. Savage	-	Manager
Miss Sue Anderson	-	Operator

Other employees during the time the exchange was controlled by the Valley Company were -

Mr. W. T. Alexander  
Mr. W. E. Jones

In 1909 the Valley telephone plant was sold to the Southern Telephone Company, who in turn sold to the Southwestern Bell Telephone Company in 1911.

The original installation of the switchboard was installed in Mr. E. R. Remley's store at the corner of Main and Iowa Streets. When bought by the Southern Telephone Company the exchange was moved to 106 South Main Street.

The first telephone line was built from Dermott to Collins, approximately 8 miles. Later a line was built to Pine Bluff, Monticello, and Arkansas City.

The office was closed at 10 P.M. in the earlier days and no service given until the next morning.

January 1, 1935.

## LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT OF JOHN J. BOWIE

Reprinted from the Sesquicentennial Edition, 1973

The Will of John J. Bowie-from Will Record C, Chicot County, Arkansas

I, John J. Bowie, of sound and disposing mind and memory, but somewhat bodily afflicted, bringing to mind that it is the common lot of all men to die, and having been repeatedly warned within the last few weeks that the time was not far distant when I would have to go the way of all flesh - prompted by the above warnings I now declare the following to be my last will and testament:

In the first place, I wish to be buried in a plain way, and never to have any tomb or other marks of respect placed over or about my grave, and further I am in hopes that none of my family or friends will ever mourn for me. I go the way that all before me have gone, and all that I leave behind me will soon follow; I leave five heirs by my first wife name Mary Bennett: Sarah Stuart, John Bowie, Jr., (a minor son of Reason Bowie, deceased), Nancy Sanford and Matilda Homer, all of whom I have here-to-fore given what I believe to be an equal and full share of my estate, and I hope and request that none of them will interfere with my younger children's property left them by this will. I have also one other daughter Harriet E. Hollingsworth, the same has been one for her as was for my first family of children. My present wife also had two children before we were married, namely William P. Kirkland and his sister Mrs. Elizabeth Hamilton; for both of them I have done all I think it was my duty to do.

Whatever estate I now own or possess, either real or personal, I wish to dispose of it as follows: first to pay all of my just debts. After this is done first proceeds arising out of the estate of One Thousand Dollars is to be paid to Martha B. Leatherman, which must be done in five years from the date hereof, which will be in full for her part of my estate. The balance to be equally divided between my wife, America A. Bowie and our two sons, John R. Bowie and James W. Bowie, and it is further my desire and request that America A. Bowie, my wife, be left sole Executrix of this my last will, and that she and my sons be allowed to manage their estate without giving any security for their acts, and I further desire that in the event of the death of my wife that her estate be equally divided between our three children: Martha, John and James, and I further request that the girl Mary be sold and the money arising from the sale be paid over to Messrs. Fandlin & Co. of Vicksburg from whom I purchased her. To prevent fraud from being practices on my estate I leave enclosed a correct list of all my just debts.

I now declare this to be my last will and testament, hereby revoking all former wills written by myself at any residence-this 29th day of September, A.D. 1853.

JOHN J. BOWIE

B. F. Stephenson, Clk.

Filed for record Aug. 8th, 1859 and recorded August 22nd, 1859

test:

DWC BANHAM

SAM MELSON

P.G. SCRUGGS

(Ed. note: John J. Bowie was the eldest son of Reason (Rezin) Pleasants and Ella Bowie. He had two younger brothers: Rezin Bowie, Jr. and James (Jim) Bowie who died at the Alamo). Bowie Township, Arkansas, in which the town of Dermott is located, was named after John J. Bowie.

## GRAVESTONES IN THE MCDERMOTT FAMILY CEMETERY

Located in Dermott, Arkansas

1. Charles, husband of Hettie S. McDermott      born Sept. 22, 1808  
died Oct. 3, 1884
2. Hettie S., wife of Charles McDermott      born Nov. 18, 1818  
died Nov. 13, 1880
3. Philander McDermott, Co. B      born 1846  
2nd Ark. Cavalry      died Aug. 30, 1922
4. Ella E., wife of Phil McDermott      born Sept. 27, 1876  
died Nov. 14, 1893
5. Dr. Edward Ozan McDermott      1862-1940
6. Nannie P., wife of E. O. McDermott      born Dec. 4, 1864  
died 1926
7. Margaret, wife of J. B. Mercer      born Aug. 27, 1854  
died April 3, 1889
8. Matt Alexander Shaw      Mar. 25, 1862  
died Feb. 12, 1863
9. Ethel Shaw      born Dec. 15, 1867  
died Sept. 12, 1869
10. Hettie, wife of Dr. E. Baker      born 1883  
died April 10, 1912  
(age 27)
11. James W. Cloud      born Sept. 27, 1862  
died Jan. 30, 1890

(Viewed and recorded by J. C. Hammock)

## **DERMOTT: A THUMBNAIL SKETCH**

**by Capt. John C. Hammock, US Navy, Ret.**

**Reprinted from the Sesquicentennial Edition, 1973**

The city of Dermott, Arkansas, occupies the northwest corner of Chicot, a county which is older than the state by thirteen years. The county was formed on October 25, 1823, the tenth so organized in the Territory of Arkansas. Its name is said to be derived from Point Chicot, a navigation reference point on the Mississippi River bank recognizable to the French-speaking bargemen by an abundance of stumps, or cypress "knees" protruding above the surface of the sluggish backwater. The word for "stump" translates into the French word "chicot", so the point became Pointe Chicot, or Point of Stumps. At least so legend has it.

The first settlers arrived in this area about 1826, and among them were members of the Bowie family of Louisiana. The best known member of this family was Jim Bowie, who died fighting at the Alamo. Jim's older brother, John J. Bowie homesteaded a few miles east of present-day Dermott, and it is for him that the township bears the name of Bowie.

In 1832 another early settler came from Louisiana in the person of Charles A. McDermott. He, in time, acquired a large amount of land on which he operated a plantation, and built a commodious home about a mile east of Bayou Bartholomew. His place became a well-known overnight-stopping camp for the wagon trains of immigrants heading west into Texas. Dr. McDermott was a graduate of Yale College, a physician and surgeon, a financier and an inventor. He devoted his life and fortune to a determined effort to produce a flying machine. In 1872 he was granted a U.S. patent for the design of an airplane, which, however, never met with success because there was then no known source of motive power. Dr. McDermott died in 1884. His grave and that of his wife are in a small family cemetery which is expected to become included in the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program. The town of Dermott was named in his honor, in 1877.

An Arkansas map dated 1838 shows a post office named "Bartholomew" on the east bank of the bayou of that name, a few miles west of the town. Years later, on October 5, 1875, another post office was established in the same area, named "Bend", presumably because of a bend in the course of the meandering stream. On May 25, 1877, the name was changed to "Dermott"; John B. Daniels was the postmaster.

About the year 1870, a railroad had been constructed with the name of Mississippi, Ouachita and Red River, extending west from the Mississippi River to Collins, and later to Monticello and Warren. Shortly thereafter another railroad called the Little Rock, Pine Bluff and New Orleans ran from Chicot City (later Arkansas City) to Little Rock. The two lines were later consolidated under the name of Little Rock, Mississippi and Texas. Eventually that line was absorbed by the St. Louis, Iron Mountain and Southern railroad, which, in turn, became a part of the Missouri Pacific Lines. When the north-south main line of the Iron Mountain was built in 1887, the crossroads community of Dermott was incorporated and became a town, on July 11, 1890.

J. Tom Crenshaw was the first Mayor, with W. D. Trotter as Recorder, W. E.

Splawn as Marshal, D. Kimpel as Treasurer. The Board of Aldermen was composed of Charles T. Wells, John T. Crenshaw, S. M. Owens, L. C. Crute and W. D. Smiler. During that first administration, a pattern for future beautification was cut. Wide streets were laid out, as if in anticipation of the Automobile Age. Trees were then carefully planted to line the streets -- great oak and pecan trees which now, almost a century later, stand as monuments to the foresight and imagination of these early leaders.

The Crenshaw family, of which Reuben D. Crenshaw was the first postmaster, his brother John T. Crenshaw was one of the first aldermen, and their cousin, J. Tom Crenshaw, the first mayor, played an important part in the development of the town. J. Tom's family had settled near Bayou Bartholomew before the War Between the States, and the other Crenshaws came after the war.

In about the year 1886 the Presbyterian, the Methodist and the Baptist churches of Dermott used a "Union Church" building on the east side of Freeman Street, a half block north of Peddicord Street. By 1900 the Baptists had built a church on Main Street at Broadway. In the late 1960's that structure was replaced by a beautiful new building. At about this time the Presbyterians purchased a city lot at Peddicord and School Streets, their present location and there built a church. In 1957 this church was extensively remodeled, including the application of brick veneer. The Methodists then sold the old structure formerly used jointly, and in 1913 moved the church to Main and Peddicord Streets. Their present handsome edifice was erected in 1925.

John T. Crenshaw and his cousin, Mrs. Hattie Peddicord, were the founders of the Dermott Methodist Church in 1886. In 1891 J. Tom Crenshaw organized a Sunday School and was elected to be Superintendent. Among the early members of the church were Miss Mabel Winston (later Mrs. Harvey Parnell), Mrs. Susan Elizabeth Crenshaw and Mrs. Reuby Crenshaw Edwards.

The Dermott Presbyterian Church was founded in 1868, with the Reverend J. A. Dickson as pastor. The first Elders were James Lowery and Pinneo Hurd, and Matthew B. Shaw held the office of Deacon. Families represented among the charter members were: McDermott, Daniels, Hurd, Lowery, Shaw, Anderson, Warner and Lambert.

The Dermott Baptist Church was organized May 12, 1904, with 15 charter members under the first pastor, the Reverend N. C. Denson, a veteran of the Confederate Army. W. J. Raborn was the first Superintendent of the Sunday School. Among the early members were Mrs. Mae Courtney, Mrs. Ouida Johnson, Mrs. Evelyn Baker, W. H. Lephiew and Mrs. W. S. Daniels.

Dermott is a city of many churches of both races, but lack of space precludes even a brief description of them herein.

The first public white school in Dermott was a summer session in 1885 held in the same building which was used by the Negro students in the winter, located on what is now Gaines Street. The teacher was Miss Anna Morgan, and J. Tom Crenshaw was the first white director of the school, his predecessors having been black. Among those enrolled in the first school were: Martha Crenshaw (later Mrs. Shirer Burleigh), Eula Mercer (later Mrs. J. A. Bennett), Kate Mercer (who married Vance Bordeaux) Arthur and Ada McDermott, and Frank, Mary, Gordon and Maggie Hurd. A suitable building was not obtained until the first unit of the present school system was erected in 1908. Recently, extensive additions were constructed, including a handsome new Elementary School Building.

Dermott is an attractive town. Sited in the semi-tropical clime of the Mississippi Delta, each spring is featured by thick, verdant foliage, brightened by a profusion of wild and cultured flowers of many kinds. The town is the home of almost 5,000 friendly people. It has aptly been called "Where the Old South and the New South come together" The Old South of hospitality, flower gardens and southern cooking, and the New South of industry, trade and diversified farming. It is a good place to live.

## MEMORIES OF DERMOTT AND THE DERMOTT SCHOOLS

by Mrs. Martha Crenshaw Burleigh

(Edited from an address by Mrs. Martha Crenshaw Burleigh to the Chicot County Historical Society in November of 1961. This article appeared in the Sesquicentennial Issue 1973, and there was, at one time, a copy of the speech in the Dermott Library.)

I am not much of a public speaker and I am afraid I won't be able to interest many of you very much, except possibly the Dermott people. However since Dermott and I grew up together and I am now, in point of citizenship, its oldest resident, Mrs. Stark thought I should tell you a few things about the history of the town. Now, being a woman, I want to make it clear before I go any further, I am not the oldest person in Dermott, but I have definitely lived there longer than any other white person. Somehow I dislike the idea of passing a group of children and hearing them say, after I pass, "There goes Mrs. Burleigh, she's THE OLDEST PERSON IN DERMOTT."

I am not going to burden you with the history of my family, but the lives of some of us were so closely interwoven with Dermott's early days I will explain why my branch of the family came there and I will have to mention them quite often. My father's uncle, Dr. William Crenshaw, came first, why I don't know nor do I know when except that it was before the Civil War. He was the father of Mr. Tom Crenshaw whom a good many of you probably remember. Dr. Crenshaw was a practicing physician and didn't go in for farming to a great extent, but he did own a small plantation on Bayou Bartholomew, just west of what is now Dermott. He was the grandfather of Mrs. Harvey Parnell who is well known in Dermott. Dr. Crenshaw came to Arkansas from Louisiana. My father's family came from Tennessee. His father owned a plantation near Memphis. My father, John Crenshaw, was quite young when the war started and was never old enough to fight. His father, like everyone else, lost practically everything during the war. When governesses, tutors and colleges were out of the question he moved to Memphis to send his children to school. After they finished public school my father and two brothers went to a business school and also learned cotton buying. Dr. Crenshaw, even after the Yankees took over, still had visions that this part of Arkansas would some day be the garden spot of the world. He asked my father's oldest brother, Reuben, to come to his home and look things over. Reuben came and decided to stay. He was the first postmaster for the community. This post office was called Bend and was on the bayou a few miles west of the present site of Dermott. My father and another brother, Jim, came to Arkansas shortly after, to Varner. They were cotton buyers and had a small store. My father was also railroad agent at Varner. My mother's father had a plantation near Varner close to the Arkansas River. My father met her there. They were married and lived on the plantation for several years before they too decided to come to Dermott. That was in 1881. There was a railroad station and it was called Dermott. My father came to take the position of railroad agent. I was a baby then and of course have no remembrance of what the so-called town was like, but I remember hearing that it consisted of a gin, a store, and a saloon. The railroad station was about a mile west on what is now Mrs. Walter Bowden's place. It was a part of the Crenshaw place. My remembrance of the town begins several years later. It had grown slightly by that time. There were three stores, the gin, the



saloon and a barber shop, and the railroad station had been moved into town. My father and his brother, Jim, had built a rather large barn-like structure. It was located just across the railroad from where Lephiew's gin is now. I think that is where the gin was when we came but don't think it belonged to Lephiew at that time. As I remember it was called The Dermott Gin Company. Dermott was a good shipping center even then, that is during the cotton season. There was no railroad south of here, and practically all cotton was hauled here to be shipped to Arkansas City and from there on river boats to New Orleans.

This building of my father's and his brother's had a large room running all the way through the center with shed rooms on each side. The central room was a general merchandise store, the shed room on the west was for feed stuff, and the one on the east was my father's special domain. In it was the railroad station, ticket office, telegraph office, post office, and my father had a small stock of drugs. Nothing much was ever wrong with the people here in those days except malaria, and practically the only drugs needed were calomel, quinine, castor oil and turpentine. My father was the only one in charge of these businesses, and he also bought cotton. Before leaving the health of the community I want to say that shortly after the town was incorporated, in 1890 I believe, some land was bought for a cemetery and it was ten years before anyone was buried in it.

I can remember when my cousin Reuby Crenshaw, the daughter of Tom Crenshaw, and I were the only little white girls in town. She had a brother older than she, and I had one younger than I. They were both named Will. There were a few other children, the Mercer children and the Hurd children. Mrs. Mercer was a McDermott, and Mrs. Hurd an adopted daughter of Dr. Charlie McDermott. There were three other families then in Dermott besides our family and the Tom Crenshaws. They were the Peddicords (Mrs. Peddicord was a daughter of Dr. Crenshaw), the Winstons (Mrs. Winston was also a daughter of Dr. Crenshaw), and the Stinsons. However they had no children when I can first remember. Mrs. Winston was the mother of Mrs. Harvey Parnell.

My father and mother had a young friend who lost her husband and who came and lived with us for awhile, and while she was with us she taught me and my cousin Will Crenshaw. This lady however didn't stay very long, and the parents of the neighborhood were beginning to weary of teaching their children and a drive was begun to get a tax-supported school. The Negro children already had a school and they had a very nice building. There were something over 50 Negro children. This building was located where the Tom Spurlock home now is. The landmarks I am mentioning are of course only known to our Dermott people. Well, when we tried to get a school for the white children, in spite of all efforts we could only muster ten children who were six years old or older, and could not meet the requirement for twelve. Mr. Tom Crenshaw was president of the school board then. After we found there was absolutely no chance to find twelve children who were six or over, Mr. Crenshaw decided to include his daughter Reuby and my brother Will, both of whom were about 4-1/2, but both were rather large for their age. I was 6-1/2 and Reuby's brother Will 6-1/2. We then had twelve white children though we had fudged slightly on their ages. Then came the problem of a school building. It seemed we would be allowed a teacher but the building of a house was out of the question-NO MARSHALL PLAN. Finally it was decided we would use an abandoned cabin. It had a rather large front room and a shed room at the back. It had

only wooden shutters at the windows and a dirt chimney. This cabin was located in a cotton field about a quarter of a mile south of the Negro school. We only had a six-months school so we went in the summer time - due to no glass windows. We had no place to play except the "big road" as we used to call it, which was usually about a foot deep with dust. We couldn't play in the cotton field. I was one of the twelve who went to this school and was there the first day it opened. As far as I know I am the only one now living who attended that school. After one term it was decided we could use the Negro school when they were not using it. I don't remember how long we went there, but the town was growing and the children in the families already there were becoming school age. So when there were about thirty white children we had a new school building. It was practically a duplicate of the Negro building - No better, no worse.

The town grew slowly and it was not until 1908 that we had a brick school building. That was the first year it was a graded school and Mrs. Barnett, who is with us tonight, was the first graduate. She was Alma Daniels and afterwards married Mr. Barnett who was superintendent of the Dermott schools. Though we had very meager school buildings and equipment for a long time we always had good teachers. When there were so few the teachers were able to give us special attention, and we were not held back by grades. Those who went from this school were always well up and mostly ahead of the students who came from graded and accredited schools. Our schools are now up to date in every way, both in buildings and good teachers. Mr. Palmer, our present superintendent, has kindly given me all the data on our schools as they are at present, as follows:

We now have 650 white pupils, 1 superintendent, 1 principal and 26 white teachers.

For white children we have:

6 educational buildings with as aggregate value of	\$422,500.00
Equipment for these buildings, including athletic equipment	70,000.00
Athletic field	18,000.00
Six school buses for transporting white children	22,500.00

In addition, there is a home for the superintendent,  
3 homes and 4 apartments for white teachers 30,000.00

There are 812 Negro students, 1 Negro principal and 24 teachers. Their building and equipment are about the same as for the white children.

To one who began with the first twelve white pupils in an abandoned Negro cabin, these figures are quite impressive.

I have seen Dermott grow from nothing to a nice, up-to-date little city with model schools, good stores, beautiful churches and homes, a hospital that has been commended by physicians from many places, and as pretty a bank as there is in the state.

Dermott has no scenic beauty to speak of. You Eudora people have your hills, Lake Village the wonderful lake which I believe is the largest natural lake in Arkansas. However Dermott has its trees and is a rather pretty little town anyway.

I have always wondered what it was that won the affection and loyalty of most of the people who have lived in Dermott. There are a few of course who didn't like it, but the majority did and do. One of the ones who liked Dermott very much was my husband. He was reared in London amid all the gaiety and amusements possible. He came to Dermott when he was 22. His grandfather owned several mills in the United States, and when Sherer came home from the Boer War his grandfather asked him to come to the United States and take charge of all the mills. One mill was in Ohio, one in Kentucky, one in Dermott and one somewhere else, I am not quite sure where. After he had visited all these places he decided on Dermott for his headquarters, and it was his home from then on. He always wanted to go back to London for visits, and after we were married we went every year or two, but he always wanted to come back to Dermott. The head mill was located in Glasgow, Scotland, and several times he was urged to come there and take over the management of the head plant, but he never wanted to go, choosing rather to come back to Dermott. He eventually bought the Dermott mill. There are many others who, wherever they are, remember Dermott with love and affection. Hardly a Christmas passes that I don't receive a card from some friend of long ago, and they always write a few rather sad, nostalgic lines about their longing to see the old place again.

There seems to be some subtle charm about Dermott which I don't understand and can only attribute to the kind hearts and friendly people-OF MY HOME TOWN.

This little talk was made before the Chicot County Historical Society in Lake Village in November, 1961.

Martha Crenshaw Burleigh

## **DERMOTT FOUNDER: MAN OF TALENTS**

**by Bess Paris**

(From *Dermott News*, Thursday, November 9, 1961)

HERE LIES..”Dr. Charles McDermott, Sept. 22, 1808-Oct. 13, 1884.” A broken tombstone in an old family graveyard in Dermott bears the above inscription. And here lie the bones of the founder of the city of Dermott.

Under the spreading branches of century old pecan trees, planted by Dr. McDermott, in the middle of a cotton field, the old family cemetery is a focal point of interest of the recently organized Chicot County Historical Society.

Belonging to a descendant of Dr. McDermott, the cemetery was at one time offered to the city and refused because of the expense of upkeep. However, a move is now on to clean it up and make it one of the historical attractions of Dermott, (Editor’s note: The cemetery has now been taken over by the city as a memorial and will be maintained by the city.)

Scientist, planter, physician and minister of the gospel, Dr. McDermott founded the town of Dermott in 1832. It was incorporated in 1890.

Dr. McDermott built and flew an airplane 30 years before Adler and the Wright brothers, and he patented the principle of the modern airplane more than a quarter of a century before the Kitty Hawk incident. They called him “Flying Machine Charlie”, and some of his neighbors called him crazy.

He spent a fortune on various designs of flying machines and obtained several patents including No. 133,046 on Nov. 12, 1872. This was the airplane he flew and proved the principle which is now used in modern aircraft. He lay prone in his machine and provided power through a bicycle pedal action. Had gasoline been common, he probably would have sustained flights in his machine. He actually flew a short distance.

He invented and patented the common iron wedge used all over the world, patent No. 159,949, Feb. 16, 1875. He also invented and patented a cotton picking machine, No. 152, 858 on July 4, 1874, and an iron hoe.

His feats and inventions are recognized by the Institute of Aeronautical Society in New York, but there are few monuments or markers to his great achievements, and he died without recognition due the inventor of the airplane.

Born in West Feliciana Parish, Louisiana, Dr. McDermott was the son of Patrick McDermott of Ireland who settled in Louisiana in 1794. His mother was Emily Ozan, daughter of a French family of Point Coupee.

The first lands that the McDermott’s owned in Louisiana were given to Patrick McDermott, an engineer, by the Spanish government in payment for work in making flour mills for them. They believed that wheat could be grown there. At that time, cotton had not been grown in Louisiana, but indigo and sugar cane were the principal crops.

In his journal written in 1880, Dr. McDermott speaks of the slaves that his family brought to Louisiana with him from Virginia and Kentucky, and some that he bought direct from the slave ships from Africa. They sold for \$1 per pound. He also tells of how he heard some of them discuss which part of the human body was best for eating. He said his first religious awakening came through an old Negro slave from Virginia who had him read hymns and the Bible aloud so that he could memorize them. This old slave

taught him to pray.

He speaks of private schools which he attended and later a school at Plainfield, Connecticut, where he was tutored by a Yale student to prepare him to enter Yale. He boarded with a Dr. Coggswell for \$1.50 per week "with everything furnished." He entered Yale as a sophomore in 1825 and graduated in 1828.

He then returned to his plantation home in Louisiana by stagecoach, skiff, which he helped row down the Ohio River with a classmate, and later a small steamer took them the rest of the way. There were no railroads then.

At home he supervised his mother's plantation. In addition to the farm crops, they had a large dairy and bee hives, as well as orchards and vegetable gardens. He was much interested in bees and increased his mother's hives from 9 to 130. At the end of four years, his mother gave him and his brother, Edward, each one-fourth of the slaves, but no land.

According to one entry in the Journal, he was married to Miss Hattie S. Smith on Dec. 19, 1837. She was related to Jefferson Davis by marriage.

Dr. McDermott and his family moved to the Bayou Bartholomew home in 1844, which he described as a sort of cabin. He came to Arkansas to get back on his feet financially because he had been following the pattern of rich men in his parish and living in such an expensive style that he found himself overwhelmed by debts. In a few years he paid off the debts and improved the "poor house" which he then called home.

Speaking of his wife, he mentions her goodness and her hardships in bearing so many children (six) and moving about with him so much. They lived four years in a small home near his mother in Louisiana, several years in a larger house and several years in the cabins at Bartholomew, he said in his Journal. Then he built a large house, the old home just in front of the family cemetery, facing the Bayou Bartholomew road. At that time, this was considered a palatial residence. It stood about 200 yards back of where the residence of Mrs. E. G. Hammock and the late Chancellor Hammock, now stands.

From there they moved to a fine home near Monticello called "Finisterrae". After that came the "horrible Yankee war". Dr. McDermott was outspoken for the Confederate cause during this war, and came near being hanged by Federal soldiers at one time.

Declaring that he would not live under union rule after the war, he organized a colony of secessionists and went to Honduras for several years. He returned because of dysentery, climate conditions and other hardships.

In addition to his own family, he and his wife reared several orphan children and educated them with private tutors and every advantage possible.

He left many descendants but there are not many bearing the McDermott name. Of that name still living in Dermott are Lewellyn and Arthur Floyd, great grandsons, and the latter's children, great-great grandchildren. The families connected living in Dermott are the Ellis, Helmstetter, Stark, and Bennett families.

And so, here in Dermott, where the writer of this article can look out her back door and see the old family graveyard, lies the bones of Dermott's founding father, Dr. Charles McDermott, scientist, physician, planter, minister of the gospel, scholar, and Southern gentleman.

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**Old Letters Recall Remarkable Efforts  
in West Feliciana of**

**ONE 'FLYING MACHINE CHARLIE'**

**By Orena Muse**

Brittle old letters, a patent granted in 1872, and a piece of heavy paper used in the construction of an "aeroplane" are mute relics of the endeavors of a Louisiana man to construct one of the first machines in the United States designed to fly through the air like a "buzzard."

These are in the possession of Mrs. Mamie S. Kiblinger, 373 Oakwood Drive, a granddaughter of the late Dr. Charles McDermott, who was among the first in the United States to conceive the principles of the modern airplane design and probably was the first person to be granted a patent for a flying machine.

"He never got recognition for his efforts," Mrs. Kiblinger said. "He died a broken-hearted old man without ever seeing his machine become a reality. He worked so hard I would like to see him get credit at last. But I don't want any credit from the Yankees. I want him to get his credit down here in the South. He was a Southerner and he hated the Yankees. He wouldn't want any credit from them. He was an unreconstructed Rebel. And I am, too."

**Born at Waverly**

He was born at "Waverly" - in West Feliciana - presently restored to its original beauty by Mr. and Mrs. George W. Lester - but later went to Arkansas where he worked desperately to perfect a machine which would permit a man to "fly from one state to another and back home at night in time to feed the chickens."

Known the country around as "Flying Machine Charlie", Dr. McDermott never gave up the invention despite ridicule, abuse, and poverty, though he died without seeing his "invention" become a success, his granddaughter said.

So great was his faith in man's ability to fly that Dr. McDermott spent several fortunes in construction of flying machines of various designs. There was always a flying machine in some stage of construction at his home and Mrs. McDermott and her daughters got the silk for their dresses from the bolts of silk he bought for use for his flying machine models. At first, he bought silk by the bolt, then when he could no longer

afford silk, he bought linen, later cotton cloth, and finally, paper. It is a piece of this paper which Mrs. Kiblinger treasures.

### **Invented Other Things**

A Yale graduate, a brilliant scholar, a scientist, an inventor, and an outstanding planter, he invented and patented a cotton picker, an iron wedge, and an iron hoe.

Dr. McDermott, his granddaughter said, first became interested in flying when he was a young man, and there is said to be still standing an oak on the grounds at "Waverly" known as "Flying Charlie's Oak," because Charlie fell from it in trying to fly. "Waverly" was built about 1795 by his father, Patrick MacDermott.

He took time out from his invention to fight the Yankees during the War Between the States, and at one time was saved from death at their hands by a friendly warning, which sent him into hiding in the woods. He hated the "Yankees" until the time of his death.

He was left in reduced circumstances after the war, but he continued to devote his time to his "flying machine," working at his summer home near Monticello, Arkansas, and the rest of the year at McDermott, Arkansas. (Editor's Note: Dermott, Arkansas)

"He would observe the flight of buzzards and cranes," Mrs. Kiblinger said, "noting particularly the ability of buzzards to glide for long periods of time without flapping their wings.

"From this he theorized that a heavier-than-air machine could be raised and supported by dynamic means alone, by reaction of the air on surfaces driven through it."

### **His Machine Was Glider**

His early machines were, in reality, gliders.

They were made of "cypress slats split by his own hand." When the day of trial came he called on his sons and his neighbors to come and hold the corners until he said "let go." However, there was always one, or more, who did not let go promptly and a slat would always be broken, or the wind - its only power - would stop blowing or change directions, his granddaughter remembers.

The inventor went to Washington several times to have some of his ideas patented, and one time he stayed nine months to promote interest in aviation. Even after his own fortunes had been spent, he sought financial aid from others, having abiding faith in the practicality of his machine.

He was granted a patent November 12, 1872, for "Improvement in Apparatus for Navigating the Air." This patent was recently turned over to Mrs. Kiblinger by the U. S. patent office.

Dr. McDermott experimented with biplanes, triplanes and multiplanes. His most successful design was, apparently, a plane with about 15 pairs of wings, placed one above the other, elevated slightly in front. The flier was to lie in a horizontal position, supported by a horizontal cot, placed just below the center of gravity, his legs providing the power of propulsion by working a "mechanical power of the lever of the screw or the wheel and axle." His hands were to direct the vertical course of the machine by pulling wires which operated the guiding vane.

## **Mrs. Kiblinger Tried It**

Mrs. Kiblinger said the plane would actually leave the ground.

“When I was a little child,” she recalled, “I remember getting in the hammock of that same flying machine, and was told by my grandfather to work my feet, and the machine did rise a little bit.”

All of his life Dr. McDermott was regarded as “unbalanced” on the subject of flying. His neighbors didn’t pay much attention to his efforts, just laughed about them as a “big piece of foolishness.” Several times he announced that his invention was perfected and he needed only capital to enlarge the model and place it on the market.

But each time, when put to the test, something was found wrong and he returned to the development of his theory amid the jeers of the unfeeling and the sympathy of those who regarded him as demented.

He exhibited his machine at several fairs in Arkansas and at the Centennial exposition at Philadelphia. It was there - where the famous scientists from all over the world gathered - that he offered his prized gold watch to anyone who would show him a flaw in the machine. Incidentally, he also exhibited his patented iron hoe and iron wedge at the exposition.

In 1822 he wrote:

“I hope to give a flying chariot to every poor woman, far better than Queen Victoria ever rode in. I hope in time to rout the devil out of his boasted possession. He calls himself ‘the prince of the powers of the air.’ It is mortifying that a stinking buzzard and a stupid goose should fly, and man, the lord of all the earth, should be any longer confined to the land and water. Many sails (wings), one above the other, and a horizontal propulsion, is the secret, which was never known until I discovered it by analysis and synthesis, and which will fill the air with flying men and women.”

Shortly after this, in an announcement to the public, Dr. McDermott stated that a “practical machine” could be constructed at a cost not to exceed \$1,000. Being old, feeble and poor, he earnestly asked for immediate financial help to test the merits of his model thoroughly and to place a complete machine on the market.

## **Storm Ruined Plane**

The money was raised and the machine was constructed. A day or so before time for the trial a storm struck which lifted the machine high into the air and crashed it into a tree.

That was the last flying machine Dr. McDermott constructed. The loss of the plane left him a feeble old man. He died in 1884, at the age of 76.

Had Dr. McDermott had the use of gasoline as a motive power, his granddaughter said, there is little doubt that he would have anticipated the Wright brothers by 30 years. For he was the first to work out accurate information regarding the laws of air resistance to bodies moving through it, but he .....motive power for practical flight; the steam engine was too heavy. It was not until the development of the internal combustion engine that power-driven flight became possible.

In 1893, just 10 years after Dr. McDermott’s efforts, the government granted S. P. Langley \$50,000 with which to experiment on flying machines. Even with this financial



assistance, he accomplished no more than Dr. McDermott, although he did perfect a method which made possible the practical study of aerodynamics. His machine was damaged in launching, and the government withdrew its financial support. The government called him crazy, too, and he died broken-hearted.

### **Got No Credit**

Another 10 years and on December 10, 1903, the Wright brothers made their historic flight at Kitty Hawk, N. C. However, in the record books, the first flight by a human being is credited to a Frenchman, Ader, who on October 17, 1897, flew 1,000 feet at Satory, France. These later inven..... plans of Dr. McDermott which were on file in the patent office in Washington.

For years after the Wright had made their first flight no one would believe they had flown for had not leading scientists - among them Simon Newcomb, famous astrologer and mathematician - already explained with unassailable logic that the thing was impossible?

The first formal public demonstration by the Wrights came at Fort Meyer, VA, in September of 1908.

Two of Dr. McDermott's contemporaries - seeing the Wright plane for the first time - exploded: "Why that's Charlie McDermott's machine!"

Dr. McDermott has never been accorded recognition in the history of aviation for his work with the "flying machine." Recently a "Yankee" magazine wrote to Mrs. Kiblinger for some information about her grandfather, explaining they wanted to give him credit for his work.

"I don't care about any Yankee credit," she said. "He wouldn't have wanted the Yankees to give him anything. And I don't either."

**DERMOTT GUARD MOBILIZED**  
**June 22, 1916**

**Reprinted from the Sesquicentennial Edition, 1973**  
**Originally in the *Dermott News***

Company K, the local company of the National Guard, is preparing to go to Fort Logan H. Roots, where it will be inducted into federal service for war with Mexico, which, at the present writing seems unavoidable.

The officers and non-commissioned officers of the unit are: Capt. W. S. Daniel; 1st Lieut. J. F. DeLany; 2nd Lieut. R. L. Woolfolk, Jr.; 1st Sgt. J. B. Daniels; Quartermaster E. B. Kimpel; Sgts. A. O. Flowers, E. M. Offutt, H. Duerson, R. W. Parrish and G. H. Cavaness; Corporals L. McDaniels, N. F. Bynum, G. A. Crenshaw, J. W. Reynolds, A. G. Caveness, H. Harden and Wyatt Mason. There are 49 privates in the ranks.

Demonstrations in honor of the company included a reception given by the ladies of Dermott on the lawn in front of the B. Ford residence Sunday night. The address of the evening was given by E. G. Hammock, former captain of the unit, who, on account of disability, is not now able to be one of their number. In beautiful but forceful language, he expressed to Company K the appreciation, sympathy and affection extended to them by the people of our town. His address was an excellent example of optimistic patriotism, and was enthusiastically applauded at frequent intervals. Captain W. S. Daniel responded on behalf of Co. K with a gem of a speech of appreciation and farewell. Seldom has there been such an enthusiastic demonstration by a Dermott audience as that which attended these speeches, and in fact, prevailed during the entire evening. U. C. Barnett, who presided on the platform, introduced as guests of honor, two Confederate Veterans, Mr. J. T. Crenshaw and Mr. W. A. Holt. A third veteran, Rev. N. C. Denson, was out of town.

On Tuesday afternoon all business houses were closed as the hour of Company K's departure approached, and practically the entire citizenry of the town formed a parade and marched to the railroad station led by a drum and bugle corps and Standard Bearer Henry Bordeaux carrying an immense flag. Numerous gifts, including cigars and floral offerings, were presented, and the ladies of the town presented the soldiers with a beautiful silk flag on which the words "Company K, Dermott, Arkansas." The railroad car in which they went was draped with bunting and flags, both inside and out.

## HISTORY OF LOCAL DEPOT

Related by Frog Parker

*The Dermott News*

Thursday, July 3, 1969

Reprinted with permission of Jim White

Interesting history of the Missouri Pacific passenger depot is related in a letter to the editor written by Will (Frog) Parker of Dermott:

“In your Dermott News of last week you had a picture and told of the closing of the beautiful Mo-Pac passenger station.

“When this station was built it was one of the finest between Little Rock and New Orleans. I felt like saying a few words about the station. Few people know this was the second station of this kind. As the first one was being built it was destroyed by fire; one of the most disastrous fires in the history of Dermott. Destroyed was the entire block south of the station: the Wilkerson Hotel, Ed Anderson’s barber shop, Bowden’s saloon, Gus Mitchell’s Restaurant, Henry Van’s Saloon, also a snack lunch counter operated by a Chinese man.

“The fire started in the Mitchell Restaurant. I was eating supper there, along with my good friend, Frank Johnson (brother-in-law of the late W. E. Lephiew) when it started.

“This was in the fall of 1912. The depot was torn down to the foundation and started again. It was finished in 1913.

“The station was the meeting place for most everyone on Sunday. Two passenger trains met here at 1:45, one from Little Rock; the other from New Orleans. During those days we had 16 trains every 24 hours carrying passengers.

“We had a good payroll on the depot force. B. Ford was agent here for many years on the passenger side. He had three operators, three ticket salesmen, one day porter and one night porter. Mr. Ford had his office in the freight depot across the track with an office force consisting of Elze Bond, Pete Murphy, Harry Ward, Hazel Morris, Odie Courson and a man I cannot call by name. Also a porter, Hal Bradley.

“Everything in those days moved by rail as we had only two cars in town at that time--a Ford owned by the late Mrs. Oliver Higgins and a 1913 Buick owned by Percy Hart.

“The front street which is now a parking area was the unloading track for all carload shipments.

“Things have certainly changed in the 60 years I have lived here.

Your friend,  
Frog Parker.”

## 125 YEARS OF HISTORY WOVEN INTO A SHORT STORY

By Abbott F. Kinney

(Published in the Magazine Section of the *Arkansas Democrat* February 17, 1952).

(Reprinted with the permission of the author)

When I drive down the beautiful paved streets of Dermott, lighted by a handsome whiteway, and when I look into the brightly lighted windows of our modern, air-conditioned stores and hear in the background the smoothly running machinery of our cotton gins and mills, I think of the pleasant hours of conversation about the contrasting "old days" I have enjoyed with the old-timers of Dermott.

Some of them have told me the story of their parents and grandparents, who 125 years ago first settled on the fertile land that is now Dermott. When night time came, they barricaded themselves into their log cabins, and their only light was from their mud fireplaces and candles made from bear grease, and from them I learned why Arkansas was once known as the Bear State.

Dermott, center of a large trade area in Chicot, Drew, Desha and Ashley Counties, originally was situated deeply within the boundaries of Chicot County instead of at the center of a quadri-county area as at present. For at the time of the original formation of Chicot County, ninth subdivision of the Territory of Arkansas, on October 25, 1823, the county extended westward from the Mississippi River to the Saline and Ouachita rivers, and northward from the Louisiana state line to within 10 miles of the mouth of the Arkansas River, taking in territory now in Desha, Drew and Ashley Counties in addition to Chicot.

The present sites of Arkansas City, McGehee, Monticello, Collins, Hamburg, Crossett, Wilmot, Parkdale, Portland and Montrose are on land that at first was within the boundaries of Chicot County. Villemont, a town of some 150 persons on the Mississippi river, now non-existent, was the county seat. Drew County was carved out of Chicot in 1846, Ashley in 1861 and part of Desha in 1879.

The earliest settlements in the vicinity of Dermott were made in 1826, but most of the land titles date from 1830-1836.

In those early pioneer days only a few scattered homesteads broke the vast wilderness of forest and swamp. The hostile Indians had moved westward by this time, but families had to barricade themselves against the panthers, wildcats and bears of the wild country. Muzzle-loading muskets hung on the walls of the log cabins, and always kept handy were cap and ball pistols which shot molded bullets, using paper wadding and percussion caps, with the iron ramrods pivoted to the barrels.

Another weapon became common with these frontiersmen and little later: the bowie knife, which was invented in 1827 at Natchez by Col. Jim Bowie, who died a hero's death at the Alamo in 1836, the year Arkansas became a state. Colonel Bowie paid several visits to his relatives on Bayou Bartholomew on the site of Dermott, John J. Bowie's place being one day's travel west of the Mississippi River. It was for the Bowies that the township in which Dermott is located is named.

The early history of Dermott, however, is the history of Charles McDermott, for whom the town is named. Charles McDermott was born April 4, 1808 in West Feliciana Parish, Louisiana, near the old town of Woodville, Mississippi, five years after the

Louisiana Purchase.

His father was Patrick McDermott, who, as a boy ran away from home in Ireland and came to Philadelphia in the American colonies. Patrick was later employed by the Spanish government as an engineer in Louisiana and received a large grant of Louisiana lands for his services, becoming very wealthy. He died when Charles was six. Charles' mother was Emily Ozan of one of the French families of Point Coupee.

Charles was graduated from Yale University in 1828 and then studied medicine under his brother-in-law, a Dr. Bains, who had graduated in London. He married Hettie Smith, who was related by marriage to Jefferson Davis, president of the Confederacy during the Civil War.

On his return journey home from Yale in 1828, coming down the Ohio River, Charles had fallen in with a party of government engineers who were going to explore for the navigation of the Red River. By them he was told of the rich lands in Arkansas Territory, where one could stake out claims.

Thus it was that on the death of his mother in 1832, Dr. McDermott and his younger brother, Capt. Edward O. McDermott, moved from Louisiana to Chicot County. Dr. McDermott secured by pre-emption or purchase most of the land on which Dermott is now located, and settled about a mile east of Bayou Bartholomew.

Here he fell in with such early settlers as Stephen Gaster, Reese Bowden, Early Hurd and Hilly Jones, with whom he enjoyed bear hunting, often bringing home cubs for playmates for his children. Another outstanding early landowner in the vicinity was Silas ("Old Si") Craig, who settled Bellaire and Yellow Bayou. With compass in hand, "Old Si" traveled on foot through the almost impenetrable thicket in order to survey the lands, and it was he who first divided Chicot County into separate divisions.

Capt. Edward McDermott, who was one of the heroic figures of the Seminole War in Florida, died young, leaving two little girls who were reared in the family of his brother, Charles. One of these girls married Robert Watkins Finn of Monticello, and when she died May 27, 1932, at the age of 80, she left four sons: Tracy W. Finn and R. W. Finn of Dermott, Charles Finn of Little Rock and W. H. Finn of Monticello, and three daughters: Mrs. Sam Cole, Mrs. M.E. Shewmake and Mrs. V. B. McCloy of Monticello. The other daughter of Capt. McDermott married Sid Crute, some of whose descendants still live in Monticello.

Dr. Charles McDermott became an extensive landowner and planter and influential citizen, and through his inventions gained national recognition. He built a residence which was considered quite palatial for those early times. It stood about 200 years behind where the residence of Mrs. E. G. Hammock and the late Chancellor Hammock now stands.

In addition to his large family, he reared a number of orphaned children, giving them the same advantages of music, dancing and study under French masters and governesses, whom he secured on his various trips to New Orleans to buy supplies for his plantation.

His wife, in addition to rearing children, had to oversee the cutting and making of clothes, and the various industries attendant to carrying on such a large estate. In her home was a nursery where the young Negro babies were kept each day under the supervision of slaves too old to work in the fields. The estate was governed with justice and kindness.

The McDermott premises were a favorite camping place for emigrants crossing the Mississippi River at Gaines Landing on their way to the West. Gaines Landing, incidentally, derived its name from Ben P. Gaines, R. M. Gaines, and William H. Gaines, who settled it, and it was one of the chief ports on the lower Mississippi from about 1830 to 1880.

A Mrs. Hotchkiss, of Oklahoma, in a magazine article many years ago, gave an account of stopping at the McDermotts'. As a young woman, she started in 1858 with the Rev. Cyrus Kingsbury to become a missionary to the Indians. Starting from Steubenville, Ohio, they came by boat down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, landing at Gaines Landing with the purpose of making a cross-country trip to Indian Territory. The first night out from the landing, they reached the McDermott home, where she found abounding hospitality. She recounted the unique experience of having the servants bring out water in cedar tubs to wash the dust from the weary travelers' feet. Several families living in the neighborhood offered her \$500 and board to stay with them and teach their children, but she decided to go on with her original purpose, although her salary as a missionary was to be only \$200 a year.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, Charles McDermott was an outspoken secessionist and became widely known for his bitter denunciations of the Federal government. Near the close of the war, his life was saved by the receipt of a message from a friend, warning that a company of Federal soldiers was approaching. He was very ill at the time, but his daughters got him into a wagon and into the woods in time to save him from hanging. His home was sacked and orders were given to burn it, but curiously this was called to a halt when the Union officer recognized a photograph of William McDermott, a college friend at Yale. Young McDermott was in the Confederate Army at the time.

After the war, declaring that he would not live under the Union flag, Dr. McDermott and a Charlie Barrow of West Feliciana led a movement to found colonies of secessionists in Honduras, Central America. The venture was a failure, due to dysentery, the climate and other hardships.

Today, some 85 years later, a citizen of Dermott, John Mitchell Baxter, son of Mr. and Mrs. John Baxter, is successfully engaged in the timber business in Honduras, near San Pedro, a related United Fruit Company industry. He and other Americans live in air-conditioned homes, with all the modern comforts.

Dr. Charles McDermott, a scientist at heart and a charter member of the Southern Pacific Railroad Co., had great faith in man's ability to learn to fly. He spent a fortune constructing flying machines of many designs. He experimented extensively with biplane machines and was the first scientist to discover the principles of modern airplane design. Using the principles patented by him, No. 133,046, Nov. 12, 1872, he constructed a plane here which actually took to the air briefly. Lying prone in the machine, he provided power with his feet. He exhibited models at the state fair at Little Rock and at the Centennial Exposition at Philadelphia in 1876, where he unsuccessfully sought ideas about motive power from scientists. He became known the country around as "Flying Machine Charlie", and had the gasoline engine been available for motive power at that time, he would have anticipated by 30 years Adler and the Wright Brothers, who used his design. Facts about his efforts are in the archives of the Institute of the Aeronautical Sciences, New York City, which obtained additional information from this

writer.

The newspapers in 1882 quoted him: "I hope to give a flying chariot to every poor woman, far better than Queen Victoria ever rode in. I hope in time to rout the devil out of his boasted possession. He calls himself 'the Prince of the Powers of the Air'. It is mortifying that a stinking buzzard and a stupid goose should fly, and man, the lord of all the earth, should be any longer confined to the land and water. Many sails, one above the other, and a horizontal propulsion is the secret, which was never known until I discovered it by analysis and synthesis, and which will fill the air with flying men and women."

It seemed appropriate that Charles A. Lindbergh, who in 1927 set the world aflame with his New York-Paris flight across the Atlantic Ocean, should make his first night flight, in 1923, in Chicot County, near Lake Village, only a few miles from the place where Dr. McDermott labored so hard to invent the airplane.

The common iron wedge used all over the world was invented by the founder of Dermott, and was patented, No. 159,949 on Feb. 16, 1875. The Dermott scientist also invented and patented a cotton picking machine, No. 152,858, on July 2, 1874 and also an iron hoe.

Dr. McDermott was a Bible scholar, reading the scriptures in Greek. Although reared by Catholic parents, he was converted to Presbyterianism under Lyman Beecher at Yale. He had been ordained an elder at Woodswille, Mississippi, about 1829, and after he had become settled in his new home in Arkansas, he erected a building in the southeast corner of his front yard for a place of worship for his white neighbors, and a place of assemblage and instruction for his Negroes.

In 1868, while Dr. McDermott was in Honduras, the New Bethany (Dermott) Presbyterian Church was organized under the guidance of the Rev. J. A. Dickson, pastor of the church at Monticello. Judge J. F. Lowry and Pineo Hurd were elected elders, and M.B. Shaw, deacon. When Dr. McDermott returned from Honduras, he was made an elder in the Dermott church, and he continued in that office until he died in 1884.

The descendants of these early McDermotts make quite a multitude, but there are not many of the McDermott name. Of that name still living in Dermott are Arthur McDermott, a grandson, and his two sons, Llewellyn and Arthur Floyd, great-grandson, and the latter's children--great-great-grandchildren, and another great grandson, Harry McDermott. The families connected living in Dermott are the Ellis, Helmstetter and Bennett families. R. B. Ellis is now postmaster.

In 1904 Mrs. N. Smylie (nee Emma Shaw), a granddaughter, who now lives in Franklin, Kentucky, sold the land with the old McDermott mansion to Dr. W. K. Baker, reserving 100 feet square in order to preserve the old McDermott cemetery, where lie buried the old couple and many of their descendants and neighbors. Previously she had sold several acres to the town for a town cemetery.

The first railroad in this section was built through the Dermott settlement west to Collins before the Civil War. For several years after the war, the town, or rather the trading center, consisted of a church building on the lot on which Circuit Judge John M. Golden now stands, and a general store. The store, adjacent to the church and facing the Gaines Landing road, now Gaines Street, was kept by M. B. Shaw and Matthew Allison.

A post office was established Oct. 5, 1875 under the name "Bend" (the bend in Bayou Bartholomew) with Reuben D. Crenshaw as postmaster. On May 25, 1877, the name was changed to Dermott, in honor of Dr. Charles McDermott, with John B. Daniels

as postmaster.

In 1878 the eastern terminus of the railroad was changed from Chicot City to Arkansas City, which had displaced Gaines Landing as the chief port on the lower Mississippi River. In 1879 the railroad was extended from Collins to Monticello, and in 1882 to Warren. When the north-south main line of the Iron Mountain railroad, now the Missouri Pacific, was built through the Dermott settlement in 1887, a real town began to spring up at the crossroads.

The town was incorporated July 11, 1890, with J. Tom Crenshaw as mayor; W. D. Trotter, recorder; W. E. Splawn, marshal; D. Kimpel, treasurer; and Charles T. Wells, John T. Crenshaw, S. M. Owens, L. C. Crute and W. S. Smiley, Aldermen.

The Crenshaw family, of which Reuben D. Crenshaw, the first postmaster, and his brother, John T. Crenshaw, one of the First aldermen, and their cousin, J. Tom Crenshaw, the first mayor, were members, played an important part in the development of the town. J. Tom Crenshaw's family had settled near Bayou Bartholomew before the Civil War and the other Crenshaws came here shortly after the war.

John Crenshaw and his cousin, Mrs. Hattie Peddicord, were the founders of the Dermott Methodist Church, about 1880, and each year on the Sunday nearest Mr. Crenshaw's birthday, May 26, a memorial service is held with flowers from the garden of his daughter, Mrs. S. Burleigh. Two stained glass windows in the present church building, which was erected in 1925, and which won a national award for church architecture, are memorials to Mr. Crenshaw and Mrs. Peddicord.

The Dermott Baptist Church was founded about 1895 by the Rev. N. C. Denson, a Confederate veteran who founded a number of the Baptist churches in southeast Arkansas. W. J. Raborn was the first superintendent of the Sunday School.

The Bellaire Baptist Church, near Dermott, whose 356 members dedicated their new \$50,000 building last year, was formally organized in 1918 by the Rev. F. C. Sims, pastor of the Dermott and Eudora Baptist churches. However the church's history dates back to 1907, when Sunday School and singings were held by the seven families of the community. The Rev. Mr. Denson preached there often in the early days. Mr. and Mrs. T. J. Lamb and Mr. and Mrs. J. B. Griswood are still active workers in the church.

The Church of Christ and the Assembly of God churches were organized in comparatively recent years, the former having completed its church building in 1939, the latter in 1940. There are also 14 Negro churches.

J. Tom Crenshaw retired as mayor in 1894 but continued as a civic leader. He became recorder in 1895 and served in that capacity most of the time until his death in 1926. Monuments to Mayor Crenshaw and to C. H. VanPatten, recorder under Mayor Crenshaw from 1891 to 1894, are the oak trees they planted along the streets while in office. Of these now majestic specimens, the late George M. Moreland, roving Southern journalist, a few years ago, wrote: "When I reached Dermott I found a beautiful and an immaculately clean city. The planners of Dermott possibly anticipated the coming of the automobile, for the streets are wide and there is plenty of room for parking. I saw many beautiful homes in Dermott, but the one feature of the city which interested me most was the oaks which line the city's streets. Certainly there are no finer trees within the borders of Arkansas."

One of these stately trees died recently, and when it was cut down, citizens felt that they had lost an old friend.



After Mayor Crenshaw, succeeding mayors to date have been: Pat E. Savage, 1894-1897; D. Kimpel, 1897-1898; E. G. Hammock, April-July 1898; E. P. Remley, 1898-1901; T. A. Wilkinson, April-June 1901; C. F. Wells, June-September 1901; W. J. Raborn, 1901-1908; J. B. Mercer, 1908-1909; W. J. Raborn, 1909-1912; J. H. Hammock, 1912-1913; W. J. Raborn, 1913-1914; J. T. Freeman, 1914-1916; J. A. Bennett, 1916-1926; G. W. Burks, 1926-1938; Zan Golden, 1938-1947; Will J. Irwin, 1947 until his death in June, 1951; and Lloyd O. McKeown, present mayor. During an illness of Mayor Golden, in 1938, Miss Catherine Alexander, recorder, served as mayor for several months, and is believed to have been the first woman mayor in the state.

Present aldermen are: A. Prothro, who has been a city official longer than anyone else in the town's history; W. E. Lephiew; J. E. Wagner; G. M. Jones; Will Parker; and F. H. Dennington.

Dermott has always been a politically minded town, and one of the political highlights was the election of the late Harvey Parnell, a home-town boy as Governor in 1927 and again in 1929, after having served as lieutenant governor, senator and representative. Mrs. Parnell now operates Winston Plantation at Halley, near Dermott.

Dermott has long been an outstanding women's club city, with its cultural and social life led by such clubs as the Altrurian Club, which was federated in February, 1913, with Mrs. E. G. Hammock and the first president, and of which Mrs. G. W. Burks is now president. In 1924 Mrs. B. Ford of Dermott was president of the Pine Bluff District of the Arkansas Federation of Women's Clubs, and in 1936 Mrs. Elwood Baker served as state president, later being named state director for the General Federation of Women's Clubs. Mrs. Harvey Parnell has long been active in the Arkansas State tuberculosis Association and in state women's clubs circles, and Mrs. G. E. Kinney served several years as secretary of the Arkansas Women's Democratic Clubs and held office in the state American Legion Auxiliary and the Arkansas Press Association.

A public library, supported by the women's clubs of the town, is maintained in City Hall, with Mrs. C. D. Gist as librarian and Mrs. F. R. Paris and Mrs. G. M. Jones as directors.

Dermott's beautification program is led by the Dermott Garden Club, which celebrated its 21st anniversary this January, and of which Mrs. Tom Spurlock is president. The American Legion Auxiliary, of which Mrs. Frank Gibson is president, is active in child welfare and other civic works. The St. Mary's Hospital Auxiliary of which Mrs. W. W. Bynum is president, is composed of volunteer hospital workers of Dermott and McGehee, and the Parent-Teacher Association, of which Mrs. Tom Patrick is president, is an outgrowth of the old School Improvement Association, which was organized at the turn of the century.

The first public white school in Dermott was a summer session in 1885, held in the same building which was used by the Negroes in the winter, located on West Gaines Street on the lot west of where the John Baxter home now stands. The teacher was Miss Anna Morgan, the late Mrs. J. J. Baugh of Searcy, wife of Mr. Baugh who was publisher of the Searcy Citizen for more than 50 years. J. Tom Crenshaw was the first white public school director, all previous directors having been Negroes.

Enrolled in the first school were Martha Crenshaw, now Mrs. S. Burleigh, Her brother, Will Crenshaw, and two cousins, one of them also named Will Crenshaw, and Reubye Crenshaw, now Mrs. R. C. Edwards, retired superintendent of the Florence

Crittenden Home at Little Rock; Eula and Kate Mercer, who became Mrs. Vance Bordeaux of Little Rock; Arthur and Ada McDermott, and Frank, Mary, Gordon and Maggie Hurd.

The next year school was held in a cabin which was built in the block north of the present W. H. Oglesby home on South Trotter Street, and about two years later a building was erected on the present location of the Dermott Gin Co.'s gin on Speedway Street. This was used until 1908, when the first unit of the present school system was erected. Just last year the entire school plant was renovated and modernized, and a new \$65,000 elementary school building was erected.

Incidentally, in 1908, at the suggestion of U. C. Barnett, then superintendent of the Dermott school---more recently with the state Department of Education at Little Rock, but now retired---the Southeast Arkansas Literary and Athletic Association was organized for the purpose of holding annual contests in literary and athletic events, the first organization of its kind in the state. Mr. Barnett and Supts. John H. Belford of Lake Village, Victor L. Webb of Hamburg, David C. Hastings of Crossett and J. R. Anders of Portland met at Montrose Nov. 28, 1908 for the organization meeting, and Mr. Barnett was elected president and Mr. Hastings secretary-treasurer. A half dozen other schools came into the association, and the first contests were held at Dermott in April, 1909.

For the ensuing 20 years, the annual contests were probably the most popular events in southeast Arkansas. Special trains were run for the occasion, and for several years the literary events were held under a circus tent, no auditorium in southeast Arkansas being large enough to accommodate the crowds. Outlay for cups and medals amounted to \$500 annually.

From this beginning, district high school contests were organized throughout the state, but gradually these organizations were absorbed by the state association until at the present time they are controlled by the Arkansas Athletic Association.

Dermott still continues a sports-minded town, having over the years won the state high school football championship, the state high school golf championship, the state junior basketball championship and many district track, softball and baseball championships. Fred Haas, Jr., national golfing figure, began his career while a student at Dermott High School.

Since 1923, when Act 678 of the state legislature authorized the creation of the Chicot and Desha County Game and Fish Commissions to protect and propagate the game in these two counties, Dermotters have turned more to the pastime that the early settlers engaged in for relaxation and recreation as well, as, in many cases, for livelihood: hunting and fishing. The largest deer herds in the state are located in Chicot and Desha Counties, it is said, and for many years hunting clubs from some 40 counties have encamped in these two counties during the deer season.

The Nimrods also have enjoyed quail, duck and squirrel hunting, while the fishermen's Mecca in recent years has been Lake Wallace, a \$55,000 man-made lake four miles south of Dermott, constructed by Chicot, Drew, Desha and Ashley County sportsmen in 1933. A new and larger concrete dam and spillway was constructed just last year.

Another center of recreation now is the \$55,000 swimming pool constructed in 1949 by public subscription, without taxation or federal aid. The pool is opened each year with the annual Miss Southeast Arkansas beauty contest, with winners to date as

follows: Miss Joyce Brasel of Dermott, 1949; Miss Janet Haley of Lake Village, 1950; Miss Katie Sue Rogers of Lake Village, 1951.

The town has excellent medical facilities, foremost of which is St. Mary's Hospital, opened July 1, 1940, under the direction of the Benediction Sisters, after years of effort by the late Dr. E. E. Barlow, a state medical leader and President of the Arkansas Medical Association. The Dermott Clinic serves a large area, and is owned and operated by Dr. Brian Barlow, a past president of the Arkansas Tuberculosis Association, and Dr. H. W. Thomas, both of whom were presented honorary degrees by the International College of Surgeons in Chicago last September. Two other Dermott physicians, Dr. E. Baker and Dr. J. A. Thompson, received recognition last fall also when they were honored by the University of Tennessee Medical School for 50 years of service. Dr. C. V. Reeves here has one of the most modern clinics for Negroes in the state and Dr. N. R. Parker, another well-known Negro physician, last year became one of the few Negroes ever to receive the coveted Silver Beaver Award by the Boy Scouts of America.

After the main line of the Missouri Pacific railroad was laid through Dermott in 1887, lumber mills of various kinds---stave, handle, automobile spoke, veneer, baseball bat and other---were built, and the town grew rapidly. On Feb. 20, 1913, its population having increased to 2,108, Dermott was proclaimed a city of the second class by Gov. Joseph T. Robinson. After World War I, the town had another period of rapid growth, this time due mostly to the settling of people from the north on the rich alluvial land, "which stretches in one gorgeous panorama in all directions from the city."

Dermott has had more than its share of disasters and hardships in the form of fires, flood, drought and insect infestation of crops, with the 1913, May 1914 and August 1914 fires and the 1927 flood probably the most calamitous. After another disastrous fire in October 1935, which destroyed the main hotel and a main portion of the business section during the depth of the depression, people shook their heads and said that Dermott was destined to become a ghost town.

But, as Mr. Moreland wrote: "fires may strike, floods may hinder, droughts may check and depressions leave their imprint upon the city's foundation, but a city located, as is Dermott, in the heart of one of the south's richest agricultural sections can never fail to make progress."

Bearing this out, the 1950 census showed that Dermott increased in population some 17 percent since 1940, with a population of 3,600, and with farm diversification and livestock coming to the fore. Cotton is still the principal crop, but rice is growing into an industry, along with cattle and broilers. Other principal crops are oats, corn, hay, sweet potatoes, timber, soy beans, and pecans, with some production of fruits and truck crops.

Dermott has a progressive bank with resources in excess of two million dollars, and its executive vice president, W. F. Pierce, is attracting statewide attention as chairman of the important Agricultural Committee of the Arkansas Bankers Association. John Baxter, president of the bank, is also president of the Southeast Rice Growers Association and of the Delta Production Credit Association, which serves five counties. W. E. Lephiew, Dermott civic leader, planter, cotton buyer and ginner, is president of the Southeast Arkansas National Farm Loan Association, which also serves five counties.

Dermott has active civic clubs, with the Rotary Club, of which Lamar Grisham is

president, recognized as one of the state's best, having won a number of citations. Organized March 19, 1925, the club still has two active charter members in John Baxter and C. R. Bates. The Dermott Chamber of Commerce, of which L. B. Hawkins is president, works constantly for the improvement of the town.

The American Legion, of which W. O. Higgins is post commander, is a leading organization, its many activities including giving substantial financial aid to eight worthy causes each year. Several years ago, R. L. Gordon of Dermott, was elected national vice commander of the Legion. The Boy Scout organization is strong here, with R. H. Dennington of Dermott chairman of the Chicot-Desha District. The Cub Pack is active under Scoutmaster Tom Ross, the Boy Scout Troop under Scoutmaster A. R. Walker, Jr., and the Explorer unit under Advisor Joe Carmichael. Because of his outstanding work, Mr. Walker was presented the Eminent Leadership Award and year before last was chosen to head the De Soto Area Council contingent of Boy Scouts to the National Jamboree at Valley Forge. The recognition resulted in this writer's being elected to serve this year as president of the 11-county council, which leads the 32 councils in Region Five in membership gain.

The Dermott Masonic Lodge was recognized when in August 1948, the late K. D. McNeely was chosen grand master of the Grand Lodge of Arkansas.

New highways were completed in the Dermott area last year, a new drive-in movie is being built, and Dermott is joining with its sister city, McGehee, in constructing a radio station for Southeast Arkansas. New business buildings and fine homes have recently been completed.

Yes, although Dermott has a proud history and may face disappointments in the years to come, it will never be content to live on its past glories but will always work for progress. An ideal town in which to live, with the advantages of both the big city and the small town, Dermott can well look forward to a full future as well as back on an interesting past.

## A LETTER TO DERMOTT

This article was given to me by Leslie Williams, Dermott City Nursing Home Administrator. I do not know the author nor the date written. I have taken the liberty of correcting the spelling.

### DERMOTT

Story or Narrative of one of the Most Substantial little towns in Southeast Arkansas-Here Business Men are Making Their Community the True Headquarters for a Wonderful Agricultural Territory.

Chicot County, Arkansas is one great county. DERMOTT the largest town in the county with a population of three thousand people, stands amid the plowed fields a center for the trade, a market for all that is grown with the wide rich country.

The advancement of a town like this depends upon the country round about it. We know what good crops mean. Understanding these things we the residents of the town should go about to make the country depend as much upon the town as the town upon the country and the result will be -Prosperity.

It takes more than rich soil to make a good farm. If information and approved methods of cultivating the soils is applied this county will be more prosperous than at present.

Dermott seems to have always flourished. Since it was founded, it has been known as one of the best little live towns in southeast Arkansas. Just now, however, it is moving forward more rapidly than in any other time of its history.

Blessings, often appear in disguise. The boll weevil and a few over-flows for the past five years, and still Chicot county people are prosperous.

Five years ago Dermott had a population of about a thousand people and now triple this amount. During this period has built five miles of sidewalks, and have installed water works and sewer system, and Electric light plant, Lights and water every where in the city.

After the town spending several thousand dollars in improvement buildings and homes, and public property, they should see that some good country roads are built to their little town, which would add a great deal to the building of the town.

It is simple to say of a town that it has seven factories and five miles of concrete side walks and one of the finest public schools in this section of the country, and two of the finest hotels in the state, to the size town they are in. It is, however, the manifestation of public spirit of the good people of Chicot County and DERMOTT Arkansas.

Yours Very Truly,

## A SALUTE TO THE CITY OF DERMOTT

[The following article appeared in the Dermott News on June 26, 1947, and is reprinted at the request of the Dermott Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber has had numerous requests for the information about Dermott contained herein.]

The article, prepared by W. F. Pierce, secretary of the Dermott Chamber of Commerce, and A. F. Kinney, chairman of the Publicity and Public Relations Committee, was presented in a salute to Dermott over Radio Station KLRA, Little Rock, last July.

DERMOTT--center of a large trade area in Chicot, Drew, Desha and Ashley counties, was first settled in 1826. The early history of Dermott is the history of Dr. Charles McDermott, for whom the city is named.

Dr. McDermott became an extensive landowner and planter, and built a palatial residence in which he reared a number of orphan children in addition to his large family, giving them the advantages of music, dancing and study under French masters and governesses. The McDermott premises were a favorite camping place for emigrants crossing the Mississippi river at Gaines Landing on their way to the West.

A graduate of Yale University, Dr. McDermott was the first scientist to discover the principals of modern airplane design. Using the principals patented by him, No. 133,046, Nov. 12, 1872, he constructed a plane which actually took to the air briefly. Had the gasoline engine been available for motive power at that time, he would have anticipated by 30 years Adler and the Wright brothers, who used his design.

The common iron wedge used all over the world was invented by Dr. McDermott, and was patented (No. 159,949) Feb. 16, 1875. The Dermott scientist also invented and patented a cotton picking machine, No. 152,858, on July 2, 1874, and also an iron hoe. He was a charter member of the Southern Pacific Railroad Company.

The first railroad in this section was built through the Dermott settlement west to Collins before the Civil War. A postoffice was established October 5, 1875, under the name "Bend", with Reuben D. Crenshaw as postmaster. On May 25, 1877, the name was changed to Dermott, with John B. Daniels as postmaster.

In 1878 the eastern terminus of the railroad was changed from Chicot City to Arkansas City, which had displaced Gaines Landing as the chief port on the Mississippi river. In 1879 the railroad was extended from Collins to Monticello, and in 1882 to Warren. When the north-south main line of the Iron Mountain railroad, now the Missouri Pacific, was built through the Dermott settlement in 1887, a real town began to spring up at the crossroads.

So the town of Dermott was incorporated July 11, 1890, with J. Tom Crenshaw as mayor. After the main line of the Missouri Pacific railroad was laid through Dermott in 1887, lumber mills of various kinds -- stave, handle, automobile spoke, veneer, baseball bat and others -- were built and the town grew rapidly. After the first World War, the city had another period of rapid growth, this time due mostly to the settling of people from the North in the rich alluvial land, which stretches in one gorgeous panorama in all directions from the city. During World War II, a Japanese Relocation Center and the largest Prisoner of War Camp in the United States was located at Dermott.

Dermott is a hunting center, with Nimrods from many states enjoying deer hunting, quail, duck and squirrel hunting here. The fishermen enjoy Lake Wallace's \$55,000 mad-made lake four miles south of Dermott, constructed by Chicot, Drew, Desha and Ashley county sportsmen in 1933.

Dermott is really the hub of Southeast Arkansas being located in the geographic trade center of Desha, Drew, Chicot and Ashley counties. It is conveniently located to U. S. Highways 65, 165, and 82 and State Highway 35. The Warren Branch of the Missouri Pacific Railroad leaves the main line at Dermott thereby giving the City the advantage of a Railroad crossing. Such connections of Railroads and Highways give this area access to the best markets in the Mid-South. Due to its central location the Delta Production Credit Association and the Southeast Arkansas National Farm Loan Association are both located in Dermott.

The soil in the Dermott area is alluvial Delta soil that will grow cotton, corn, hay, beans, vegetables, and any other crops grown in the Mid-South. The long growing season and the short mild winter makes this area very good for the cattle, poultry, and swine industry. In fact cattle raising is rapidly becoming one of the present money crops of this area. A large dehydrating plant has been constructed nearby which will give a market for alfalfa that can be grown on heavy lands in this trade center. Among the 50 or 60 present business houses in Dermott are the following:

3 large modern cotton gins.

3 saw mills with large payrolls.

Large, modern bank.

1 Quick Freeze plant.

1 of Arkansas' largest wholesale grocery houses.

1 large wholesale and retail machinery plant.

1 wholesale dry goods store.

1 wholesale and retail auto parts store.

3 auto agencies

Lack of buildings and lack of building facilities have prevented any other industries or businesses from coming to Dermott.

Dermott is a city of wide paved streets, white way lighting system, excellent water and sewerage system and beautiful homes. Several new homes have already been built and many more will be built just as soon as labor and material conditions permit. Two new residential sub divisions are in the process of development.

Dermott has one of Southeast Arkansas's best Public School Systems and is the City of Beautiful Churches. The Dermott Methodist Church won first place in a national contest in church architecture.

St. Mary's Hospital, a \$100,000 municipal project, was completed in 1940 and it has been a great service institution since its completion.

Plans are being formulated for the construction of a modern swimming pool and recreation center. (Recently the swimming pool was completed.)

Dermott has one of the best colored communities in Southeast Arkansas. It is the home of the Morris Booker Memorial College for negroes. The Chicot County Training School for negroes is one of the best. There are several prosperous business institutions in the colored area. It also has many churches and Dermott is noted for its outstanding sensible negro leaders.



## **DERMOTT IN THE 1950's**

**by Sheila Farrell Brannon**

**June, 1998**

I will probably not remember all these things in chronological or location order, but these are some of my impressions as I was growing up in Dermott, Arkansas in the 1950's.

I was born in 1946 at St. Mary's Hospital. This hospital was run by Catholic Sisters and was located in a large house on South Pecan Street. I was told the Ellis family, who was related to the McDermotts, had owned the house. The McDermotts were the founders of Dermott and many years before also lived in the same vicinity as the location of the hospital. The hospital was on the west side of the street on the last block before you get to Gaines Street.

We lived on Howard Street across the railroad tracks, three sets of them. My grandfather, E. S. Farrell, worked for Burleigh Mill (he cut out ax handle blanks) and we only lived a block from the mill site. Many of the workers lived around the mill. We were only a couple of blocks from the main part of town and as soon as I got old enough to go to town by myself, I would sometimes make the trip several times a day. We would usually cut across our backyard that was bordered by a railroad-switching track. Then we would cross the Parker Lumber Company yard. They would have racks of creosote light poles and we walked them like lumberjacks instead of going around them. This was probably dangerous, because if they had ever begun to roll, we would have gotten caught between them.

Other times we went around by the other railroad tracks. Children who live close to the tracks are excellent "track walkers" and I don't mean inspectors. We could climb on the track and walk all the way to town without ever falling off the rails. The trick was not to burn your bare feet in the summertime. Speaking of bare feet; we went barefoot all summer long and could run on rocks without much discomfort, but sometimes the heat of the sidewalk was a little much. There was one store in town that I would love to pass by and would usually linger for a few minutes. Mr. and Mrs. Huey Jacobs had a store that had probably been a service station at one time, although I don't remember it. It sat back off the street and had a large canopy extending out front. You could walk under the

overhang where the sun never got a chance to shine and the concrete was so cool. That was a summertime treat in itself. This store was located on the east side of the corner of the 100 block of North Freeman. Many businesses have been in this building over the years and the store has been completely redone and the canopy is long gone.

My all-time favorite store was Morgan & Lindsey. Mrs. Lucille Smith ran this store for as long as my memory could stretch. It was always pleasant to go into the store in the summertime because it had large cooling fans blowing all over the store. I don't think Mrs. Smith liked all of us kids traipsing through the store, because we seldom bought anything, but we certainly did our share of looking. Some of the clerks were very gruff and followed you around watching your every move. I can't speak for all children back then, but honesty was a virtue during that time and children didn't take things that didn't belong to them. I can remember going to the store before I was big enough to see over the counters. Years ago when you bought something in the store, they didn't put it in bags, they wrapped the items in brown paper and tied them up with string. I remember Mrs. Donna Salter did this so well. She was always nice to us kids; I guess because she had children, too. I also liked her to wait on me at the candy counter. She seemed to have infinite patience while I tried to decide between the blonde fudge and the non-pareils.

I will try to name as many businesses and locations as I can remember. At the very end of East Iowa was the train depot. This was an extremely busy place in the 1950's with lots of freight and passenger trains coming through daily. Starting on the corner of Arkansas Street and Iowa, going along the east side of the street, there were several office buildings; the first one was the Dermott State Bank, Dermott Insurance Agency, then the Post Office, Delta PCA, John Baxter Law Office, and Spot Oglesby's Beauty Shop. I am not sure of the exact order. On the next block was the Sibernagel building. They were in the wholesale grocery business and served southeast Arkansas.

On the west side of Arkansas Street, I can't remember what the corner building was, although years later, it was a Laundromat. Then on the corner by the alley was Pritchard's Café and some of the best food anywhere. After you crossed the alley, you came to the most magic building in town: the movie theater or as we called it, the picture show. This was the Allied Theatre and we all looked forward to Saturday and the double

feature matinee. We usually got a Sugar Daddy caramel sucker and if you held your mouth just right, it would last all through both shows.

At Christmas time the owners of the theater would treat all the grade school children to a free movie. Back then "free" was a very good price, but we always had to watch "A Christmas Carol" with Alistair Sims. When you are 6 or 7 years old that is a pretty scary movie. I wished they would have chosen a different movie, but I never missed a chance to go to the picture show.

My cousin and I would use whatever movie we saw on Saturday as the basis for all our make-believe the next week. One week we were Dale Evans and Roy Rogers; the next we were Tarzan and Jane. One time "Tarzan" fell out of our pecan tree in the backyard and we were afraid to go to the house for help because we knew we weren't supposed to be in the tree in the first place.

The theater burned in the 1960's and the Dermott volunteer firemen (my daddy and husband were two of them) stayed with the fire and fought it all night. The only thing left is some of the tile floor and embedded in the tile are the words "Allied Theatre". When I look at the place where the theater had stood, it is hard to visualize it. It seemed so big when I was a child and yet the building was only about 25 feet wide.

South of the theatre was the bottling company; I think it was the Pepsi Company. The best I can remember they bottled many kinds of soft drinks like Orange Crush and Double Cola. The Scott Apartments were on this block, too. The last building on this block housed Tama Mahfouz's Pool Parlor. The men gathered there to play pool and dominoes. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of July Tama would sell fireworks. (In the old days, this was the only time you had fireworks. It would have been considered sacrilegious to shoot them at Christmas.) We would go up there with a dollar to spend and he would send us home with a sack so full that we could hardly carry it. We came closer to having \$20.00 worth of stuff because he would put in some of every kind he had. The boys always shot firecrackers and Roman candles, but I liked the sparklers and snakes better.

On the corner of Peddicord and Arkansas was nothing, except a wonderful place to play. At one time there had been a hotel there, but it had burned many years before. All that was left was this fascinating mosaic tile floor. We used to go there to roller

skate. It was so much fun to glide across those ceramic tiles and hear the clacking of the wheels, until you ran into a broken piece and usually ended up with skinned knees.

Going down Iowa Street toward the west, there were no businesses directly on the north side of the street; that is where the railroad was located. There was an old bank building and a car dealership north of the track and lying between the switching track further north. The car dealership building also held a grocery store at one time.

On the south side of Iowa some of the businesses were a barbershop, a beauty shop, Mr. Louie Courtney's grocery store, Prothro's Jewelry Store, Morgan & Lindsey, Barnes Furniture Store, Dermott Supply, Western Auto and on the corner of Iowa and Freeman, Chester's Grocery Store. This had also been Kroger's, but I don't remember it. Going across Freeman and continuing down Iowa was Abrom's Department Store, Y. L. Tow Grocery, Royal Liquor Store, Pick and Pay Grocery Store, Cohen's Department Store; then you crossed the alley. The next building has held many stores but at that time was Delta Drug Store. (In the 1960's, Young Lee had a Ben Franklin store in this building, and my mother, June Farrell, was the manager.) After the Delta Drug building there was an open spot where someone usually had set up a cheap picture-taking booth, then on the corner of Iowa and Main was Mr. Horn's service station. I remember that Willie Plummer, Sr. was just a boy when he worked there, but he was the best bicycle flat fixer that we knew and I think I was his best customer because we always rode our bikes on gravel roads. I cannot remember where Weisman's Department Store was, but I think it was just around the corner from the service station and later took over that whole corner when they expanded. At this point I will attempt to name the people who owned the stores. Mr. and Mrs. Yee Gow Suen owned and operated the Y. L. Tow Store; their son, Chester, owned and operated Chester's Grocery. Pick and Pay Grocery and Royal Liquor Store were owned and operated by the Lee Jaim family. One of Lee Jaim's sons, Belser, is still operating the liquor store along with help from his three sons, Curtis, Shueylin, and Dennis. The Abroms owned their store and their niece, DeVera and her husband, Joe Goldstein, also helped run it. In later years the Goldstein's daughter, Margie, and her husband, Barry Brunner, took over the operation. The Cohen's had a daughter named Jennie Nussbaum and she and her family ran the store for many years. (One of the Nussbaum children, Stanley Ray, changed his name to Ray Stanley and

became a famous songwriter. He wrote a Perry Como song, "Glendora". Another son, Alan Joe, is a lawyer in Little Rock.) Delta Drug was owned and operated by the Chester Courtney family. The business changed locations a couple of times and eventually built a beautiful new building on Peddicord Street. A few years ago, they sold the business to Jeff Dunn, who had moved here from Stamps, Arkansas. Joseph and Stella Weisman originally started Weisman's. Their daughter, Louise, her husband, Bernard Levi, and son, Larry, carried on the tradition until just a few years ago.

Starting down Freeman Street from Iowa, on the east side of the street; as I have noted, Chester's Grocery was on the corner (the entrance was even on the corner); then there was and is presently the Lephiew Gin Company office. They have been in the same place for many years and my sister, Linda Farrell Fowler, has been their secretary for many years. The gin used to be just across the railroad track to the north, but then they built a new, modern one on Highway 35 East and the old one was destroyed. When in operation, it used to cover the town with cotton lint every fall.

South of the Lephiew Gin office, across the alley, was the Jacobs Grocery Store building, then a set of three buildings all connected that belonged to the Parker family. These buildings were built where a wagon yard had once stood and before that it was the location of one the first churches in Dermott, the Methodist Church. I have seen a picture dated 1909 that still had the church at this place. Back to the three buildings; they housed the J. B. Baker Furniture Company, The Dermott News newspaper, (run by W. W. Mundy for many years) and Perry Rexall Drug Store. Then there was the Mutt Gibson law office. I don't remember what was next, but Dr. H. W. Thomas built his office in that spot sometime in the 50's. The old American Legion Hut was on the corner of Freeman and Peddicord where the current Post Office is located. (The new Post Office is being built now and is located further south on the next block beside the library.) The old hut was made of logs and shaped like a Quonset hut. They had a dance there every Saturday night. We never went, but sometimes Daddy would find a parking place in front of the building and we could see the people dancing inside. They usually left the doors open to let in a little cool air. My husband remembers his family going and they would put quilts on the floor in the corner for the children to sleep on while the grown-ups danced. I don't know what they called the dance back then, but when they built the new hut on the edge

of town, it got to be a pretty rough place to go and everyone called it "The Rat Race." The old hut was purchased by the Mutt Gibson family and moved to their farm south of town and made into a hunting club. At the time of this writing, it has been gone several years, the victim of a fire.

The only times I ever went inside the building was once when I was six years old and had to sing at a Shriner Banquet; one time we had a dance when I was a teenager; and several times we schoolchildren were bused there to receive polio shots. Those times I hated. In the 50's polio was a very scary thing. No one knew how to prevent it. I remember having to lie down and take a nap each day after lunch in the summertime, because some people thought if you got tired and overheated you would contract the disease. Our small town was very lucky because most of the children here escaped the epidemic and I can remember how relieved all the parents were when the vaccine was discovered.

On the west side of Freeman, Abrams had a side entrance facing Freeman, and then there was another building that Delta Drug eventually moved into. I think that Trigg Department Store was there at one time, too. After you crossed the alley there was Pete Hodges Insurance Agency, the clothes cleaners, City Hall which housed the jail and also the library, Downey Funeral Home, another building (I think it was a doctor's building), then there was one of my favorite places -Hamm's Puddin' House. Mr. Hamm had a small dairy diner under some big shade trees where First Community Bank is currently located on the corner of Freeman and Peddicord. We loved to go there to get an ice cream cone. It was the soft kind. When my Grandpa Barrett would come to visit us from Massachusetts, he would take us to town every day for either an ice cream cone or we would go to the soda fountain at Perry Drug Store and get a soda. I loved a chocolate soda with vanilla ice cream. In the old days I guess most of the drug stores had soda fountains. You could get fountain drinks, sandwiches, etc. A lot of the businessmen went there to eat lunch and conduct business. I heard my daddy say "that more business deals have been made in Perry Drug Store than in all the meeting rooms in town." I remember Mr. Willie Perry and his brother, Buddy. They were pharmacists and were also rural mail carriers. I probably shouldn't be telling this, but to me it seems to be a compliment to their skill as pharmacists. You could go to Mr. Willie and tell him your

symptoms and he would fix you up with some medicine. This really came in handy when money was tight and you couldn't afford a doctor visit. I am sure it wasn't the proper thing to do, but all the people of Dermott had a lot of confidence in him and if the truth be known, his cure rate was probably as good as any of the doctors'. I remember when he gave you pills; they came in little white boxes shaped like small matchboxes. He would write the instructions on the outside of the box.

My grandmother would only take a pill called A.S.A.'s for her headache. Mr. Willie always fixed her a box of them. She would not take aspirin because she said that they did not help her headache. Years later when I began to be a curious person, I found that A.S.A. and aspirin contain the same ingredients.

Back to my story; traveling south along Main Street, on the west side of the street, beginning at the railroad track was the Pinkus Liquor Store, owned and operated by Mendel and Beulah Pinkus. I think this row of buildings was in the Kimpel block. Mr. Ernie Kimpel had a restaurant on this block in the early 60's and maybe before. He called in the Circle K. Even after he sold it, the new owners kept the name as long as the business was in operation. There was a large brick house that I guess the Kimpels lived in and then sitting back about a half block off the street was one of the most beautiful homes in Dermott. It was the home of Mrs. Martha Crenshaw Burleigh and her husband, Sherer. These people owned the mill where my grandfather worked. I don't think I remember Mr. Burleigh and I never saw Mrs. Burleigh much. Evidently she had a hard time walking because she had an elevator in her home. We thought that was the greatest thing and would loved to have seen it. Of course children are not usually invited into someone's home just because of their unbridled curiosity. In later years, a family named Cockerham bought the home and then sold it to the Gibson family. A lady named Carolyn Vogler, operated a midwife service there for a few years. As I write this, the house is empty and very run down. There was another fairly large house south of the Burleigh home and on the corner is the new Methodist Church. I say new, but it was built in the 1920's to take the place of the one on Freeman Street.

On the east side of Main after Weisman's was an office on the corner of the alley. At one time it housed a beauty shop. In later years it has been the office on Bing Colvin, a lawyer. Across the alley were several large houses. One of them held the Telephone

Company. You could tell it was the Phone Company because there was a little blue and white sign with the picture of a telephone on it hanging out front. Mrs. Ila Mann had a crew of young women who were assigned shifts at operating the switchboards. My aunt and my future mother-in-law were two of them. Next was a dentist office run by Dr. Harold Grumbles. There was a service station on the corner of Peddicord and Main. I think the Wagner family originally operated it, but mostly I remember Jug Magness having it. To the south, across the street, there was the Calhoun service station. (During elections, people would gather around this station because they would write the voting results on their big glass window.)

I do remember that there used to be "sidewalk superintendents" all along this side of the street. These were benches where the old retired men sat and watched the day go by. I used to walk to school this way sometimes. Mr. George Bernard, a lovely old man, used to visit with us kids as we would walk by. I enjoyed talking with him so much that one day I was almost late for school. This happened when I was only in the first or second grade. When Mother found out about my tardiness, and I explained what created the problem, she told me not to talk to him anymore on the way to school. Of course, she meant to just say hi and keep on walking. The next day when Mr. Bernard tried to strike up a conversation, I, being a very literal child, told him that I couldn't talk to him anymore. He and my parents were all members of the Eastern Star and he knew them very well, so he asked them what had happened. To make a long story short, everything soon got back to normal.

Speaking of Mr. Bernard, he was always thinking up things to entertain people and he had all kinds of tricks. One day we saw him uptown, his finger was all bandaged up with what looked like blood on the bandage and "horrors of horrors" there was a large nail sticking right through his finger and through the bandage. He said he had been to the doctor, but the doctor couldn't remove the nail and he would just have to leave it in there. We children were so upset that my mother finally made him take the bandage off to show us the trick of the bent nail.

As I think of Eastern Star, I can remember so many of the people who used to be so active in the organization: Mrs. Scott, Mrs. Mann (who operated the phone company), Mrs. McKeown, Mr. and Mrs. Charlie Barnes, Mr. Bernard, of course and an elegant lady



from Arkansas City, Mrs. Sponenbarger and many more. The ladies called her, "Sister Sponie". Sometimes we would get to go to some of the open meetings and I always enjoyed seeing the women in their evening dresses. They looked so pretty. The ladies would try to out-do each other with the food that was served. I remember Mother always made open-faced sandwiches of cream cheese. She would cut the bread in the shape of a star and color the cream cheese with the colors of the five star points. Now the Eastern Star and Masons are both gone. The Masons moved their charter to McGehee. Years ago, people were more easily entertained and they enjoyed getting together to visit. These organizations gave them the opportunity for both. Now in today's fast paced world, most fraternal organizations have been left behind in the dust. The Masonic Hall was right around the corner from the dentist office and was located on Peddicord Street. It is now the new home of the Dermott Chamber of Commerce.

This has covered most of the business area, although there were some businesses located further south on the next blocks. Mr. Renfro had a motor company in the same spot where the new Post Office is being built on east side of the 100 block of South Freeman. There were doctors' offices scattered around. Years ago we had the wonderful old hospital and a lot of wonderful doctors to go with it. You never thought about traveling out of town to see a doctor unless you had some horrible disease or condition that no one had ever heard of before. Our doctors delivered babies, were great surgeons, loved the old folks, and probably did psychiatric counseling on the side.

The Barlow family had two doctors practicing here when I was born. Dr. Brian Barlow delivered me and his father was also a doctor. Their son and grandson, Eddie, is now carrying on the family tradition as a famous cardiologist in Little Rock. When my sister, Linda, was born two years later, Dr. H. W. Thomas delivered her as well as Buddy, the next child in our family. When the last child, Bryan, was born, Dr. McCutcheon delivered him. Shortly after that, Dr. McCutcheon moved and we started going to Dr. Major Smith. He was our family doctor until he retired. Dr. T. C. Wilson also came to Dermott in the 50's I believe. He and Dr. Thomas are the only two fulltime Dermott doctors still here. I don't know what we would do without them.

One place that wasn't in the city limits, but made a lot of memories for the people of Dermott was the Cotton Boll. This small hamburger restaurant was located on the

outskirts of Dermott at the junction of Gaines Street and Highway 165. The Wooldridge family owned and operated this landmark for many years. People would travel from miles around to get one of "Miss Mattie's" hamburgers. They also had curbside service. That meant you drove up, honked your horn, and someone came out to take your order. We never went inside when I was a child because they served beer and sometimes there were people inside who might not be on their best behavior.

I guess one of the places I miss the most is our old school. It took up the whole block southwest of the corner of South School and Speedway (Highway 35). The school was built in 1908 and served us well. When I graduated in 1964 it was as pretty and well kept as it had been when I started school 12 years before. However in the next few years the wear and tear took its toll and it was demolished around 1976. The entire block was lined with beautiful old hardwood trees, as was most of our town. Dermott was always known for having wonderful, tree-shaded streets. Then in the early 1980's we had several years of near drought conditions and most of the historic trees died. Some of these were almost six feet in diameter, but a lot of them were a type of oak that had shallow roots and they just couldn't survive without a lot of water.

There were two more cotton gins in town. On the south side of Speedway going east, just before you crossed the railroad track was Dermott Gin, owned by Don Bulloch and his family. Planter's Gin was on the east side of South Freeman Street just before you got to Gaines Street.

Dermott was a prosperous little town in the 1950's. There were very few vacant buildings and the stores stayed open until 10 p.m. on Saturday night. Everyone came to town on Saturday and shopped and visited with people they hadn't seen since last week.

I know I am forgetting some buildings and businesses, but anyone who can remember back to the 1950's has pretty well dated herself anyway and you can tell I have a right to have some memory loss.

## **CARMEL TOWN-EUDORA PREDECESSOR**

**by Thelma Downing Pulley**

**Reprinted from the Sesquicentennial Edition, 1973**

Carmel Town Site - lying in Sec. 25, Township 18, south Range 2 west in Chicot County Arkansas, surveyed by E. R. Armstrong on April 4, 1902 and said Town Site (daughter of James Winnfield Scott and wife Emma Vick Lane). The following Streets, Avenues and Alleys dedicated for public use by the Scotts. Gordon Street, Armstrong Avenue, Anderson Street, Archer Street, Main St., Bruce St., Downs St., Hamilton St., Deloach St., Washington Avenue, Masona Alley, and Commercial Alley.

In 1816 Natchez Mississippi Circuit had two preachers; James Dixon and John Lane. The latter was a native of Virginia, but was reared in Georgia. In 1813 John Lane joined the South Carolina Conference, which then included Georgia. During the 1815 session of the Methodist South Carolina Conference at Charleston Bishop McKendree called for volunteers for Mississippi. At this time Mississippi was looked upon by the people of the older states as a huge graveyard, as Malaria was widely prevalent and sickness abounded. Notwithstanding these perils and hardships John Lane responded to the Bishop's call. In 1821 he located in what is now known as Vicksburg, Miss.

The circumstances which led to his location there: He had married Sally C. Vick, a daughter of Rev. Newitt Vick, who owned the land on which the city of Vicksburg now stands. Reverend Vick and his wife died the same day leaving a family of ten children and named John Lane as executor of his will.

He laid off the town of Vicksburg, merchandised on a large scale and for some years was Probate Judge of Warren County. He served as President of the Board of Trustees of Centenary College for many years.

Judge Lane never missed a preaching appointment and was always at the house of God at the appointed time. It is said of him, that his generosity was almost boundless, his character one of those symmetrical, well rounded ones which is a pleasure to contemplate. Rev. W. C. Black said, "His life was priceless benediction to our Zion". Rev. John Lane who was born in Fairfax County, Virginia, April 8, 1789 died of yellow fever in Vicksburg in 1865 leaving a large family. John A. Lane being the eldest son.

May 10, 1955 the Daughters of the American Revolution placed a marker at "Lanes Ferry", in West Carroll Parish just east of Bayou Macon Bridge on Highway 11 near Oak Grove, Louisiana. This was near the point where Bienville crossed Bayou Macon in the year 1700 according to his diary. The crossing received the name of "Lane's Ferry" more than a Century ago for John A. Lane who operated a ferry across Bayou Macon. Lane's wife was Nancy P. Mayfield who inherited the land in Sec. 33 from her father. In 1838 John A. Lane and Nancy P. were residents of Warren County, Mississippi. They moved to Carroll Parish, Louisiana about 1840. The family home was known as "Reclusia Plantation". John A. Lane and Nancy P. Mayfield (Carroll Parish Court Records at Lake Providence, Louisiana) left heirs Alexander G. Lane, Jane Ann Lane and Emma Vick Lane. Court records reveal these heirs were living in New Orleans, Louisiana just prior to the Civil War.

Emma Vick Lane born about 1822 in Warren County, Miss., married in New

Orleans 1860, James Winnfield Scott born August 14, 1829 to this couple was born four girls, May Mayfield Scott (died at age of five) Laura Scott (died while attending college in Jackson, Tenn.) Anna Lane Scott born 1866 and Madeline Scott born December 23, 1860 at Burtontown, Copiah Co., Miss. Died January 21, 1918 at Little Rock, Ark., buried at Eudora.

James Winnfield Scott and his family moved to Chicot Co., Ark., Township 18 in 1875-76. J. W. Scott operated a Ferry on Bayou Macon S.E. of Eudora near the present State Highway Bridge. His father-in-law John Allen born September 18, 1806 died at Carmel, Ark., August 15, 1883.

This Ferry was a very profitable business, as it was the only Ferry between Beouf River and the Mississippi for a distance of forty miles. All freight in this area, of every day living were tea, cotton, flour and the necessities of everyday living were transported to and from Grand Lake, Ark., across Bayou Macon by J. W. Scott. He amassed a considerable fortune in Real Estate, but in those days a person with considerable land was "Land Poor". The price of land in 1860-80 was fifty cents an acre.

Madeline Scott married at Carmel, Ark., December 1883 Dr. Samule August Scott (no relation) was born August 15, 1853 in Avoyelles Parish, Louisiana. Died Eudora, Ark. October 14, 1940.

S. A. Scott was reared in Louisiana, Marthaville and near Natchitoches. As a young man he taught school in La., and Texas before entering the University of Kentucky Medical School at Louisville, from which he received his M.D. degree. Dr. Samuel Augustus Scott began the practice of medicine about the year 1875 at Columbia, Ark., in Chicot County. He later set up his office at Grand Lake, Ark., and permanently settled at Carmel before 1883. His practice covered a wide expanse of territory, reaching from Lake Village on the North to Delhi, La., on the South. These sixty odd miles had to be covered on horseback, through densely wooded sections most of the way in all kinds of weather. There were no good roads, mostly trails, where only a horse or Ox wagon could travel. When the Doctor reached a swollen stream there was nothing left to do but give the horse his head and wade in, for the other side lay a patient, to whom his coming meant the relief from suffering and a chance to live.

In 1884 Dr. S. A. Scott and his wife moved to New Orleans, La., where Dr. Scott took special work at Tulane University. Here their son, Ernest Winnfield Scott, was born October 23, 1884. They returned to Carmel, Ark., in 1885. Dr. Mark Allen of Grand Lake, was the only doctor in the territory during the absence of Dr. Scott.

Ernest Winnfield Scott, the only child of Dr. S. A. Scott and Madeline Scott, received his elementary education at Carmel (Eudora) and New Orleans, La. From 1899 to 1901 he attended Hendrix College in Ark. In 1901 he entered the University of Virginia and received a B. A. degree and in 1908 graduated from the University with a M. D. degree. Dr. Ernest Winnfield Scott spent the fall of 1908 in Europe vacationing and studying medicine. He returned to the States in 1909 and finished his internship at the German Hospital (now Lennox Hill Hospital) in New York City in 1912.

Dr. E. W. Scott accepted the commission by the United States Government Public Health Service as Assistant Surgeon at the Lennox Hill Hospital soon after his internship. He was promoted to Past Assistant Surgeon and in 1920-21 to Surgeon in charge. In 1924 Dr. Scott left the Govt. Service to accept the place of Assistant Medical Director for the Equitable Life Insurance Society of New York. In November 17, 1931 Dr. E. W.

Scott married in New York City, N. Y., Estelle Keiper, daughter of Tilghman Henry Keiper, a native of Easton, Pa., and wife Susan A. Hoagland of New Jersey.

## **A BRIEF HISTORY OF EUDORA**

**By E. T. Cashion**

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[Mr. Cashion wrote a book about Eudora. The book is available from the Chamber of Commerce in Eudora. This is an excerpt from that book.]

In 1851 one E. C. James owned more than 700 acres of land where Eudora is now located, and the James tract extended east to and possibly beyond Bayou Macon. Death claimed an infant daughter of E. C. James in 1858. Her name was Frances EUDORA James. She is buried in Mt. Carmel Cemetery. She had died at the age of 4 years. Her last resting place is plainly and distinctly marked with a marble slab in our cemetery. When Frances Eudora James was given her name by her parents, her father used her middle name in designating his land holdings here. He referred to his farm or plantation as "Eudora Plantation" and the property was known by that name on up to the beginning of the 20th century. In fact, Dr. S. A. Scott, the present (1940) owner of that part of the James plantation which has not been absorbed by the town of Eudora and its additions, still and frequently refers to the property as Eudora Plantation.

The half century between 1850 and 1900 was the beginning of another local development of interest. As information for this historical sketch was assembled, Rev. N. Smylie, the present leader of the Presbyterian Church at Dermott, Arkansas, supplied us with information from an authoritative source that in the middle or late 40's a Presbyterian Church and a Seminary for girls was established just south of the present corporate limits of Eudora and upon the exact spot where Mount Carmel Cemetery is now located. The land upon which this church and school were domiciled was donated to the Presbyterians by John Booth, who died on November 2, 1847, and who is also buried in the local cemetery. (There is also a Phillip Booth buried in Mount Carmel Cemetery. His headstone reads: "Born 1797 and died April 25, 1854.")

When the Presbyterians came into possession of their church and school site prior to November 2, 1847 - the date of the death of John Booth, it appears that the church was actually organized in 1848 or 1849 by Rev. Benjamin Shaw. This information is set forth in a letter written in 1851 by Rev. James Smylie (an ancestor of Rev. N. Smylie of Dermott) to one Matthew Bolls and from which the following quotation is taken: "It is a source of satisfaction to me to know that my nephew, Benjamin Shaw, has been instrumental in raising a church in the wilds of Macon Bayou, where, in my remembrance, Macon, a child of the devil, ruled as his viceregent near fifty years ago.

This same Rev. Benjamin Shaw is buried in the local cemetery. He died on May 5, 1853.

Two buildings were erected by these early Presbyterians at Mount Carmel. One was a two story frame building, the upper story of which was used for church and lodge purposes, while the lower story or ground floor served as a dormitory and class rooms for the girls who attended the school. The girls' school enjoyed the reputation of being quite a musical center and a college of the very highest culture, and it is said that its student body was drawn from Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi and other Southern states.

To the west of the church and school building stood the manse or pastor's home. About 1870, and because of the removal or death of most of the local Presbyterians this church and school was abandoned and the building became untenable through the lack of use and through decay. They were torn down about 1876.

December 4, 1856, is a date which marked an improvement in the economic and social life of the early settlers of this community. In those days, communications and contacts with other sections of the State and the Nation, were carried from place to place by the traveler and the wanderer, those who were moving about for adventure or seeking new places in which to establish homes and settlements. Post offices and post roads were few and far apart, and the convenient means of communication which we enjoy today, such as the radio, telephone, telegraph, air mail and the daily newspaper, were unthought of by the Delta settlers prior to the Civil War.

But on the date mentioned, December 4, 1856, the Federal Government established the first post office, contrary to common belief, was designated as Eudora. It was impossible to determine the exact location of the building which housed our first post office, for we were unable to locate any living person who was acquainted with this section at that early date, neither were we successful in bringing to light any records which would give us this information. It is reasonable to assume however, since there was some united human activity at Mount Carmel, that this first government office may have been located near the Presbyterian Church, school and manse. More will be said about the local post office and its officials later on in this sketch.

In the same year that the post office was established here, E. C. James, whom we have heretofore mentioned, brought into operation another community development and convenience by establishing a ferry across Bayou Macon. This ferry was operated just a few feet south of the present steel bridge which spans Bayou Macon, east of Eudora and on Federal Highway No. 65. The ferry operated continuously, and under different owners from 1856 to 1886, when a wooden bridge was thrown across the Macon by Chicot County. This wooden bridge undergoing periodic repairs, served the traveling public from 1886 to 1912, when the present steel bridge was erected.

About the time the war broke out between the States, there is recorded evidence that there were then a number of individual farms and some highly improved plantations in this neighborhood. The organized civil governments of the state and the county had then been in operation about twenty five years, and human and property rights were generally observed and enforced. The advancement of civil rights and the yearly harvest of abundant crops from the fertile delta soil had blessed many families with an abundance of worldly possessions. For instance, we examined a tax receipt issued by Chicot County to Warren Phillips in 1861. He owned 320 acres of land in Section Fifteen Township Eighteen South of Range Two West (About two and one half miles northwest of Eudora.) His personal property consisted of twenty slaves, twelve horses and mules and thirty cattle. His real and personal property carried a total assessed valuation of \$22,300. The value of his twenty slaves was placed at \$16,000. It is somewhat interesting to note that Mr. Phillip's taxes upon an assessed value of \$22,300 in 1861 was but \$142.48. Today the total taxes upon an assessment list that large would carry taxes of from five hundred to seven hundred dollars depending upon the number of improvement districts in which a 320 acre farm is located.

The first residence to be erected in Eudora was what is now known as the W. H.

Stephenson home. A man by the name of Sweet built the home just a few years prior to the Civil War, possibly in 1858. A little later it became the property of a man by the name of Ratcliffe, who operated a store in the basement of the property. The present Dr. Scott home was the second residence to be erected here, and about the same time James Ralph, put up a store on the present Stephenson gin site. The Masons also erected a two story lodge building near this Ralph store.

About 1905 Mr. A. Meyer moved his Grand Lake store to Eudora, and a few years later he established one at Readland. He placed his son, R. H. Meyer in charge of his Readland store, and his son, Sol Meyer, in charge of his Eudora store. The latter was operated under the name of The Eudora Store.

Mr. A. Meyer married Miss Carrie Pheifer in 1875, and they were blessed with thirteen children, six of whom are living, and, of those six three sons are our own fellow citizens today - R. H. Meyer, Sol Meyer and Carrol S. Meyer.

Mr. Meyer became a rich man and at one time he owned a total of 30,000 acres of land in this county, in addition to his town property and holdings in Missouri.

It will be interesting to tell you that Cariola was named for Mrs. A. Meyer and Mrs. Peter H. Ford. Mrs. Meyer's name was Carrie, and Mrs. Ford's name was Eola. The husbands combined these two names and called the boat landing at Grand Lake by the name of Cariola.

Up to this point in this history many family and some individual names have been definitely connected with the development of Eudora. But it will be well to remember that many others were and are directly or indirectly responsible for the growth of the town. This is especially true of the period from about 1885 on up to the present time. The people who lived in the outlying communities such as Readland, originally known as Peakeville, Sterling, Grand Lake, Barnard, Scaife, Harwood, Eula, Chicot and others interwove their daily lives and activities with those of the people of Eudora and such families as the Hilliards, Warfields, Scaifes, Halls, Moons, Meyers, Cracrafts, Peakes, Stephensons, Easterlings, Salters, Graves, Fords, Mathis, Sawyers, Ralphs, Harrimans, Worthingtons, Lees, Johnsons, Wilkersons, Allens, Streetmans, Griffins, Maulls, Crabtrees, Sigmonds, Haleys, Phillips, Byrds, Routtes, and many others must be given credit for their share of contribution to the growth of the town.

At the very beginning of the twentieth century, Eudora was fortunate enough to be given its first railroad facilities. In 1901 the old Iron Mountain System began the construction of its Memphis, Helena and Louisiana Division of that railroad. The M.H. & L. was surveyed to traverse the entire length of Chicot County, and it ran squarely through the Eudora Plantation belonging to the Scott family. We can well imagine the pleasure, satisfaction and hope with which the people of Eudora received this outstanding development.

Long before his death, J. W. Scott had prudently divided his land holdings between his two daughters, Madeline Scott and Annie L. S. Dent. All of that part of Eudora Plantation lying north of what is now Boeuff Street (Highway No. 8) was given to Mrs. Dent, and she also received a plantation just east of Bayou Macon. Then all that part of the plantation lying south of our Boeuff Street, and on east to Bayou Macon, was given to Mrs. Scott. So when the railroad was completed and mixed trains begin to move over the rails in 1902 or early 1903, Dr. and Mrs. Scott sensed the opportunity to promote a real town here. So, for several months, they spent their time in planning, surveying and



mapping out a new town. What we now know as Main Street was then the County road leading north to the county seat at Lake Village; a man by the name of M. B. Block had now erected a frame store building on this road, that store was located about where the Liberty Cafe is located today; then too the old Ralph home (The Gilmore House) was facing this county road. The Scotts decided to make this county road the Main Street or business section of the new town, and with that as a base they worked out the other streets and alleys.

Early in August 1903, they filed "Carmel Townsite" for record in the land records of Chicot County at Lake Village. The dedication of the streets and alleys for public use is signed by Dr. S. A. Scott and M. Scott. With the exception of a few small plots of land which had previously been sold, Carmel Townsite embraced that portion of the present town (west of the railroad) beginning at the Methodist Church, it ran south to the R. T. Stephenson residence, then west to the present high school athletic field, then north to what we know as Highway No. 8 and on east to the Methodist Church.

Just about this time some conflicts in naming the town occurred. The railroad called their station "Eudora" for Eudora Plantation, and on August 26, 1903 (the same month in which Dr. Scott filed his first plat, the Federal Government changed the name of the post-office from Carmel to Eudora. Dr. Scott quickly saw what confusion this conflict in names would cause in the future so he went to work to get his Carmel Townsite changed to Eudora, and after some eighteen months of activity, he finally broke down the legal and technical barriers, and on Feb. 1, 1905, he filed for record his "Map of Eudora."

The second map embraced the same territory which was covered by the Carmel Townsite map, and the plan of the town was identical with the original plat with one exception. In establishing the corporate boundaries of Eudora, Dr. Scott used the Missouri Pacific Railway as a center, and then defined the corporate limits in the form of a circle and extending a half mile radius in every direction from the depot.

Many additions have been added to the town since 1905. The first of these was Dent's Addition, and it too came into existence at the suggestion and under the supervision and direction of Dr. Scott. Other additions in the white section of Eudora are Wylie's, College, Myrtle and Cashion additions. Some of the additions for colored people are Fairview, Midway, New Town, Westwood, Pleasant Hill, Will White and South additions.

The first brick store building to make its appearance on Main Street was constructed in 1904 by W. H. Stephenson. It now belongs to his heirs, and is occupied by the City Barber Shop, and the C. D. McMillan Dry Goods Store. The Masonic and K. of P. Lodges then erected the two story lodge building which is still owned and controlled by them, and the third brick building was put up by B. Abrams, a brother in law of M. Schwartz. It is now as the Schwartz Building, and is occupied by Hart's Department Store and the Peoples Dry Goods Store. The fourth brick building was erected by the Bank of Eudora at the corner of Main and Duncan Street. The bank owned and occupied this building for a number of years. The building is now occupied by J. F. Keller's Hardware Store.

From that time on Main Street Property owners continued the erection of frame and brick business houses, and today every business house on Main Street except one is of brick construction.

## FAMILY PIONEERS OF EUDORA

by Thelma Downing Pulley

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Ransom Ellis, son of Owen J. Ellis, was born in Pike County, Miss. November 22, 1815. His father served in the War of 1812 from Mississippi. On November 9, 1838 Ransom Ellis married Miss Sarah Howell of Copiah Co. Miss., who was born July 14, 1824. Sarah Howell was a granddaughter of Governor Richard Howell of New Jersey, and a cousin of Varina Howell who became the wife of Jeff Davis, President of the Confederacy, and the heroine of "Bride of Fortune" by Harnett T. Kane.

Shortly after their marriage this young couple left Mississippi for their new home in Chicot County, Arkansas and settled in Township 18 in the settlement called "The Colony", near Eudora.

The census of Planters Township 18 list 1840--Ransom Ellis - 1 male 20 to 30--1 female 15 to 20.

Owen Ellis - 1 male 60 to 70.

The census of Planters Township 18 list is 1850:

Ransom Ellis - age 35 born Miss.

Sarah Ellis - age 26 born Miss.

Felix Hugh Ellis - age 9 born Miss.

Lafayette Ellis - age 3 born Arkansas.

Records of this Ellis family are found 815 A.D. in the "Anglo Saxon Chronicle" and "The History of the Welch Princes". Owen Ellis of Ystmyllyn County Carernarvon, Wales was Chief of one of the 15 tribes of North Wales.

First Coat-of-Arms: Sable a chevron between three fleur-de-lis, arg. We find no record of Ellis, Ellisse, Elice, Elis, and Allice family in England until about 1066, the time of William The Conqueror.

A Mayflower passenger John Elice was the first of this family to come to America. He settled at Sadwich, Mass. and married Elizabeth Freeman. As to what relation this John Ellis was to our John Ellis, who settled later at Nansemond County, Virginia near Jamestown and in March 29, 1666 received a land grant of 550 acres for transportation of 11 persons including his wife, Margaret Ellis, has never been established.

Henrico County, Virginia, on the Eastern Branch of the Tuckahoe was the place that the Ellis family finally located. Hence we are called the Tuckahoe Ellises.

Stephen Ellis was born in Virginia about 1750 and served in the Mechlenburg County Militia during the American Revolution. He married Diana Lowry of Virginia and the census of Mechlenburg Co. 1782 shows they had 7 boys and 1 girl.

Ransom Ellis was the only member of this pioneer family to leave descendants in Chicot County, Arkansas. He was a wealthy man, in material possessions, due to his generosity to his friends. His heart was as big as his above average stature. His opinion was asked on all important matters in the community. Ransom Ellis was respected and loved by all who knew him. Henry F. Holt said of him, "Ransom Ellis was the only man he had ever seen that he was afraid of", he could look at you in his direct manner and you

would wonder if you could half way measure up to the standards he expected in a fellowman. Henry F. Holt said this was the way he felt when he asked Ransom Ellis for the hand of his daughter, Jennie in marriage.

Ransom Ellis home was the center of social life in "The Colony". Miss Alice Parker, who later became the wife of Dr. Maull told about the time a New Year's house party was held at the Ellis home, it snowed so hard that it was two weeks before it was possible for anyone to go home. The Ellis girls and their brother, Frank, furnished the music, as they all played string instruments. Miss Alice said she danced so much that she literally danced the soles off her shoes.

Thirteen children were born to bless the home of Ransom and Sarah Ellis. Felix Hugh, Lafayette, Henry Harrison, Samantha, Amanda, William L., J. Frank, George T., Roashe (Jerrushia), Jennie (Jane), twins Eller and Pandora.

Ransom Ellis died on December 19, 1887 after a lengthy illness and was laid to rest in the Ellis and Mathis Graveside. His wife Sarah and the following daughters and son survived him, Mrs. Amanda Gilmore, Mrs. Dora Allen, Mrs. Jennie Holt, Miss Roashe Ellis and J. Frank Ellis all of Planters Twsp.

Quote from "The Arkansas Methodist", August 1893.

Mrs. Sarah Ellis: died August 17, 1893, in Planters Township Chicot Co. Arkansas, Mrs. Sarah Ellis, relict of Bro. Ransom Ellis, aged 67 years; was born in Miss., but a resident of Arkansas for many years and an exemplary member of the Methodist Church South. She had paralysis of the left side some weeks before her death. We spent several evenings with her in prayer and Christian converse and she expressed no fears at death, but desired to go to relieve her family of so much trouble caring for her in her helplessness. We buried her with our beautiful service and with her children and grandchildren and many friends attending. May God Bless them with like preparation of heart. Amen. Felix G. Davis. Unquote.

1956 - Granddaughters of this pioneer couple living in Eudora, Ark. Mrs. Mitie Holt Downing, Mrs. Beulah Allen Gambill, Mrs. Alma Allen Davis, and Mrs. Jennie L. Gilmore Haley- Living in Nashville, Tenn., Mrs. Willie Ellis Fort; Miami, Florida, Annie Allen Milke.

Six generations of this family have served in Wars since 1776. Stephen Ellis - Virginia in the American Revolution.

Owen - Mississippi in War of 1812.

Ransom Ellis - Mexican War.

Felix Hugh Ellis - Chicot County Arkansas Civil War.

Frank Holt, Sr. - Eudora, Ark. World War II.

These men put God and Country above all else that we might have freedom to pursue life and happiness in our homes free from oppression.

Jessie Lee in "A Short History of Methodist in the United of America" 1810 Edition lists Stephen Ellis as a minister in the 10th Conference in Virginia. Conference Minutes of the Methodist Episcopal Church South shows that Stephen Ellis was sent to Tar River, North Carolina and later to Franklin County. The 1790 census of Rawan Co., N.C. gives Stephen Ellis with a family of 6 boys and 1 girl. One of the older boys married. The family stayed in North Carolina only a short time. Roashe Ellis, a great granddaughter of Stephen Ellis said that he had gone a man's bond and the man was dishonest and Stephen had lost all his property in North Carolina. This accounts for the

deed in Rowan Co., N. C. for 488 acres of land in 1790 which Stephen Ellis deeded away.

Mississippi records of the Methodist Church show that Stephen Ellis was a local preacher after he came to Miss. in 1800. The family came to Marion Co., to Amite and Pike. Casey's History of Amite Co. Miss. gives the date 1802-04 that George Ellis and Owen Ellis took up land on Beaver Creek, West of Pearl River. Their brother-in-law, Jacob Curry patented land in Amite Co. Miss. in 1802 and built a house on this land West of Pearl River.

Stephen Ellis and Diana Lowry had sons, John, Stephen, Daniel, Ezekiel, George, Lowry, William and Own and one daughter, Avis. Amite Co. Miss. court records: Avis Ellis Curry after Jacob Durrey's death married 2nd Evan Whittington. Lowry Ellis married Lucy Whittington October 30, 1815. Owen Ellis married Pike Co. Miss. 1801, Martha (Courthouse Pike Co. burned destroying records) George Ellis married Mary Warren. John Ellis married in Columbia Co. Ga. November 5, 1793 Sarah Johnson of South Carolina.

Pike County Miss. 1798-1876, Pioneer families and Confederate Soldiers by Luke Ward Conerly--1909-page 59. John Ellis born in Virginia and connected with the Randolph and Tucker families of Virginia, was the father of Stephen Ellis. Dr. George Ellis of Utica, Miss., Mrs. Sally Wadsworth, T. J. Millsaps of Hazelhurst, and William Millsaps of Brown Wells, Miss. are off shoots of this Ellis family. Unquote.

John Ellis is buried at Frankilton, La., and the inscription on the tombstone reads: John Ellis born 1773 - son of Stephen Ellis and Diana Lowry married in Columbia Co. Ga. November 5, 1793. Died April, 1840 (beside his tombstone stands that of his wife) Sarah Johnson Ellis.

Daughter of Samuel Johnson and Olevia Kershaw, wife of John Ellis - born May 17, 1776 - died 1847.

According to the statement of Mrs. Jennie Ellis Holt in 1930, her great grandfather Stephen Ellis died at the age of 103 in Miss., while out squirrel hunting. She remembered her father telling her so many times about his grandfather who fought in the Revolutionary War in Virginia and was also a Methodist Minister. He took his gun and went out hunting and when he did not come back, they went in search of him.

They found him sitting under a tree with his gun across his knees. He lived a full rich and active life until the end. This grand old soldier and preacher from Virginia had joined his flock.

The last reference to Owen Jasper Ellis in Planters Township Chicot County, Arkansas is the deed to his grandchildren, Felix Hugh, Lafayette and Amanda Ellis of 40 acres of land which he purchased for \$1.25 cents as acre and patented to him August 10, 1850. He died soon after this date and was buried in the Ellis and Mathis Graveyard near Eudora.

Owen Jasper Ellis and his wife, Martha had the following children: Asa, William Leroy, George, Stephen, John, Daniel, Ransom, Francis, and Martha. Four of these boys came to Chicot County, Asa, William, Leroy and Ransom, George settled at Rolling Fork Miss. Francis Ellis and Martha Ellis Gardener settled in Texas.

## PLANTATION MEMORIES

by Emma Cracraft Aldridge

[This article was contributed by Mrs. Aldridge's niece, Jeannie Cracraft Turley. It was written when Mrs. Aldridge was attending Vassar. Nothing in the article has been edited. The punctuation and spelling are Mrs. Aldridge's.]

When I drive in an automobile along the concrete roads of Chicot County, Arkansas, I am struck forcibly by the realization that it is the New South in which this generation is living, and that the old plantation life is fast becoming a memory. Only twenty-five years have passed since my early childhood, and yet the whole county has become completely transformed in that time.

Children to-day are surfeited with toys, bicycles, trains, automobiles, moving pictures, even airplanes are commonplace things to them, and the simple things that so filled our childhood with delight are unknown to them.

My brother, who was a year younger, and I lived on a cotton plantation, on the Mississippi river. Our nearest neighbor was four miles away. There were only ten or twelve white families within a radius of ten miles, and few children, so we were left to our own devices for amusement.

No child of to-day can know the thrill we felt when the first open cotton boll was found, for it meant that winter with its activities would soon come. My mother's sewing machine was kept busy making enormous cotton sacks for the negroes from a heavy material called drilling. These sacks were made with straps to go around the negroes' necks and over one shoulder. They put the cotton into them as it was picked, dragging the sack along on the ground behind them. With nearly a hundred colored families on the plantation and sacks to be made for most of them, it meant a very busy household.

The morning the first gin whistle blew was a never-to-be-forgotten time. We usually spent every day of the first week of ginning watching each process. The separation of the seed from the cotton, the great rolls of snowy white lint, the pressing of the lint into large bales in the old fashioned press operated by mule power, and the stenciling of our father's initials, with the initials of the negro tenant below, was all very fascinating to us.

How glad we were when the sacks of cotton seed and the bales of cotton were hauled each week in the wagons to the steamboat landing near our yard, for it meant a long stay of the steamboat! We could hear the whistle of the boat several hours before it reached our landing, and from the time we heard the first faint whistle we would watch the thin line of smoke along the horizon grow more dense as the boat came up the river. Even when we were in the school room with our governess and heard a boat whistle for our landing, we would drop our books and run to the bank of the river. If it were the New Orleans Anchor Line, it would bring red snapper, celery, and a bucket of oysters, for such luxuries came from New Orleans. We were much happier on the day the Memphis boat came, for it meant a delicious jelly roll. One dear old captain on this line, knowing our fondness for this cake, ordered his steward always to have a jelly roll ready for us.

There was the fun of watching the boat make the landing, the shouts of the mates, the creaking of the gang plank, and the songs and shuffling of the ragged roustabouts as

they carried the freight off and took the cotton on! A trip to the pilot house with all its mysteries was a regular occurrence, if the boat staid long enough. How we would secretly hope that the boat would come at noon, for we were sure of an invitation to dinner! The greatest days were those on which we were allowed to ride to the next landing on the boat. It meant at least two hours aboard the boat, for while the distance was only four miles by land, with the windings of the river and two landings to be made in Mississippi where a great deal of cotton was taken on, we were assured of several hours travel. Our father would drive the horses and carriage to the next landing and take us home.

Once we took a real journey. I was six years old and we went on a White Collar Line boat to Louisville. The journey required a week and the whole visit stands out more clearly than any subsequent experience in my life. During that visit I saw my first railroad train, ate my first ice cream soda, and was in the theater for the first time. The impressions, while still very vivid, are indescribable.

The flat boats were a never ending source of interest to us. We could see one coming around the bend of the river half a mile away, with its flag flying over it. These little flat bottomed boats were in reality rude little house boats, which were used as trading boats, with the front part given over to their wares, and the back part to the family living quarters. We could scarcely wait until the little boat reached our landing. The owner would usually tie his boat securely to some tree along the bank and stay several days. In the little front room was found everything one would find at a country store. They usually came from St. Louis, Cairo or Cincinnati, and sold their goods to the negroes in the vicinity of the landings, or traded their goods for mink or coon skins. Many of these flat boat men were itinerant photographers, with a little gallery in the rear of the boat, but they only made tintypes, and we still have a very curious collection of these pictures.

After the steamboat, I think the Italian fruit vender, "The Dago" as he was commonly called, occupied the most important place in our lives. Twice a week, on Wednesday and Saturday mornings, we hung on the gate, looking eagerly up the road for "The Dago," our nickels fairly burning our pockets. Finally he would come, with his heavy basket on his shoulder, and would set it down in front of us. How well we knew the order in which the fruit would be arranged. He would take the ring of hardtack, which was his food, off of the top, and there would lie the beautiful fruit, bananas and bunches of raisins always on top; next the apples, then the oranges and lemons, and finally in the bottom, boxes of dates and dried figs. A nickel bought much then, and we would run away each one loaded with an apple, banana, orange and maybe some raisins.

It was such fun to get up early those mornings when the pecans first began to fall and what a race we would have to be the first one out to pick up the pecans that fell during the night!

There were few toys at Christmas, and no new ones during the year, so it made us rely on the see-saws, stilts, and piles of red and white corn cobs, with which we built beautiful houses, -- but the tobacco tags gave us the most pleasure. The negroes used hundreds of pounds of tobacco each year, and each plug had its gay tin tag, which we collected. We would slip into our plantation commissary and strip plug after plug of its tag, and then the difficulty that confronted the manager when a negro came along wanting his favorite brand of tobacco and there would be no way of determining it! We

pretended that the tobacco tags were sheep, cattle, even ships, during the Spanish American War, and such battles as we would have with those tags!

In the evening we would all gather around the fireplace and play authors, a history game, or checkers. While we were playing these games apples were roasting on the hearth. On Sunday night we would beg to broil our meat on the coals, and roast yellow yams in the ashes. That was the best meal of all, to our minds.

Our Christmas really began just before Thanksgiving, when our mother brought out the catalogues from mail order houses, in order to select the gifts. Each page seemed more alluring than the one before. The arrival of the boxes meant our immediate banishment from the room, until the articles were sorted, and after our gifts were put away we could revel in each gift as it was wrapped for mailing to our friends. Christmas when I was about six years old we had our first tree. We worked for days popping corn and stringing it to decorate the tree. There were some gorgeous tinsel ornaments from the mail order house to complete its glory. We were up at daybreak, calling "Christmas-gift" to each other. Then we went to see our tree, -- a holly covered with its beautiful red berries, which touched the high ceiling of the old-fashioned room. We were so full of excitement there did not seem to be much room for the dinner that day, but such a Christmas dinner as it was, with a big turkey at one end of the table and a little roast pig with a big red apple in its mouth at the other, rice and gravy, candied sweet potatoes, celery, scalloped oysters, sweet pickles, sour pickles, salted nuts, and then the desserts and cakes, -- fruit cake, chocolate cake, cocoanut cake, caramel cake and pecan cake! The cake baking was the biggest Christmas preparation. The darkies came up to catch us by saying "Christmas'gift" first, but no matter who said it first, they expected to be remembered. So there were bags filled with fruit and nuts on hand to give them, and of course personal gifts for the servants.

"Going to town" was always a memorable day. "Town" was four miles away, and was made up of three country stores, eight or nine white families, a little church, a tumble down schoolhouse, and a blacksmith shop. All the way to town, through deep dust or, after a rain, deep mud black and sticky, or jolting over the one mile of corduroy road, there was always the vision of the stores with their cocoanut candy, striped in red, white and green (they always made us think of water melons) or, there were the little red lanterns filled with tiny candies, and only a nickel apiece! Then there was always a visit to one home which meant cookies and iced shrub in summer, or a cup of steaming hot cocoa and nut cakes in winter. A trip to town was a thing long looked forward to.

On Sunday, if the weather and roads permitted, we all drove to Sunday School and staid for church, if it was church day. The minister, an itinerant Methodist minister, only came on one Sunday in each month, and when the Methodist members of the congregation sanctioned certain of his terrible warnings with loud "amens" I would wonder why they were impolite and interrupted a person speaking. No music of pipe organ since has ever been more beautiful to me than the music from that old-fashioned organ in this church.

Distances were so great that one always spent the day when going to a friend's house for dinner. A negro on horseback usually brought the note of invitation. The most enchanting days were those spent with some friends on a plantation back on the lake. It was a ten mile journey. It was like a journey to another world, the very fauna seemed different. There would be the tall blue cranes standing lazily on one foot, snow-white

cranes stepping proudly along the edge of the lake, perhaps a pelican, with its enormous pouch, that looked as though it might swallow us. If the day were bright mud turtles would be sunning themselves on logs on the lake bank, a flock of black di-dappers and water-turkeys, as the negroes called them (and I've never known any other name for either bird) would be bobbing up and down in the water, diving for fish, and sometimes we trembled at the sight of a black bump in the water which looked like a little piece of stump sticking up but which we knew was an alligator. None of these birds or alligators were even seen on the river. There it was only the never ending black line of wild geese and ducks flying southward in the evening. After an hour's ride along the lake, we came to our destination, a massive old three story red brick, antebellum house, which stood back in beautiful grounds. Behind the house had been planted a thick grove of trees, more than an acre, which made an exquisite setting for the place. This was the only house left standing after the Union troops passed through that part of the country. They had burned every other big house, and orders were given to burn this, but the old gentleman who had built it only a few years before and whose four sons were in the Confederate army, sat in the doorway and said, "Gentlemen, you will burn me if you burn my house, I refuse to leave it." His appeal was so great that the orders were rescinded.

Almost our first request on entering the house, was "Please take us to the secret chamber." Then we climbed the stairs and somehow, as if by magic, the wall would open at our hostess' touch, and we would be in the secret room. Then we would beg for the familiar story again, how the old gentleman foresaw the coming of the war, and had had this secret room built in his new house. In this room he had stored sufficient provisions to last them for several years, by careful usage. When the Union captain asked him to surrender all supplies he had on hand, he replied: "Gentlemen, I have nothing, you are at liberty to search my house." Just then a young lieutenant stepped up and said, "Captain, if there are supplies in this house I can find them," and he ran up the stairs, opened the secret door and confiscated all their provisions. The plans for the house had been made in the north, and the lieutenant had been one of the architects who had drawn them.

We next begged to go into the dark cellar and asked to hear again the story of how the captain had declared he smelled whiskey. It seemed to come from the cellar, and he rushed down into the darkness, slipped and fell into a sea of molasses, as some of the molasses barrels stored there had leaked or burst. The captain was such a ridiculous looking figure, our hostess, then a young girl, could not control her laughter, and for this offense was kept a prisoner in one of the rooms for several days.

After winter passed we began looking forward to the coming of the spring flood. We would watch the river daily as it rose, overflowing its banks, and creeping nearer and nearer the house, until the whole surrounding country would be covered with water. We staid in our house through two floods, with the water right at the porch, and about six feet of water in the yard. We would watch pigs, chickens and turkeys floating down the river on logs or pieces of debris. As the negroes' cabins were built low on the ground, they would not be able to stay in their houses and would have to be moved to other quarters behind a big levee, a mile back of our house. One flood was so serious that the water was four feet high in our house and we too had to go back of the levee. Even behind this splendidly constructed levee one felt no security, for there was the constant danger of a break in it. The planters guarded and patrolled it day and night to watch for weak places, or to guard against persons from the other side of the river who might come and cut our



levee in order to prevent a break in the levee on their side. A broken levee meant not only immediate destruction of property, but there was always danger of sand deposits which might turn magnificent plantations into desert wastes.

We were really too young to realize the seriousness of the flood so we always had a great deal of enjoyment from it. When we were marooned at home it was fun to play we were Robinson Crusoe. We kept a rowboat tied to one of the posts of the porch and with a canary bird and our other pets in the house, and the top of a sweet olive tree sticking just above the water it was easy to pretend that we were in Noah's Ark and that soon the bird could fly forth and bring back the sprig of olive. After the flood had gone there was the usual routine of cotton planting and chopping out the cotton. Finally when the "laying by time" as it was called, came, when the crops needed little attention for a few weeks, there came the greatest event of the entire year, the barbecue.

The barbecue was an annual picnic to which all of the white people of the county were invited, and every class was represented, from "the Colonel's lady to Mrs. O'Grady." The barbecue was held in a beautiful grove about twelve miles from our home. "Aunt Minty" was busy for days ahead preparing for that feast of feasts. When the morning of the barbecue came, we had great hampers packed with fried chicken, beaten biscuits, salads, devilled eggs, pickles, pies and cakes. We would get into a big plantation wagon in which chairs had been placed, and which was drawn by either two or four mules, the number depending on whether the roads were muddy or not.

On our arrival at the barbecue grounds, we would find a great crowd of people assembled. There were long tables built, and on these each one would place the contents of their baskets, and when everything was in readiness the *pièce de résistance* was brought on, the barbecued meats, lamb, beef and sometimes pork. The meat had been cooked all night in deep pits by men who were experts at barbecuing meat, and all other delicacies paled before this dish.

After the dinner was over there was dancing in the pavillion and, later, political speaking. All the candidates, from the senatorial candidate down, took advantage of this opportunity to reach the mass of the people, so there were the great personages to add to the importance of the day. With no railroads, and the journey to the county seat requiring a day's travel with the horses and carriage, this trip was made very rarely, and so the barbecue often offered the only opportunity to see one's friends from this distance during the year as the roads were impassible so much of the time.

After the barbecue was over we led a very quiet life on account of the intense heat, and counted the days until the first cotton boll should open.

## **READLAND PLANTATION**

**by Judge George K. Cracraft**

I was born on Readland Plantation, near Eudora in Chicot County on September 29, 1922. Our home was located on Grand Lake in a large pecan orchard. The orchard is still there although the house has long since been torn down. The concrete silo that Judge Robinson mentions in his book as being behind the home house is still there.

Our family moved to Helena when I was an infant and for some reason Dad rarely mentioned the place. For even stranger reasons I never seemed to ask him much about it. What little I know stems from a few personal recollections, taped conversations with my mother and her sisters, an article written by my aunt Emma and some visits with Judge Sam Robinson. Judge Robinson had been one of my father's plantation managers on Readland Plantation from 1919-1922 and drove my parents to the hospital in Lake Village the night I was born. Shortly before his death he wrote a book about his life titled "Winning Against All Odds". Several chapters are devoted to his life on Readland Plantation.

The house was not ante-bellum but constructed long after the Civil War. I was there once or twice as a small boy and do not remember it as a particularly pretty place. The nearest neighbor lived in a beautiful antebellum several miles up the lake from us. (It belonged to the Warfield family and burned to the ground in the 1950s). The Warfield house is the one mentioned by Aunt Emma in her "memories". My sister, Katie, visited there one week end when she was about 14. I was inside several times but I remember nothing about it.

The Cracraft house was adequate to take care of the immediate family and several guest. However, Readland was a haven to which many family members and friends came on holidays and during the summer staying long periods of time. A friend of my grandmother's referred to as "Minona" came for a visit when Dad was born. She had been a teacher and stayed on as governess for the children until she died there fifteen years later. My aunt Nancy spent most of the summer there while she was in high school. I know that my aunt Katherine Webster (mother of Judge William H. Webster, former Director of both the FBI and CIA) spent many of her vacations there with dad and Aunt Emma.

In a taped conversation with my mother before she died she described the house as a "luxurious" one with a living room, parlor and study. The dining room was quite large and would seat 14 people. She described a beautiful mahogany buffet in the dining room and six oil paintings on the wall. I ended up with four of them but she does not know where the other two are. Most of the furniture went to Aunt Emma. Only a few pieces were brought to Helena when they left Readland.

There were four house-servants: "Bob" (who I remember), his wife and two others including "Margie" who was our nurse.

According to my mother, many long-term guests were housed in a guest quarters located behind the commissary. It had comfortable bedrooms and baths and was completely surrounded with screened porches for summer comfort. The meals were all taken in the main house.

As was common to plantation life, most of the food was grown on the place. It had a large commissary or "company store" full of farming supplies and staples. They had large vegetable gardens, hen houses and raised some cattle and pork that were slaughtered on the place - and the day hands to attend to it. The place was perfect for wild game. Grand Lake was full game fish such as crappie and bream and in the wintertime geese and ducks. There were wild turkey, doves, quail and other game in the fields and woodlands. My grand parents (and my father after them) paid one of the tenants to keep the house supplied with fish and game. They also purchased from the tenants berries, fruits and nuts gathered on the place.

It was the custom on the place to buy all the berries brought to the house where it was pressed into wine. One year my grandmother Scott, a strict teetotaler, arrived for an unannounced visit during berry picking time. That year the berries were made into jam-so much that we had some of it stored in our basement during the 1930s.

My personal recollection is limited to a boyhood visit. I remember the Cracraft house as a pretty one high above the ground on stilts. The latticework was covered with purple vines, (lilac or wisteria) and I remember that they smelled good. It was built before there were effective levees along the Mississippi and for this reason it was on pilings to keep the flood waters out during high waters which usually came in the spring of the year. The house that Aunt Emma wrote about is the original home and was located near the riverbank. The family moved to the new location west of Grand Lake after some levees were built. Even then a good flood would come into the yard of the house. The present levees were not built until the 1930s.

According to Sam Robinson and other data I have gathered the plantation consisted of 2,500 acres (not all in one block) of fertile black loam and was bounded by the Mississippi River on the east. He had a recollection that the home place was about 800 acres. He told me that my father was not a farmer and after my grandmother died he hired three plantation managers to run the place They also owned about 120 acres at the south end of Lake Chicot which was willed to my father by his governess "Nonie". She was governess to my father and his sister through what is now the ninth grade. There were no schools in that area. They were both sent to live with their uncle and attend high school in Crawfordsville, Indiana to finish high school. My dad went from there to the University of the South and Harvard Law School. Aunt Emma got a doctor's degree from Vassar.

According to Aunt and Judge Robinson there were 100 families living and working on the place. Each family farmed a designated tract and was furnished mules, implements, seeds and fertilizer. In addition they were furnished garden plots and

livestock. The plantation kept a woods area where the tenants gathered wood for the winter. They in turn paid my grandfather a portion of the crop as rent. This practice was still in vogue in many areas in more recent years and known as "sharecropping". The landlord furnished everything but the labor and got paid from the yearly crops produced on the land.

Also on the place was a commissary that sold groceries clothing and all other necessities to the tenants.

In the early years of the century Readland was almost self sufficient during most of the year and received the supplies that it needed by riverboat at a landing on the river known as "Cracraft Landing". I have seen it so designated many times on river maps and it was for years, and still is, a point mentioned in reports to river pilots by which they were informed of changes in the channel. Later an island came up out from the landing. The river pilots referred to it as "Cracraft Towhead", the name by which it is still designated on navigation charts of the river. Aunt Emma tells of their rides on the riverboats around the turn of the century.

Steamboats from Memphis came as far south as our landing before returning up stream. Boats from Vicksburg rarely went further north but both used our landing. Each brought plantation supplies and both hauled away the cotton from ours and adjoining plantations. According to a historical monument we saw recently, the landing at the end of Grand Lake was given another name. However, the new name must have come later on as the Cracraft Landing designation is preserved on the river charts.

My family moved to Helena when I was still an infant. . I had a hard time locating the home site the last time I was down there. It has changed hands many times and we have been gone so long there was no one there to point it out to me. I located it by landmarks mentioned to me by Judge Robinson.

Readland Plantation marks a way of life long gone.

**The following are extracts [in italics] from "WINNING AGAINST THE ODDS" written by Judge Sam Robinson ("Uncle Sam" as he was known to my sister and brother and me), who came to work on Readland Plantation shortly after his discharge from the army in 1919.**

*"One of the first people I met at Lake Village was George Cracraft who owned Readland Plantation. The plantation adjoined the town of Readland about twenty five miles south of Lake Village on Grand Lake, another of the river made lakes. I had never met George before, but I knew who he was because my Aunt Brooksie, then about sixty years old, kept house for him at Readland. He knew who I was because Captain Cracraft, his father, and my grandfather Robinson had been law partners at one time. George was in his late twenties and invited me to go home with him and visit my aunt and I accepted.*

*Captain Cracraft had died a few years previously, leaving Readland to George's mother. She was much younger than her husband who had been about fifty when they married. George had bought his sister's interest when their mother died.*

*"There were two other white men working a Readland; Ivy Lasley, the head man under George and a Mr. Emery, a riding boss. A riding boss is called that because he rides a horse in overseeing the work done by the dayhands, as laborers are called. Mr. Lasley oversaw the whole operation of the plantation. Actually, George very seldom went over the place. He had not been educated with operating a plantation in mind. As a child he had been sent away to school in the North, and then he went to college, and to Harvard Law.*

*"Readland Plantation is located on Mississippi river delta land built up from the river depositing silt during flood times. It is good alluvial soil. The whole plantation consisted of about twenty-five hundred acres- the eight hundred acre home place where we all lived and kept most of the equipment; the seven hundred acres north of Eudora; four hundred acres on the other side of Grand Lake and four hundred acres a little further south.*

*"George had a concrete silo on the home place that held fifty- five tons of silage, and another that held fifty tons on the land north of Eudora. In addition to feeding the livestock several thousand bales of hay that winter, I emptied both those solos with a fork. During that time Mr. Emery quit and after we put the cattle out on pasture that spring, I was given the job of riding boss.*

*"There were cabins scattered over the plantation, located at places convenient to the land the occupant worked. They were all the same type cabin, but there were two sizes; a small two-room cabin and a larger four-room cabin. The two room cabin consisted of a fairly good sized rooms about 16x16 in the front a smaller room about 12x16 to the rear. There was a porch about eight feet wide across the front of the house and the roof of the house also covered the porch. The roof was rather steep, making a pretty good- sized attic which helped keep the house cool in the summer time. The sills of the house, the foundation timbers, rested on cypress blocks. These blocks were cut from cypress trees growing at various places in the water along the shore of Grand Lake.*

*"A four room cabin was built the same way, only there were two rooms in the front, side by side and two in the rear; Sometimes the rooms were divided in the middle by a hallway going from front to back. This hallway was called a 'dog trot'. There was no running water. The water supply was from a hand operated pitcher pump , one at each house, located in convenient places. We drove the pumps with a small hand operated pile driver made of a heavy wooden block contained in a frame with the block and tackle at the top."*

*"Readland was operated like all other plantation in the delta country, each having its own gin.*

*"The negroes (sic) did all the labor and there were several different classes of workers. The 'dayhands' were mostly unmarried young men who boarded with families on the place. They did all kinds of work that came up and worked strictly by the day. There was quite a bit of acreage planted in the 'day crops', cotton and corn that were worked by day labor.*

*"Then there were the 'half hands', the married couples, most of them having children. The couple was given enough acreage to plant cotton. This took up most of their time, but not all of it. They had some time to work as day labor and they were paid in cash each Saturday for the day work they had done that week. In addition they had a house to live in. The 'half-hands' were furnished the mules and equipment necessary to work the crop as well as a place to get wood for their fuel. They were given credit at the commissary for food and clothing, any medicine that might be needed and the services of a doctor. The couple got half the money from the crop they had worked; the other half went to the plantation owner. The debt incurred at the commissary throughout the year was taken out of the couples half of their money. There was usually some money left after the cotton was ginned and sold and this, along with the day labor money made for a good arrangement.*

*"A 'sharecropper' had his own mules and equipment and the plantation owner furnished the land and credit at the commissary for the 'sharecroppers' needs during the year. He got three quarters of what he produced and one quarter went to the landowner.*

*"The arrangement was about as good as could be made for everyone and was a way of life for both white and negroes. The negroes had some money from day work, getting the necessities on credit at the commissary. The fact that the debt might never be paid made no difference-they had nothing to lose. Meanwhile the whites lived beyond their means on credit also.*

*"There were many enjoyable hours on George Cracraft's Readland plantation. The relationship between whites (there were four of us) and Negroes on Readland was good.*

*"There were never any dull times on the plantation. Not long after I went to work on Readland Plantation, George married Jean Scott, a beautiful young lady from Helena, Arkansas. When she came to live on the place, she brought a lot of life and pleasure with her. They had two children, Katie and George, Jr., who is now a member of the Arkansas Court of Appeals. (Their second son, Edward Scott Cracraft was born after they left Readland.)"*

In one of my visits with Judge Robinson in recent years he spoke most highly of my mother who he found cute and amusing. One story he told is worth preserving. After they were married she took over the running of the plantation house. The Overseers lived elsewhere but took their meals in the home house. They got up before daylight and worked until after dark. It was hard and demanding work and the men required and were used to hearty meals.

My mother's first weeks there were hard on these hardy men. She was raised in a family of five sisters and thought it would be nice to feed the men salad and "finger sandwiches" for lunch. They went back into the fields hungry and faint. Finally Mr. Lasley said something to dad about it and they got their meat and potato meals.

## EUDORA'S DOCTORS

Reprinted from the Sesquicentennial Edition

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Dr. A. W. Webb came to Chicot County in 1834, but remained only a few years before he moved to Little Rock where he was robbed and murdered in September, 1866.

The history of medicine in Arkansas, and the treatments used from 1834 to 1885 are almost unbelievable. Herbs and native plants of various kinds were made into medicine and administered to the sick. These were not totally devoid of merit, for some of the most valuable drugs used in present day medicines are derived from these same sources. Digitalis from the Fox-glove plant, Arnica from the plant known as Leopard's Bane, Sassafras, Buchu from the leaves of the Barosma Bteulina, Castor oil from the seeds of the Ricinus Communis (commonly called Castor Bean Plant), Belladonna from the leaves and roots of the Atropa Belladonna (Deadly Nightshade) and so many more.

We did not escape the superstitions and use of charms so to speak, such as wearing a necklace with a small ball of asafe-tida attached to keep off sickness. The spice nutmeg was supposed to guard against whooping cough and other ills when the wearer wore it around his neck. A sure cure for whooping cough was thought to be mare's milk. A person born with a veil, possessed powers of healing the sick, was an idea firmly believed in by same.

The more educated families possessed one of Dr. Gunn's Doctor Books, to be used in case a Doctor could not be procured. (The Compiler has seen one of these books published in 1846.)

The people in Planters Township, were more fortunate than most, by having two Doctors as early as 1842.

Dr. Munson Lamb, the first, was born in England in 1806, married in Louisiana, born in Missouri in 1814, their first child Thomas Lamb was born in Miss., in 1837, Mary born in Ark., 1842, Felix born 1847, William E. one month of age in census of 1850.

Dr. William Watson came next. He was born in North Carolina in 1805. Mary Olean Watson, his wife, was born in Ala., in 1820. Their son, Thomas, was born in Arkansas in 1843.

No Doctor had adequate equipment unless his pill-bag contained a cupping glass, and he was well informed in the proper technique of blood letting and applying leeches. The idea that impure blood caused one's sickness, was the purpose of removing part of this blood to relieve the patient of his sickness.

Dr. P. G. Sigmond followed in 1868 or 1870. After Dr. Sigmond died the family moved to Evansville, Indiana where his son, Harvey Sigmond, became a physician.

Dr. S. A. Scott, came to Planters Township around 1877. He was born in La., in 1853, he was a splendid doctor and promoted the growth of Eudora by laying out the Town in 1902 and building houses. He worked hard to secure the railroad, which meant much to the trade of the territory. Until this time Grand Lake had flourished, due to her location on the Mississippi River, as a trading center. Dr. Scott lived to an advanced age and was a familiar figure every morning as he came for his mail in his shining buggy drawn by a sleek horse, until a short time before his death on October 14, 1940.

Dr. Mark Allen, practiced at Grand Lake, Ark., in 1875 and for many years was



the leading doctor in that area. He came to Grand Lake in the 1870's from Alabama. His daughter, Willie Allen, was born in McKinley, Maringe Co. Ala., October 6, 1870. Her mother was Virginia Lowry. Miss Willie Allen died March 28, 1952 at Natchez, Miss., and was buried in the family plot at Eudora in Mt. Carmel Cemetery. Surviving relatives: a niece, Mrs. R. P. Stewart and son, W. E. Stewart of Natchez, Miss.; John C. Hodge, Baton Rouge, La.; Mrs. R. N. Wilson, Thomas, Ga.; Mrs. A. W. Brister, Waco, Tex.; R. F. Stewart Jr., Dallas, Tex.

Dr. John Heywood Maull was born Sept. 23, 1858, at Evansville, Ind. He was a graduate of the University of Kentucky Medical School at Louisville. Dr. Maull was presented a Medal as an Honor Student in the Graduating class of 1880. He married at Carroll Parish, La., on July 31, 1884, Miss Margaret Alice Parker. They made their home south of Eudora. Dr. Maull practiced at Carmel and also in La. He died at the family home on October 19, 1894. His widow, Mrs. Alice Maull was living in the town of Eudora in 1903 with her family of almost all grown children.

Dr. A. G. Anderson came to Carmel in 1895, a Dr. J. D. English and Dr. Byrd were practicing physicians here in 1890-1900.

Dr. D. C. Wiley came to Carmel about 1902 and Dr. Bell came a little later.

Dr. R. D. Miller, began practice in 1906. His granddaughter, Dorothy Sandusky married the famous ball player, Daffy Dean.

Dr. H. H. Parr came to Eudora in 1906. He married in Eudora Miss Irene Beasley. They were the parents of four children. Their youngest son, Richard followed in his father's footsteps. Dr. Richard Parr is an M. D. now practicing medicine at Nashville, Tenn. Dr. Parr practiced for many years until ill health force his retirement. He passed away at his home in Eudora, June 29, 1956.

Dr. J. L. Thompson was also a practicing physician and was in Eudora 1906-1915. Whit Thompson opened his office in Eudora 1925.

Dr. S. W. Douglas was born in Randolph County, Miss., April 17, 1870. He married on May 17, 1903, Miss Anna Taylor. The marriage was solemnized at the home of the bride's uncle, E. B. Taylor in Pine Bluff, Ark. Dr. Douglas came to Eudora in 1911. He was a veteran of the Spanish American War, and in 1946 was selected as Surgeon on the Staff of the Commander-in-Chief of the Arkansas Division of the United Spanish War Veterans. Dr. S. W. Douglas and his wife raised nine children. He retired 1946-48, due to his failing eye-sight. Dr. Douglas has the longest record of service of any Doctor that has made Eudora his home. For 35 years or longer, he was on the job day and night where ever he was needed. He died on August 12, 1954. His wife, Anna and nine children survive him.

Dr. W. A. Craig was born Sept. 28, 1876 at Clinton, Kentucky. Dr. Craig located at Grand Lake in 1912. He married before coming to Grand Lake, Miss Minnie Mae Moore. In 1916 Dr. Craig and his family moved to Eudora. After 29 years Dr. Craig retired from active practice. He died after a long illness on August 10, 1947.

1946 Dr. James H. Mosley - stayed a short time.

1940 - Dr. Charles G. Leverett - deceased about 1953 at McGehee, Ark.

Dr. W. J. Hutson - came to Chicot Co. about 1918, but began practice in Eudora in 1929. He and his first wife reared a large family. Seven children survive Dr. Hutson and his wife.

Dr. Robert L. McDonald - To Eudora first in 1948.

Dr. R. S. Simpson - Dentist.  
Dr. P. C. Reasons - Dentist.  
Dr. Julian Harris M.D. - now located elsewhere.  
Dr. Byron Z. Binns.  
Dr. W. J. Weaver - practicing 1973 in Eudora.

## **EUDORA POST OFFICE ESTABLISHED IN 1856**

**by Thelma Downing Pulley**

**Reprinted from the Sesquicentennial Edition, 1973**

The first short postal route in Arkansas Territory was from Arkansas Post through Little Rock across White River Post Office below Batesville; through Lawrence County by way of Davidsonville Postoffice, Mo., to St. Louis. In 1820 the United States Government established another postal line from Cadron down the Arkansas River to Little Rock, extending to the southwest through Clark and Hempstead counties to Louisiana. This line followed the famous "Old Southwest Trail". There were Territory in 1827.

The Mail Rider of more than a Century ago carried the U. S. Mail on horseback entirely. Wars were fought and over before the news reached the inland areas of the Territory of Arkansas. Stage lines carrying the Mail and also passengers were in operation between Arkansas and Little Rock as early as 1827, one reached as far as Fort Smith in 1840.

The Mississippi River Landing in Arkansas Territory, and after 1826 when Arkansas became a State, most always had a Post Office for distribution of Mail to the inland regions.

### **POSTOFFICES AND POSTMASTERS: EUDORA ESTABLISHED DECEMBER 4, 1856**

Old letters show that mail to persons living in Township 18, (known as Planters Twsp.) in 1846 was addressed "Macon Hills". Other postoffices were Bernard, and Grand Lake. Below in Township 19, the postoffice was Eula, R. E. North Postmaster 1900.

According to records of the Post Office Department now in the National Archives in Washington, D.C., a post office was established at Eudora, Chicot County Arkansas on December 4, 1846 with Henry Stern-Postmaster.

On February 8, 1867, the Eudora Post Office was discontinued; Eudora Post Office was re-established on October 10, 1871 with William T. Owen as Postmaster. The Office was discontinued on January 5, 1876.

Names of postmasters and appointments were:

Henry Stern - December 4, 1856.

Scranton E. Sweet - April 16, 1859.

William T. Owen - October 10, 1871.

On March 20, 1888 another post office in Chicot County, Arkansas located at Carmel was established, named Eudora. The name was changed back to Carmel Post Office and remained thus until August 26, 1903.

On August 26, 1903 the name was changed to Eudora Post Office and has remained to the present time. Names of the post masters and dates of their appointment were:

Henry A. Harriman - March 20, 1888. Just below Mt. Carmel Cemetery in

Harriman's Store, location NW quarter of Sec. 36 Twsp. 18 R 2W.

Ernestine Friedlander - September 11, 1893. Friedlander's Store located about three or four hundred feet Southeast of the James W. Scott home. (Called Old Town of Carmel).

Edward C. Cromwell - August 22, 1894.

Harry E. Harriman - April 1, 1899 - 2nd Harriman Store located to the Southeast of J. W. Scott home four hundred feet on the Grand Lake Road.

William R. Wallace - March 2, 1900 - located just below the J. W. Scott home.

Mattie E. Harriman - May 28, 1904 - located on the N Corner of Armstrong Avenue and Main Street.

Harry Harriman - February 7, 1910 - located on Armstrong Avenue in the 2 story brick building on the N corner of Armstrong and Main.

Mattie E. Harriman - May 28, 1910 - same location as above.

J. G. Irwin - January 27, 1911 - same location.

Mattie M. Lee - (Acting) January 2, 1914 - same location.

Williard W. Ward - March 2, 1914 - same location.

Until about 1920 moved to a location on South Main, next to North Main next door to the Eudora Bank, later moved across to the West side of North Main, and to the present location of NW Main.

Arthur V. Cashion - September 30, 1922.

Harris Parr - 1935.

W. D. Parr - April, 1940.

R. C. Grubbs - October 1940.

Carroll Gambill - March 1949.

Marvin Tackett - July 1973 ( now serving).

## FIGHT TO FINISH NEAR LAKE VILLAGE, ARKANSAS

by Weed Marshall, Mayview, MO

From a copy of the *Confederate Veteran*, April 1911

I have seen in the Veteran reports of fights in a small way during the Civil War, stating that they were the most destructive and fatal of the war. I report one for the list.

On February 2, 1864, Capt. Tuck Thorp, of Company E, Elliot's Battalion, of Joe Shelby's brigade, had a detail of twenty-four men and went to Lake Village, Chicot County, Ark. Two of the twenty-four were sent back.

On the 14th, Valentine Day, a citizen came to Captain Thorp and told him that the Federals from Vicksburg had come up the river to the Tecumseh plantation, belonging to Joe Johnson, of Indian War fame, after forage. As we were well armed and half bushwhackers anyway, Captain Thorp told us of the situation and left us to vote "go" or "no". "Go" every fellow voted. He told us that if any man did not want to go he need not, but if he went he was expected to take care of himself after the fight commenced.

There were three quarters on the plantation. We did not know the Yankees were at but one. We had to go by a gin house and negro quarters to get to the place from which they were hauling corn. We went two or three miles through canebrakes, then came to a blind road in the woods, and the next we knew we were at a fence with a big gate, with a cotton gin to the right and a cotton platform just in front. A Yankee soldier standing on the platform fired at us. Instantly Dan Ingram, Weed Marshall, and Pat Marshall fired at him, all shots missing. He went through the doorway into the gin house. They then ran out into the cabin yard, formed in line, and every one of them, thirty-two in number, fired at once with Austrian rifles.

Just at this moment Ben Krigler, an old, thoughtful soul, had opened the gate, and Capt. Tuck Thorp, Weed Marshall, Dan Ingram, Pat Marshall, and Dave Hammond cleared the gate, all others following close up. We drew our Colt navies and dragons, with which every man was well supplied. The enemy started to run--just the thing they should not have done. In two minutes after clearing the gate not a Yankee was alive. Not satisfied with the work done by our pistols, we took their own guns, the Austrian rifles with four square bayonets, and pinned each one to the ground.

As stated, there were thirty-two of them and twenty-two of us. This account may be verified by any survivors of the following citizens--fine Southern people--who lived there then: Joe and Lycurgus Johnson; their sister, Mrs. Julia Johnson, widow of Governor Johnson, of Louisiana; her niece, Miss Linsie Adams, Miss Amy Goodloe, afterwards Mrs. Josh Kregg; Misses Ella and Mollie Russell; and John and Charles Sanders, of Lake Village. These are the names and residences of my comrades who engaged in the fight: Capt. Tuck Thorp and Tom Thorp, dead; Alex and Len Patterson, Odessa, Mo.; Weed Marshall, Mayview, Mo.; Pat Marshall, Odessa, Mo.; Dick Krigler, Sedalia, Mo.; Ben Krigler, address unknown; Dan Ingram and Dan Franklin, dead; Levy Nichols, Denver, Colo.; Art Whitsett, Holden, Mo.; David Hammonds, Paris, Tex.; Jesse Jobe, Eudora, Ark.; James Kincheloe, Pleasant Hicklin, and Bill Wayman, Odessa, Mo.; James McElroy, Neosho, Mo.; James Ward and Nick Coyl, dead.

Every soldier did his part well. All were Missourians and one thousand miles

from home. "God bless them." We never had a man or horse scratched. A saber captured was inscribed: "Presented by Friends to Thaddeus K. Cock, 1st Mississippi Regiment, for Bravery."

## BATTLE OF DITCH BAYOU FOUGHT IN 1864

by Capt. John C. Hammock

Reprinted from the Chicot County Sesquicentennial Edition, 1973

In the early summer of 1864, Chicot County experienced its first real taste of combat during the Civil War. It was on July 7, 1864 that the Battle Ditch Bayou was fought, south of Lake Village. Some historians say that the Federal forces lost but one hundred men in the battle, and that the Confederates lost twenty. An eyewitness to the battle, a woman who opened her home to the Confederate wounded afterward, writes that the Federal loss was five hundred. This is the story of Ditch Bayou as told in a treasured letter written by Mrs. John Saunders, the former Martha Pettit, the sister of Antonia Pettit, who was the first white child born on Lake Chicot's shores:

"In reply to your letter of recent date, about the last of May 1864, Gen'l Marmaduke came to Chicot county to rest and recuperate his men and horses; he brought with him a battery of 3-inch guns commanded by Capt. Pratt of Shreveport, Louisiana, who annoyed the Transports on the Mississippi River to such an extent that Gen'l A. J. Smith determined to drive them out.

"Gen'l Smith landed at Sunnyside Landing the evening of July 6, 1864, with 50 boats and 10,000 men. Commenced the Ditch Bayou fight at about 6 o'clock the morning of July 7th. Capt. Clark of the Advance Guard met them soon after the landing and when he got back to Ditch Bayou he pulled up a bridge across a 12 foot Ditch (Now Ditch Bayou). Capt. Pratt's Battery was situated near where the Bayou leaves Lake Chicot, and on the north side of the Bayou. When the Federals came to the Bayou, they ordered their men to charge, and just then Capt. Pratt opened his battery on them, and I think that was the time of the greatest fatality. I could see a break in the ranks at this time from where I stood on the Lake bank in front of my house.

"Gen'l Marmaduke had his headquarters in Lake Village, and didn't appear on the field of battle until after 12 o'clock.

"The fight was carried on by Col. Colton Green of St. Louis, who had only about 600 men in the engagement they fought until about 4 o'clock. Gen'l Marmaduke advised Col. Green to retreat, but the latter said he would not retreat until all his ammunition was used, at which Gen'l Marmaduke said 'All right, Green, this is your fight.'

"There was one Confederate killed on the field, 6 mortally wounded and 34 wounded but recovered. One of the 34, Maj. Rainwater, was badly wounded, but finally recovered.

"I do not know the names of any of the men except Lieut. McWarter, who died at my house the 3rd day after the battle. The rest of them belonged to Pratt's battery.

"The Federals acknowledged a loss of 500 men.

"One of Gen'l Smith's Engineers came back to Chicot about 1 year later, and said if we had held out 15 minutes longer, they would have retreated.

"Nothing was found on the battle field except Gen'l Marmaduke's spur.

"Only 4 men died at my house, and one was taken off by the Federals. He was shot through the jaw, and his jaw broken."

## **AFTERMATH OF BATTLE OF DITCH BAYOU**

### **STREETS OF CITY FULL AS 10,000 YANKEES SPEND FEARFUL NIGHT AFTER BATTLE OF DITCH BAYOU (Contemporary news account)**

#### **Reprinted from the Sesquicentennial Edition**

Of all the nights that have fallen on Lake Village, probably the most unpleasant was that one in 1864 when the citizens had, as their guests, whether they liked it or not, 10,000 Yankees who had conquered the Confederates at Ditch Bayou.

The Federals had landed at Sunnyside Plantation, and, after defeating about 500 Southerners spent the night in Lake Village before re-boarding their boat at Luna. Though they did not display the cruelty that history tells us was customary in so many Southern towns, their conduct held the inhabitants in fear, and left the town in a distraught condition.

Headquarters for the officers were established in the Hunnicutt Hotel, where, later the Lakeshore Hotel was built. The proprietor's family was allowed one room, and the Northerners took charge of all the rest.

The officers slept there, while the streets were full of bunking soldiers. They established their hospital in a building on the corner south of the court square. That they had not fared so well in the Battle of Ditch Bayou, though they emerged victorious, was proven by the dead bodies, legs, arms, fingers, hands, feet and tubs of blood they left in this building.

That the courthouse was not burnt seems almost a miracle. The only thing burnt by these pillagers was a building that was used on Sundays as a church, and served on week days as a school.

One of their most thoughtless acts was to shoot all the cattle, probably with the thought in mind that the Confederate Army, with whom they had just engaged, might return here for rations. As a result, the women of the town, were forced to labor as men in order to burn the animal carcasses lying everywhere in the street.

The Chicot Press, the county's first newspaper, was completely demolished, the building being gutted and all equipment dumped in the lake. One citizen, who was a child then, relates how he helplessly stood by and watched a soldier almost shoot his mother, when she proceeded to tell a Yankee exactly what she thought of him and the whole Union Army.

Before leaving the marauders ransacked all houses and plantation homes, their sticky fingers taking every article that appealed to them. They carried away with them countless dollars worth of jewelry and silver, much of which had descended from one generation to another.

\*\*\*The Battle of Ditch Bayou between Confederate and Union troops took place July 7, 1864 near Lake Village; outnumbered Confederates lost the decision.



## OBITUARY OF CLAIBORNE W. SAUNDERS

Died, October 30, 1875, at Patria, in this county, Claiborne W. Saunders, in the 85th year of his age.

“The ground on which a good man has trodden is hallowed; when centuries have passed, his words and his deeds are still re-echoed to his children’s children.”

The venerable subject of this notice had, in the long course of his life (exceeding as it did the Psalmist’s prescribed limit of three score and ten years), won to himself the respect and affection of a large circle of friends.

His life was replete with the vicissitudes of joy and sorrow, common to this terrestrial sojourn, but if a calm and well ordered existence, characterized by strength and moderation, are sufficient to insure that peace which passeth all understanding, surely it was his.

Mr. Saunders was born December 11, 1790, near Lynchburg, Va.

When a mere youth he moved to Huntsville, Alabama - then a part of the Mississippi territory - where he engaged in mercantile pursuits, which he abandoned, however, by reason of discouraging reverses, and engaged in the (to him) more congenial pursuit of agriculture.

In January, 1814, he married Miss Eliza J. Norment, of North Carolina. The young couple commenced the battle of life in a new country, subjected to all the privations and hardships incident to pioneer life; but, with a firm purpose and steady patience, overcame obstacles and surmounted difficulties, which, in these days of mechanical aids and steam agencies, sound like fables of achievement.

In the year 1814 Mr. Saunders visited Chicot county, and purchased of Judge John M. Taylor the plantation on the river, upon which he spent the remainder of his life, and upon which he died.

As a planter he was eminently successful, and as a citizen he was useful, performing all the duties imposed upon him as such with zeal and cheerfulness.

As a friend he was true and warm-hearted, and enemies he had none.

But it was the more sacred and closer relations of life, as husband and father, that the brightest characteristics of his nature shone.

The period of his married life reached nearly sixty-one years. His aged and estimable widow is still living amid their children, honored and revered by all whose good fortune it is to know her.

There was, in Mr. Saunders, an inherent manliness, which the trials of his life but seemed to strengthen and perfect. Above all, his soul was filled with a firm and child-like faith in Him that doeth all things well, that cast about him a halo of gentle patience well becoming the hoary locks of his many winters. For forty-six years he was a consistent member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, carrying into active practice the charities taught by his faith.

Kind as a neighbor, hospitable and generous in the way peculiar to his day and generation, he was an object of esteem by all who came in contact with him.

The record of his allotted three score years and ten is a pure and an honorable one, and the farther allotment of fourteen years was a crowning proof of the assurance: “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” With humbleness and resignation he looked forward to the close of his long life, well satisfied that “the morning succeedeth

the night.”

Owing to advanced age and feeble health, Mr. Saunders had long since retired from the active pursuits of life into the quiet retirement of the family circle, but he will long be held in kind remembrance by all who knew him.

His remains were interred in the family burying-ground, in Lawrence county, Alabama, a spot reserved by him for many years as the last home of himself and family.

After a pure and well spent life his spirit has gone where “Virtue triumphs and her sons are blest.”

(Editor’s Note: Patria was in Chicot County, Arkansas, above the north end of Lake Chicot, in the Luna area.)

## **THE COOK HOME**

**by Harry E. Cook, Jr.  
January, 1977**

[This article was donated by Shirley Foster-McKinzey, the new owner of the Cook Home.]

The Cook Home is situated in the E1/2 SW1/4 of Section 30, Township 16 South, Range 1 West, Chicot County, Arkansas, about 5 miles Southeast of Lake Village. The home faces Lake Chicot which is shown on the original U. S. Government Survey, made in 1824, as Lake Chicot - formerly Old River Lake. It is interesting to note that at least as late as 1859 the lands were still described in legal instruments as "a certain plantation or tract of land on Old River Lake."

The original entries filed in the office of the Circuit Clerk of Chicot County show title to the lands had been released by the United States to John Battieste Billiette, and the lands were described as a Spanish Grant. Generally in the United States title to lands bordering a navigable stream, such as Old River Lake or Lake Chicot, extends only to the high water mark. However, title to the Cook lands follows the law of the old Spanish Grants and extend to the meanders of the low water mark. The Patent from the United States to John Battieste Billiette was not granted until October 23, 1917, after the lands became owned by Judge Harry E. Cook, and obviously at his request. The patent was issued by President Woodrow Wilson, wherein an Act of Congress, approved May 26, 1924, entitled "An Act Enabling the Claimants to Lands within the limits of the State of Missouri and Territory of Arkansas to Institute Proceedings to try the validity of their claims", the grantee was found to have deposited a decree of the Superior Court for the Territory of Arkansas, October Term 1825, confirming his claim to a tract of land situated in the Territory of Arkansas, containing 400 "arpents" and there follow the legal description of 352.21 acres according to the survey of the U. S. Government. (The arpent, an old French measurement, equals about 5/6 of an acre.)

There is a conveyance of this same land by Warranty Deed from Wm. Price & wife, Mary F., formerly Mary F. Notrebe, and widow of the late Francis Notrebe, Deceased to Jno H. Saunders on January 8, 1855. The records do not reflect how title became vested in Francis Notrebe and Mary F. Notrebe, but there is a statement in the Mortgage described hereinafter to Eliza W. Pettit, that the Pettit plantation on Old River Lake, was bounded on the lower side by an uncultivated tract of land belonging to the Estate of the late Frederick Notrebe, deceased. The Home was built by or for John Saunders and his wife, Martha Pettit Saunders, and thus it could have been built as late as 1855, but as shown hereinafter, personal information indicates that it could have been built prior to 1853 by the father of Martha Saunders, William Mc. D. Pettit.

William Mc. D. Pettit died intestate on November 4, 1853, seised and possessed of substantial lands to the west and south of the above land, and contiguous thereto, 109 negro slaves, and a large stock of mules, horses and other personal property. He was survived by a widow, Eliza W. Pettit, who was entitled to dower in all of said property, and three daughters who were his sole heirs at law, and who were entitled to the remainder. These three daughters were Martha Pettit Saunders, wife of John H.

Saunders; Antonio H. Saunders (who at the time of death of her father is shown as unmarried, but her name is shown as Antonio Saunders in several documents so she also must have been previously married to a Saunders) who less than 3 years subsequent to the death of her father married Wm. S. McMahan; and Rebecca Pettit who intermarried with Samuel N. Caughey within 3 years after the death of her father. (It is interesting to note that Ella Fox Johnson, a sister of Helen J. Cook, married Sam Caughey on April 7, 1911 and gave birth to a son, Sam Caughey.)

On the 3rd day of January, 1854 shortly after the death of William Mc. D. Pettit, John H. Saunders and Antonio H. Saunders, then unmarried, with the view of keeping the estate together and working it out of debt, purchased from the widow Eliza W. Pettit, her dower interest in the plantation on Old River Lake for the sum of \$24,500.00. Mrs. Pettit, who was not the mother of the three daughters, deeded her interest to John and Martha Saunders, and Antonio Saunders, and took back a mortgage on the 2/3 undivided remainder interest of Martha and Antonio. On October 14, 1857 Rebecca and her husband, Samuel N. Caughey, joined with Martha and Antonio, and their husbands, in the purchase and mortgage. There followed almost constant litigation, which continued 4 years after the death of Eliza W. Pettit. She died in Shelby County, Kentucky in 1885, leaving a will dividing the lands to her brother, W. C. Bullock. Mr. Bullock died before distribution and the lands were sold by both estates in 1889. Later portions of these lands were purchased by Harry E. Cook and other portions by the Mazzanti family.

In view of the above it would appear that the Cook Home was built in 1855 after the land was conveyed to Jno. H. Saunders by the widow of Notrebe. However, as a child I remember discussions about the origin of the Home and became convinced that it was built about 1850 by Mr. Pettit for two of his daughters who spent their honeymoons there. This information was received from several separate sources and on many occasions my mother, Helen J. Cook, stated authoritatively that it was built for the two daughters. If this is true, then it would most likely have been for Martha and Antonio and their husbands, both named Saunders. It is noted that a Claiborne W. Saunders executed the mortgage to Eliza W. Pettit as a surety. His relationship to Antonio and John is not known. In any event the Home was constructed in 1855 or earlier.

John H. Saunders was shot and killed in Lake Village in December, 1871. He died intestate leaving his spouse, Martha, and 3 daughters who were his sole heirs at law. Later the place was mortgaged by Martha and the mortgage was assigned to R. M. Gaines. A foreclosure action by him in 1886 resulted in the mortgage being set aside, because the heirs were minors at the time of the original mortgage. However, in 1887 the place was deeded to R. M. Gaines, who on May 23, 1888 deeded it to Mary P. Chapmen, whom he married later the same day. In 1906 Mary C. Gaines deeded the place back to R. M. Gaines, but the deed was set aside by the Chancery Court in 1907. Harry E. Cook was County Judge and represented Chicot county in that litigation. In 1909 several mortgages were foreclosed and the land was sold by a Special Commissioner appointed by the Court to R. A. Harrison, who was an agent for Stewart Bros. & Co., one of the mortgagees represented by Judge Cook, and has remained in the Cook family ever since. In 1917 it was deeded to Helen J. Cook and the Home, and part of the original land, presently is owned by Gloria Cook Jones.

The Home was constructed obviously with slave labor with materials locally available being used to the maximum extent feasible. The sills are 14 x 14 cypress,

expertly hewn with a carpenter's adz. The slaves were such fine artisans and craftsmen that only occasionally is an adz mark discernible. The flooring joists are about 4-1/2 x 14 cypress, also hand hewn. The ceiling joists are about 3 x 10, and the rafters about 2 x 8, also of cypress. Originally the roof was hand split cypress shingles. The attic is floored with beautiful thick cypress, and there are a number of large well made cypress doors. Cypress was available in large quantity, and even after I was born there were large cypress breaks close by. All brick used in the construction of the Home and in the tenant houses were made on the place. As a boy I remember that the brick kiln was located in the Northwest corner of the place and was quite obvious. However, it had been damaged extensively by the floods of 1912 and earlier. At that time there was also a levee along the entire lake front between the road and the lake, but it was breeched by the floods. Parts of this still remained at the time of the 1927 flood, and many hogs stayed on the levee only a few inches above the water level. It was so crowded though that many were washed off and drowned. Many others were found and rescued by boat in the woods one to five miles behind the place.

The house originally was much larger, for servant quarters and food preparation and storage spaces were in an extension behind the present home. The present kitchen at the rear originally was somewhat similar to a butlers pantry. Food was prepared in the food preparation spaces and brought there to be served in the dining room. It was open to both rooms and provided ample heat, when very large logs were used. This fireplace and those in each of the four bedrooms are further proof that the slaves were outstanding craftsmen.

The house was used as a hospital during the war between the States for both Union and Confederate troops. The closest active fighting known was the Battle of Ditch Bayou, and we still have a cannon ball we found near the house. No battle damage was suffered as far as I know. A cemetery was located to the West of the home in a grove of trees, in the same area as the Saunders family cemetery. The floods of 1912 and prior years damaged it very badly, but until the flood of 1927 the cemetery was very obvious. As a boy I observed many tombstones with various names on them. There also was an iron child's casket, which had washed out of the ground, and some tombstones with the Sanders' name on them.

During my childhood my Grandmother and Father told us many stories about the home. Certainly the most poignant one I recall was that the owner buried a very substantial treasure somewhere near the house during the early stages of the war. The story continues that the treasure has never been found because the owner was hanged by his slaves before he had an opportunity to recover it. The story is not completely accurate, but it must have been based upon certain actual events, and became distorted in the telling over the years. What these events were I do not know, but to this day certain of my relatives insist the treasure is still there.

With all the stories of hangings, soldiers dying, and other violent events connected with the Saunders Place, it was with much trepidation that my Mother and Father, Judge and Mrs. Harry E. Cook, moved in in 1910 determined to convert it to the Cook Home. They had been married in 1908, but no children had yet arrived. When bedtime came they retired to one of the large 18 x 18 bedrooms but strange noises prevented relaxation. Shortly both doors had been barricaded with furniture and Dad had his Model 97 Winchester shotgun, fully loaded, and in the bed with them. There was no

sleep that night and certain of the noises which sounded like someone in chains moving around in the attic have never been explained. Of course Dad did not believe in ghosts, but somehow his protestations to that effect were never completely convincing to his children.

The family slowly settled into the home on its terms and life went on. In late 1911 or early 1912 Dad bought the first automobile in the area. It arrived by freight train with a book of instructions. It was hauled by mules to the place and Mother stayed up all night studying the instructions. Next morning with a young man named Pa Berry, holding me in the back seat she got the car started and practiced driving in the pasture behind the house. She finally ventured out on the road, and we have had many cars since. Some things change slowly though for about 10 years later my sister and I rode the first school bus in Lake Village. It had a yellow body, but it was mounted on a wagon without springs, and pulled by a team of mules.

In 1924 major improvements were made to the interior of the house. The carpenters constantly were calling each other to come inspect some particularly superior construction and to stand in awe as they discussed it. During the flood of 1927 the water was over about one-half of the front porch which has a 4 inch slope. The water could be heard lapping against the bottom of the floor for there was a current. The original floor was not affected, but the hardwood floor laid over it three years earlier, buckled in several places. The water stayed at this level for about two weeks and the family remained in the house with three boats tied to the porches. Other than the new floor no damage was observed to the old house.

During World War II a tornado matched strength with it and the best it could do was blow off a part of the roof in the rear. The house was repaid in part for the sanctuary it had provided troops in that earlier war, for military men replaced the damaged part of the roof. These were German prisoners of war and they also were impressed by the solid construction.

And so after about 125 years the Cook Home has met the ravages of war, floods, and tornadoes and remains basically as sound as ever. It has witnessed a myriad of interesting and historical events and the story it could tell defies imagination. I only wish I could relate that story in detail, but the grand old house has witnessed things that I don't even suspect.

## **THE COOK HOME IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

**by Sheila Farrell Brannon**

**(This home is located southeast of Lake Village on Highway 82, just east of the Highway 65 Junction.)**

The old home saw the best of antebellum days, the worst of Reconstruction, two World Wars, and many things in between.

During the 1986 Arkansas Sesquicentennial Celebration, a bronze marker was placed at the home by the Chicot County Historical Society designating the house as an historic landmark.

In the few years that followed, age and neglect took its toll on the fine old home. Every time I would travel the road to Greenville, I would glance at the house and find more damage than when I had last seen it.

One day, a lady named Shirley Foster-McKinzey drove by. The home caught her eye and her fancy. She is originally from Eudora and was familiar with the area. She saw a great potential in the home and went to work right away to achieve that goal. She purchased the home and property from Gloria Cook Jones and began to work at restoring the home.

I took a tour of it on December 19, 1996 and it is remarkable at the progress she has made in such a short time. Shirley has been careful to preserve the integrity of the structure. She has traveled far to find just the right kind of board for new flooring. She has raised the ceilings back to their original grand height.

When she finishes restoring the home, she plans to make it into the "Plantation Bed and Breakfast". She and her husband Jim are semi-retired, but if you ever meet her, you will come to the quick conclusion just as I did, that there is no such word as "retire" in her vocabulary.

She plans to be open for business some time around the middle of 1997. Because of her love of antiques and old homes, she has taken this old home that was on the verge of ruin, and made sure that it will see its third century of life. Everyone in Chicot County can be proud and thankful that Shirley has given us this home for many more years.

## **MRS. D. H. REYNOLDS, MEMBER OF COUNTY PIONEER FAMILY**

**Reprinted from Sesquicentennial Edition  
(By Mrs. J. W. McMurray  
Published in "Confederate Women of Arkansas 1861-65"  
Memorial reminiscences)**

Mrs. D. H. Reynolds was a Miss Wallace, born in Holmes County, Mississippi in 1845; moved to Arkansas in 1859, and shared in the fortunes of our State during the war and reconstruction period. She met General Reynolds in Lake Village soon after his return from the war, in which he had lost a leg, shot off by a cannon ball at Bentonville, N. C. in the last important battle of the war. They were married in 1868, a lovely uniting of two fine characters. The General accepted the results of the war in the spirit of our heroes, resumed his law practice at Lake Village and invested in land of Chicot County to the amount, at one time, of about sixty thousand acres, in the mapping and platting of which Mrs. Reynolds developed a correct and artistic talent. Their home on Lake Chicot was presided over by Mrs. Reynolds with sweet grace and was the center of generous hospitality. General Albert Pike and Attorney General A. H. Garland, and other prominent members of the Arkansas bar were always at home here, and as long as they lived cherished the recollection of the hospitality they had enjoyed.

Mrs. Reynolds was the mother of five children, the eldest, Mrs. Joseph Hill, wife of our Chief Justice, Robert S., who sacrificed his young life and promising manhood in his country's cause, being First Lieutenant in the Thirteenth Cavalry, U. S. Army, and dying in the U. S. Hospital at Hot Springs, Arkansas in 1906, shortly after his return from two years' service in the Philippines. The second daughter, Eleanor, was unmarried (at time of the writing of this sketch), and a third child, Ruth is, at the time of writing, the wife of Mr. Frank Bull, assistant cashier in the Chicot Bank; these, with Daniel H., Jr., the youngest son, have all survived to bless the declining years of their devoted mother.

These are only a few dry facts in the life of our friend, but they form the framework of a picture that lives in the hearts of those who knew her best. A picture from which shines out a generosity only limited by her means, and a charity that "suffereth long and is kind." that "thinketh no evil," "rejoices not in iniquity but rejoices in the truth."

The chairman of the Arkansas memorial committee may add to this sketch of Mrs. Reynolds the fact that the flag of General Reynolds brigade is now in the Richmond museum, having been purchased from Colorbearer Dagland Foley by him and presented to the Arkansas room of the museum.



## LINDBERGH'S NIGHT FLIGHT

### Reprinted from the Sesquicentennial Edition

April, 1973 was the fiftieth anniversary of a celebrated event in the history of Lake Village...The first night flight of Colonel Charles A. Lindbergh.

In his book, "We", published several years later, Lindbergh described his visit to Lake Village:

"After circling Lake Village I landed in a field several miles from town. The nearest building was a clubhouse and soon the keeper and his family had arrived beside the plane. They invited me to stay with them as long as I wished, but the keeper persistently, refused to accept a flight in return for his hospitality. I carried only a handful of passengers that afternoon. The flying territory around that part of the country was fairly good and there were a number of fields available for planes to land in. Consequently an airplane was no longer the drawing attraction that it was farther in the interior.

"I staked the plane down much earlier than usual and went over to the clubhouse.

"Evening came on with the clearness of a full moon and open sky. The landscape was illuminated with a soft yellow light; an ideal night for flying. I decided to see what the country looked like from the air at night and jokingly asked my host to accompany me. For some reason he had no fear of a night flight although I had been unable to persuade him to go up with me in the daytime. What his reaction would have been, had he known that I had never flown after dark before, is a matter of speculation.

"We untied the plane, removed the canvasses from engine and cockpit, and after a few minutes spent in warming up the motor, taxied down the field and took off for a moonlight flight down the Mississippi and over Lake Village.

"Later in the evening after the ship was again securely staked to the ground, and we were sitting quietly in the clubhouse, my host stated that he had never spent a more enjoyable quarter of hour in his life."

It was some three years following his visit here that "The Lone Eagle" made his celebrated non-stop solo flight across the Atlantic from New York to Paris.

The clubhouse Lindbergh mentioned in his book is the home now owned by the Paul Steinle family on North Lake Shore Road. A monument placed there in 1934 by the Chicot Delphian Society still marks the spot of the flight. The "keeper" Lindbergh referred to was a Mr. Henry from Pine Bluff who operated the building as an inn. The building previously has been the clubhouse of the Lake Village County Club, which became a defunct organization a year or so after its establishment.

# **LAKE CHICOT'S HISTORY**

**by Rosemary Kinney**

**Reprinted from the Sesquicentennial Edition  
Written in 1973**

[Ed.Note: Lake Chicot has since been restored, and we shouldn't take it for granted. This article shows how much hard work and dedication it took to accomplish this difficult task.]

The faint lapping of lazy wavelets against the trunks and roots of lacy-leaved cypress trees, which separated the gently-sloping grassy banks and the smooth blue-green water, provided a perfect musical background for a panoramic view of the beautiful lake on which activity seemed limited to a gull gliding overhead and a didapper observing the splash of a graceful bass against the dim green backdrop of the distant tree-lined shore.

That was Lake Chicot of half a century ago as depicted by a photograph taken about 1920 by H. R. Sessions.

The picturesque body of water that is Lake Chicot is an oxbow-shaped lake, 18 miles long and about one mile wide, and is the largest natural lake in Arkansas. "Chicot" is the French word for "stumpy", and the lake derived its name from the many cypress knees and stumps along its bank.

According to historians, Lake Chicot was formed about 1350 A.D. by an earthquake which changed the course of the Mississippi River, cutting off that portion of the river bed that is now the lake and, in effect, straightening the course of the river in that area.

The founders of Lake Village settled on the banks of Lake Chicot in 1856 because of the bountiful supply of clear, clean, fresh water available. The lake later served as the source of the city's water supply, and its quality was indicated by the fact that when a deep well was put into use, residents did not know about the change until they read about it in the local newspaper a week later.

As roads and railroads were built in the area, Lake Chicot gradually became known as a good place to fish, and upon completion of the Arkansas-Louisiana Highway about 1920, it became a tourist attraction and a recreation center for four states. The descriptive name, "Home of the Big Black Bass," became popular. The beach in front of Lake Village attracted swimmers from miles around. A large pier with a tall diving tower was constructed, and lifeguards were employed for the safety of the swimmers. To add to the resort atmosphere, the Gaines Cafeteria was constructed out over the lake with a street-level entrance. Visitors enjoyed eating delicious fish in the dining room that afforded a beautiful panoramic view of the lake. A bath house occupied the lower portion of the building.

Lake Chicot State Park was established in 1958 at the northern part of the lake. According to Miss Clara Henry, Chicot Circuit Clerk, the first deed was actually recorded in the Chicot County Courthouse in November, 1957. The park has grown in popularity, and in 1969 it attracted 761,404 visitors.

But the blessings lavished by the Supreme Architect in designing Lake Chicot,

augmented by man's enterprise, were blemished by Nature and by man. Lake Chicot became polluted. The clear blue-green water turned rusty brown, and what had been a sportsmen's paradise became a muddy, silt-laden lake unfit for use.

The pollution of Lake Chicot actually began with the 1916 Mississippi River flood, during which Lake Village was eight to ten feet under water, although the lake remained usable after that for a number of years. As a result of the 1916 flood, Chicot County leaders and the Mississippi River Levee Commission, prompted by the fear of future floods, closed a gap in the Mississippi River levee at Cypress Creek in 1921. This gap formerly had been used as a "fuse plug" to let the Mississippi's water flow freely over the delta when the river rose up high enough to flow through the gap.

The gap, however, had also served as a drainage outlet for 433 square miles of the delta area. After the gap was closed, the water had to go elsewhere, and a system of north-to-south drainage canals, with lateral ditches to drain the land between, was designed by the U.S. Corps of Army Engineers. Lake Chicot was included as a part of the drainage system.

The plan called for a dam on Yellow Bayou, north of the lake, with a control structure that would have regulated the flow into the lake so that water would have entered the lake only during periods of unusually high flow.

The great 1927 flood in the Mississippi River Valley changed all that. The flood waters from the break in the Arkansas River levee destroyed work underway on the drainage system, including the Yellow Bayou control structure, gouged out channels of their own, doubled the size of Connerly Bayou, and laden with soil from the north, went into the lake, leaving a sand bar entirely across the upper end of the lake and enlarging Ditch Bayou, the outlet at the lake's south end. Thus, Lake Chicot became a part of a natural drainage system.

Pollution of the major portion of the lake continued and was increased when the Army Engineers, in the Lower Mississippi River Valley Project in 1944, included Lake Chicot as a link in the chain of drainage works to be constructed in the Boeuf and Tensas Basin. Of this, Senator John L. McClellan said, "As a result..one of the most beautiful and picturesque bodies of water in this country has become nothing more than a dirty muddy lake."

It is now estimated that the lake contains 28 feet of silt, and it is estimated that additional silt will accumulate at the rate of a foot to a foot and a half a year.

Since the lake has become muddy and unattractive, pride in it has lessened to such a degree that people have even thrown cans and trash into it.

The restoration of Lake Chicot to its former beauty and usefulness has been a dream for many years, and today this objective seems possible of achievement. Early efforts brought little results but the goal was always uppermost in the minds of the people of Lake Village. The souvenir program of the 1948 Fourth of July Water Carnival was dedicated "To the Restoration of Lake Chicot."

Efforts to restore Lake Chicot were renewed in 1964. The Arkansas Planning Commission, at the request of Abbott F. Kinney of Dermott, member of the Commission, made a study of the conditions at Lake Chicot. On July 15, 1964, William F. Halfacre, the Commission's chief planner and assistant to Ted Morley, executive director of the Commission, met with a group from the Lake Village Chamber of Commerce composed of George Walker, Jack Rhodes, Scott Dabney, and George Pine. Mr. Halfacre was

flown by Roy Sheffield over the lower lake and north along Connerly Bayou for an aerial view of the muddy water and the stream from which it entered the lake. Arkansas Planning Commission representatives subsequently discussed their findings with various government officials to enlist their support in a restoration project.

At the same time, definite steps were taken under the leadership of the Chicot County Drainage District Board, with Carneal Warfield as attorney. James Hatcher of a Little Rock planning firm was employed by the Drainage District to make preliminary plans for correcting the pollution.

As a result of the renewal efforts, a public hearing was held by the Army Engineers at the Chicot County Courthouse in Lake Village on November 24, 1964, in the words of Lt. Col. James A. Betts of the Vicksburg District Engineers, "to initiate a new study on the feasibility of some project to clear up the lake."

At the hearing, Congressman Oren Harris recalled that the Engineers had advised him in the 1940's that they did not feel that the federal government had a moral obligation to rectify conditions at the lake because the government was responsible for the construction of the drainage ditches.

Carneal Warfield presented a number of speakers and submitted a temporary plan drawn up by T. S. Dabney of Lake Village an engineer employed by the Drainage District. It proposed that a control dam be built on the lower edge of Macon Lake to divert the silt-laden water to the Boeuf River.

Other speakers included Charles Harris of the Bureau of Sports Fisheries and Wildlife Service office at Vicksburg; Nelson Cox, director of the State Game and Fish Commission; J. M. Buffington, representing the Chicot Wildlife and Drainage Association; Mayor Jack Rhodes of Lake Village, and, as the final speaker for the summation, Senator John L. McClellan, member of the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Nearly two years later, on August 12, 1966, the Vicksburg District of the Army Engineers released a report approving a project to clear the muddy waters of Lake Chicot.

The report stated that "as a result of federal channel improvement work and the changed land use resulting therefrom, the inflows to Lake Chicot have become increasingly turbid from fine silts which are almost colloidal and remain in suspension for long periods."

The report gave the cost of the project as more than \$15,000,000. The project included a pumping plant on Macon Lake and dams at each end of Lake Chicot. The plan also called for six recreation areas on the lake, one at the point where Connerly Bayou enters the lake, and the other five on the southern shore of the bottom curve of the lake.

The plan was the one endorsed at a public hearing held in November, 1965, when three different plans were discussed. The Vicksburg District Engineers said the plan would be submitted to the Chief of Engineers for review, then would go to the Board of Rivers and Harbors, and then to the Congress.

On September 19, 1967, Senator John L. McClellan and Representative David H. Pryor appeared before a Senate Public Works Subcommittee to appeal for federal funds in the next omnibus rivers and harbors authorization bill to clean up Lake Chicot, Senator J. William Fulbright filed a written statement favoring the improvements. The estimated cost to the federal government would be \$15,240,000 with another \$240,000 coming

from local sources.

The proposal was approved by the Subcommittee, and, in Fiscal 1969, the Lake Chicot Project was authorized by the Public Works Committee.

In June, 1969, Congressman David Pryor reported that Congress had appropriated \$100,000 for the Corps of Engineers to use in Fiscal 1970 for planning the restoration of Lake Chicot.

On June 6, 1970, Congressman Pryor and Col. John W. Brennan of the Corps of Engineers, Vicksburg district, said at a meeting at Lake Village that they were very optimistic that the Lake Chicot Restoration Project would be completed in six years. Congressman Pryor, Col. Brennan, and also Pat Arnold, who is supervising the project for the Corps, made the statement at an appreciation luncheon meeting at the Lake Shore Restaurant given by the Chicot County Drainage Board, representatives of the Levee Board, and Lake Village civic organizations.

Col. Brennan explained that Corps of Engineers' projects include two major steps, initiating planning and initiating construction. The first hurdle was overcome, Col. Brennan said, when Congress, "thanks to Senator McClellan and Representative Pryor," directed the Corps to use the \$100,000 for planning in Fiscal 1970. He said the money had been used for surveys of the bayous involved, control structures, and gravity ditches.

He stated that the President's budget for fiscal 1971, beginning July 1, 1970, includes some \$300,000 for further planning and surveying for the Lake Chicot Project.

Col. Brennan continued that the Corps would need an additional \$600,000 in Fiscal 1972 to complete planning and designing, "We expect to be ready to award contracts for construction three years from this spring," he said, thus indicating the spring of 1973 as the target date. He went on to say he felt that real estate acquisition could begin in Fiscal 1972 in Congress appropriates the funds.

Removal of Lake Chicot from the drainage system and the effective work of the Pollution Control Commission will give the lake double protection against reoccurrence of such contamination.

It is felt that, when Lake Chicot is restored, pride will take care of the litter problem there.

The major problem at Lake Chicot, therefore, is pollution by siltation. While it now appears that the hope for the restoration of Lake Chicot may be fulfilled in six years, there is still the problem of the continuing accumulation of silt at the rate of a foot to a foot and a half a year. This means that the depth of the silt in the lake will be increased from 28 feet to some 37 feet by the time the project is completed. The people of Lake Village hope that some interim measure, such as a temporary dam, may be taken to control the silt in the meantime.

The pollution of Lake Chicot should have been arrested and the causes corrected years ago when the problem was much smaller and costs would have been much less. Today the cost of solving the pollution problem is very high, but the cost of not solving it is unthinkable.

## HISTORY OF LAKE VILLAGE, CHICOT COUNTY, ARKANSAS

Written and Compiled  
by William N. Sessions

*[Ed. Note: Because this book is a compilation of other authors who have own their opinions and ideas I have not made many editorial comments. However, for the sake of historical accuracy I have tried to find evidence that DeSoto was in Chicot County, but so far I have not been able to verify his presence. The history books for Arkansas show that when DeSoto left Camden, he followed the Ouachita River into Louisiana. If this is true, he would have been to the west of Chicot County. The books do agree that DeSoto is buried in the Mississippi River.]*

The recorded history of the area which was later to become Chicot County begins in the year 1542. Hernando DeSoto, who was the first white man to cross the Mississippi River (1541), traveled to the sites of Hot Springs and Camden. Leaving Camden, he traveled in a southeasterly direction toward the Mississippi River, and legend has it that Lake Chicot is the place where he died and was buried in its waters by the men who accompanied him on his journey. Lake Chicot, at a point probably opposite the present little city of Lake Village, is the tomb of DeSoto, the renowned Spanish explorer. This fact is as definitely established as known history can determine. It happened 452 years ago, in 1542.

History is definite as to the route taken by DeSoto after leaving Hot Springs on his journey back to the gulf and thence to Spain. He followed the Ouachita to a point where Camden now stands. Thence he traveled southeastward to the Mississippi reaching the great stream at a point in what is now Chicot County. A strong tribe of Indians, ruled by Chief Chicot, had their main village on the banks of the great river, according to tradition, at the present site of Lake Village. From this powerful Chief, the present county derived its name, as did the beautiful lake also, which at that time was the main channel of the Mississippi.

Chief Chicot received the Spaniards with every mark of friendship, supplied them with food, skins for raiment, and in every way gave them assistance. Here DeSoto set about building Pyrogues (flat boats) in which to navigate the river to the gulf and thence to Cuba. By the time they were finished, he was attacked by swamp fever, from which he died. Chief Chicot brought in two of his finest young men to be executed, in order that their spirits might accompany the spirit of the Great White Chief to the world beyond and serve him there. He was prevented from doing this only by the stern resistance of the Spaniards, but the incident is interesting, in that it shows a faith in human immortality and a future state of life, firmly implanted in the minds of the untutored American savages even at that time.

At night, the Spaniards put the body of the famous Cavalier into a boat, and gave it a sea burial in the bosom of the "father of waters" discovered by him.<sup>1</sup>

This story may be challenged by critics, but they are challenged in turn to prove it, or bring forth from history any authentic data establishing a more probable place where the noted adventurer was consigned to the waters.

After this sad ceremony, the remnant of DeSoto's band, now reduced to but a few of the 600 proud warriors who started out with him on his perilous expedition to the gulf, thence to Cuba where they took ship for Spain to tell their strange but doleful story.

The next visit by the white man to the shores of Chicot County was some 131 years later when Pierre Marquette and Joliet followed the Mississippi River from Lake Michigan to the mouth of the Arkansas River. LaSalle, in 1682, granted to his lieutenant, Henry deTonti, lands near the mouth of the Arkansas River and Arkansas Post was established in 1686 as the first white settlement in what was later to be known as the State of Arkansas.

One of the commanders of Arkansas Post was one Carlos deVillemont (1793-1803), who was granted "Two leagues of land front by one league in depth", lying on the right descending bank of the Mississippi River at a place called "'Island del Chicot'" a distance of 25 leagues below the mouth of the Arkansas River. This property was not settled until 27 years later in 1822 and was known as Villemont. In 1823, Chicot County was formed with Villemont as the seat of County government. (This was when the state of Arkansas was known as Arkansas Territory). The County at that time was much larger than it is now, for the western boundary extended to the Saline and Ouachita Rivers; the northern boundary extended westward from the mouth of the Arkansas River to the Saline River. The southern and eastern boundaries being the same as they are today. At one time the cities of Crossett, Hamburg, Monticello, McGehee, Arkansas City and others were all in Chicot County.

As there were not roads at this time, travel was primarily by river boats and thus the settlement of the County began along the river frontage and extended a short distance inland from the river. Evidences of old plantation homes, gin sites, etc. are still present in 1994!

Beginning just below the mouth of the Arkansas River, the major boat landings downstream were as follows: Luck Landing, Chicot Landing, Arkansas City, Eunice, Gaines Landing, Panther Forrest, Luna, Patria, Columbia, Villemont, Vaucleuse, Sunnyside, Lake Port, Seven Oaks, Tecumseh, Grand Lake, and Scaife land in Arkansas.

In 1850 there were 145 white families in Chicot County owning a total of 4,257 slaves. Redleaf and Sunnyside having 275 between them.

The Petit family has been given the credit as the first white family to settle in the vicinity of Lake Village in 1830, although a man by the name of Brawner was granted property in the vicinity of Lake Village in 1828. Various families lived along the lake front property adjacent to or near Lake Village, between 1830 and 1840, for there was a newspaper published in Lake Village in 1840 called the "Southern Shield". There were at least two ferries operating on the lake in 1830. The same year the County Court ordered a road to be built from Lake Port to Old River Lake ferry landing. In 1833, another road was ordered built from Columbia to the mouth of Yellow Bayou on Old River Lake. Of historical interest during this period was an article from the *Chicot Spectator*:

From 1835 to 1857, John A. Murrell roamed this section. Murrell and his gang of cut-throats rode and raided, robbed and terrorized the Delta country. From all accounts, Murrell was the most

daring and brazen robber who ever stripped a defenseless man or cut an innocent throat. The Indians called him the White Man's Devil.

The chief activity of the Murrell gang was the stealing and reselling of slaves, though their other sins were countless.

One of Murrell's strongholds along the Mississippi was on Stuart's Island, across Lake Chicot from the present city of Lake Village. Often did Murrell and these men from "Robber's Nest" as their Stuart Island place was called, join unholy revelry of the early days of ill-fated Columbia.

About 1855 "Whiskey Shoot", the channel of water that formed Stuart's Island was navigable to the Mississippi River.

A steamboat laden with whiskey was held up on its way down the river off Point Chicot, near Greenville, by a small, dirty little steamer manned by Murrell's river pirates from Robber's Nest. By the time the two drifting boats had reached the mouth of a narrow willow covered channel that led to the Nest, the whiskey had been transferred and the pirates cut loose the moorings and departed.

While the little whiskey-laden craft lay securely anchored in the chute and the men were celebrating in drunken revelry, a band of silent, stern-faced men with muskets, quietly made their way toward Robber's Nest.

These men were settlers who had tired of the outlawing and plundering that had been going on about them and were determined to end it. They probably had observed the looting of the whiskey boat and knew that the influence of liquor in the case would be a great aid in their attack. It proved true.

When the bandits were suddenly surprised in their camp, there was no escape. When the smoke of the muskets drifted away, not one of Murrell's men remained alive.

The boat with the whiskey was set afire and the hulk sank to the bottom of what is now known as "Whiskey Shoot". No more appropriate name could have been found.

It has been thought that much of the plunder taken by these river pirates was left buried somewhere on the island. There is evidence of digging but as far as anyone knows no treasures have been unearthed.

There are old negroes nearby that will tell you they have seen lights in the woods where once was "Robber's Nest" and that they are undoubtedly slain men come back to search for the treasures they buried.<sup>2</sup>

The County Seat was moved from Masona to Lake Village in 1857 and a brick Court House was started the same year. The original plat shows the limits of Lake Village to be: on the East, the western edge of the lake; the southern boundary was St. Mary's Street west to Section line between Sections 11 and 12; the western boundary was this section line north to Confederate Street; and the northern boundary eastward along Confederate Street to the lake. This land was donated by John Drennan and John



Sumner. At the same time they gave the property now owned by the Catholic and Episcopal Churches as well as the property which is now the site of the Catholic and Episcopal Cemeteries. The population in Lake Village in 1860 was given as about 150 people.

Because of the War Between the States, Lake Village was more or less dormant until about 1900 when it began to show a slow but steady growth which has continued to the present time.

In the early 1890's Sunnyside Plantation saw the influx of Italian immigrants.

Uniquely and to its advantage, Lake Village has a rich heritage of Italians who still reside and add much to the area because of their retained customs and abilities to prosper by being frugal, thrifty and hard working.

Italian customs, cooking, business, and agricultural practices are viewed by many as those to be envied because they have tenaciously persevered in spite of economic difficulty and hardship where many others have abandoned their businesses, farms, and homes to move to areas where more economic opportunity in the way of industry and jobs are offered.

Italians are viewed as being able to live off the land because of their practices of curing meats, preserving fruits and vegetables, making of wine, farming techniques, and many other attributes whereby expenses are held to a minimum. This has allowed them to survive lean years and hold on until better opportunities and more economic stability becomes a reality. Many practices such as mentioned above are still carried on today and are of great interest to tourists as well as people of the surrounding areas.

Following is a brief history telling of how they came to immigrate to Lake Village in 1895.

In the year 1895, the Austin Corbin Company of New York decided to develop its land near Lake Village, Red Leaf, Fawnwood, and Sunnyside, Arkansas. Mr. Corbin was a good friend of the Italian Consul, Conte Ruspoli. The consul is a representative for the Italian people and was responsible for seeing to it that the Italian people were being treated fairly. Mr. Corbin asked Conte Ruspoli if he would get some Italian families to come to America to work his land. Those from central and northern Italy were viewed as being able to prosper by being frugal, thrifty, sturdy, and able to engage in agriculture.

Austin Corbin of New York, a banker and land speculator, who had purchased Sunnyside from Patrick Calhoun who was heavily in debt, devised a scheme to populate his plantation with Italians from central and northern Italy. Those presently farming their land did not do so productively and he was of the knowledge that Italians were industrious, energetic peoples who spent conservatively, saved, and thus prospered. Corbin approached his friend Allesandro Oldrini, chief agent of the Bureau of Information and Protection for Italian Emigration at Ellis Island to negotiate with Mayor Don Emanuele Ruspoli of Rome, Italy, for 250 agrarian Italian families with whom they would make a contract to sell 12-1/2 acre plots of land for \$2,000.00 each at 5% interest to be paid out over a period of 20 years.

This cost amounted to \$160.00 per acre and was 50% to 60% over the price of the most fertile productive land in the area. Italians would cultivate the cotton and from profits make payments after which title would be given them. Prospective Italian settlers agreed to these terms and contracts were drawn between each settler and the Corbin Company. Each contract provided for an arbitration commission consisting of one Italian, one member of the Sunnyside Company and a third chosen by the first two to settle any dispute that might arise. Of the 250 Italian families, 98 came from Marche, Emilia, and Veneto in 1895, and 72 families from Genoa by January 5, 1897. Other families came in 1905, 1907, 1912, and 1913.

Difficulties arose. Corbin was killed in a carriage accident and his son-in-law, George S. Edgell did not honor the contracts. Interest and rents were raised to an amount that could never be paid off, the climate was difficult to adjust to, the water supply was not drinkable, malaria and high swamp fever ravaged the Italians, and by the end of 1897, 44 children and 18 adults had died. Some say more than 125 perished. Some families were almost extinct but for one or two members; others had left only a few orphans. There is a small cemetery at Sunnyside on the plantation across Lake Chicot where those who died from malaria were buried but most of the Italian immigrants who died there in the 1890's were buried in the Lake Village city cemetery.

Still the Italians came and in spite of a large cotton crop in 1898, many families, about 40, became disillusioned and left with Father Pietro Bandini for northwest Arkansas and established Tontitown. Others sought work elsewhere, some moved to Mississippi and to Missouri, and only 38 of the original families remained.

Father F. J. Galloni, of a noble Italian family, was sent by the Bishop of Rome to minister to those remaining at Sunnyside. There he established a church and school. The immigrants adapted to the climate, conscientiously applied themselves with great zeal and fervor, and soon learned to cultivate the cotton crops very effectively and prospered. Two bales cotton per acre was very common at that time until the boll weevil struck in 1907.

By 1905, Italian families increased to 127. By 1907 there were 128. Many moved from Sunnyside and purchased property in other parts of the Lake Village area so that by 1912 there were 60 and by 1930 only two families remained at Sunnyside.

Father Galloni was then appointed to the church across the lake known as Our Lady of the Lake as assistant pastor and in awhile assumed pastorate. The Italians began going to church there and soon a parochial school was established, run by the Benedictine Sisters. In time a new church and new school were built. The school has produced and created far reaching effects on the community and surrounding area.

Many Italians went on to establish thriving businesses in the town of Lake Village and their agricultural expertise was evidenced by all.<sup>3</sup>

The population of Lake Village in 1900 was about the same as 1860. Its business district was confined to two blocks along the lake front each side of the Court House. Its homes were mainly scattered along the lake front with fields between neighbors. When in 1903, the Memphis, Helena and Louisiana Railroad entered Lake Village, the present main street with the M. H. & L. depot at its foot came into existence. New life throbbled in this old county seat – new businesses were built along the town's new Main Street. A new jail was built and a street opened through the Old Court House – Jail Yard and was named Court Street. Stores and offices encircled the courthouse square. In 1907 there were nine saloons on Main Street between the lake and the railroad station.

In 1907 the fifty year old courthouse was demolished and was replaced by a new modern structure. By 1910 the population was recorded at 1047 – a seven hundred percent growth since 1900. It was in 1910 that a city water works system was installed, and concrete sidewalks were laid in both the business and residential areas. In 1912 the city paved Main Street and installed its first sewage system.

The first U. S. Highway in Arkansas (U. S. H'way) was begun at the Louisiana line in 1918 and moved northward through Lake Village in 1920 becoming the first all weather road in the state.

Lake Village endured two floods in 1912 and 1913. The World War engulfed Chicot County and Lake Village as it did every other place in the nation. Our first casualty from Chicot County was William T. Cokley, for whom the American Legion Post in Lake Village is named.

In June of 1923, the State Press Association met in Lake Village at the Lakeshore Hotel. Read what a one time visitor had to say:

Picture a Lake, whose 18 miles of clear, shining water forms a perfect horse-shoe. At the bend of the horse-shoe, its houses set along a beautiful lakeshore drive like jewels in a quaint old brooch, lies the little city of Lake Village.

The panorama of southern history has passed in review as the town has looked out upon the placid waters of the lake, for Lake Village is nearly a century old. While Arkansas Post was still a trading point for Indians and white adventurers, a settlement around Lake Chicot, then known as Old River Lake – having once been the bed of the Mississippi.

The rich bottom lands attracted many families from Kentucky, Tennessee and Mississippi, who came bringing their slaves and their traditions of class and character. Prosperity rewarded their efforts, for the fertile lands yielded a rich harvest of cotton, corn, oats and hay. The climate was balmy and alluring. More settlers came, and the settlement known as Old Lake, became the county-seat, the land having been donated by the Summers family, who were distinguished Kentuckians.

Chicot County is formed of parts of Desha and Ashley counties, and for some years Arkansas City was the county seat for the vicinity; later it was moved to Lake Village, where it now remains. At this place, the bar of justice attracted some of the leading lawyers of the South. Here the distinguished Albert Pike poured forth his eloquence in behalf of his clients. Here, too, were often heard Chester Ashley, the distinguished Augustas H. Garland, afterward Chief Justice, Judge U. M. Rose, and General D. H. Reynolds, of Confederate fame. The latter was offered many political honors, including the governor's chair, but he preferred a quiet life of service in his community. Major Jas. F. Robinson and the Hon. Charles H. Carlton were also among the pioneer practitioners at the local bar, and helped to uphold the standards of the county.

During the war between the states, Lake Village received her share of the scars. The battle of Ditch Bayou was fought a mile or so below the town, and many old trees still show the marks of bullet and minnie ball. The commanding generals were Marmaduke and Steele, and aged residents still tell of the bravery enacted during the fight.

Shortly after the war, during "Carpet-bagger days", there came to the county promoters of a railroad. The enterprising citizens welcomed the proposition and two bond issues were sold in New York. For some reason the road was never built, but after lengthy litigation, the Supreme Court decided that the county was responsible for the debt.

A compromise was finally effected with the bond holders, whereby they accepted fifty-five cents on the dollar, reducing the debt to \$246,000.00, principal and accrued interest. Struggling under this handicap, this indomitable people showed the spirit of the old South, when, year by year they have paid, until the debt is practically liquidated at the present time. County scrip is worth 95c, with very little outstanding.

More than that, there was the gigantic problem of adequate drainage to protect their plantations from the ravages of overflows. Being only five miles from the Mississippi River, with Ditch Bayou, Beouff River and Bayou Mason in close proximity, they were completely at the mercy of these treacherous streams. With the negro population outnumbering the whites three to one, this threw the burden of levee-building and its subsequent taxation entirely upon the planters.

But land that produces, on average, nearly twice as much in monetary value as that of a number of other states, is worth protecting. Drainage districts were formed, levee boards appointed, until at the present time the problem is practically solved. And these people pay a levee tax of thirty cents per acre. But this is forgotten when they cut five crops of alfalfa per year, and when oats, cotton and lespedeza are equally good. All sorts of hay produce well, and furnish feed crops for the blooded stock raised in the county.

The final drainage project is on foot and will be completed in the near future, when a drainage ditch from the Pine Bluff district will be connected with Lake Chicot, to be controlled by flood-gates at the upper and lower ends of the lake.

Chicot County has fifty-eight miles of concrete paving forming a part of the splendid Arkansas-Louisiana highway, one of the longest and best pieces of road building in the United States. More than that, this little town of barely 2500 inhabitants, has the business streets paved, and miles of good side walks. Half of the county is to be drained by canals, the remainder protected by levees. As only about twenty-five per cent of the land is in cultivation, the completion of drainage will offer enticing inducements to the investor, and it is predicted that the county will enter upon a new era of prosperity. The fact that government statistics show Chicot County to be the richest in the world in cotton production will not go unnoticed.

Being a great pecan country, the entire corporation of the little city is set in an avenue of pecan trees – carrying out the plans of the progressive women of the town.

While agriculture is the great asset of Chicot County, the greatest asset of Lake Village is her lakes. There are three of these within a few miles – Macon Lake, Grand Lake and Lake Chicot, forming an angler's paradise. These have attracted the rod and line of many a tourist, and now thirty-five clubhouses dot the shores of Lake Chicot. These are owned principally by Mississippi, Tennessee and Arkansas people, for the passing tourist finds ample accommodation at the splendid local hotels, the Lake Shore and The Carlton.

In the center of the lake shore drive, just beyond the magnificent court house, is a pavilion, cafeteria, and bath house, leading out on the pier. Convenient to those are boat houses, where boats and launches of various sizes are to be had for nominal rental. The lake abounds in game fish of all sorts, but is nicknamed "the home of the big black bass".

Many a perfectly good complexion and soft pair of hands is daily sacrificed in the capture of the finny tribe. The angler starts out in his glory and enthusiasm early in the morning intending to return in an hour or two. But there are still more fish besides those soon on his string, and though the sun rises higher and hotter, he lingers to catch the big fellow that is too wise and wary. At last his watch warns him that he must eat, and he turns his boat shore-ward, only to discover that his face and cheeks are blistered, and his collarline, (which is really also a color-line) proclaims him to be a veritable "red-neck". But it's worth it. Who has not listened to the call of the great out doors, and what is more alluring than a lake of crystal clearness swept by a southern breeze laden with the fragrance of a million flowers?

Did you ever go a-fishin' on a lake in

Arkansas,  
When the dog-woods were just  
    Burstin' into bloom?  
When the mockin' birds were callin' in  
    The shadow of the trees,  
And you listened to the bumble-bees  
    Low "zoom"  
Did you never feel the tingle of a nibble  
    At your bait,  
And then followed swift, a trout's  
    Great shining leap,  
While your line spun out like lighnin' as  
    You played that fish for game?  
If you haven't—then, say sport—  
    You've missed a heap!

A peculiar thing about the lake is that there is absolutely no current, making it ideal for boating and swimming. True, in stormy weather the wind whips the waves into gulf-like white caps and makes crossing a bit perilous. But this does not happen often, and there are no sudden squalls as on the ocean.

Water festivals attract many visitors to Lake Village, for, though in the southeastern extremity of the Wonder State, it can be reached from almost any point in a day's drive over the highways. Many prizes are offered by business men, and Lake Chicot is often cleft by the graceful body of the fancy diver, pitting his or her skill against contestants for a silver trophy.

The Country Club golf course furnishes amusement for the sportsman when he is not on the lake, and the club house would do credit to a much larger resort. The Club owns sixty acres of land, and the nine-hole golf course is open the year round.

But it is in the fall that the northern sportsman visits Lake Village. Being on the direct railway line from St. Louis to New Orleans, several fast trains offer excellent traveling facilities. Wild geese and duck come by the thousands from Canada and the far north, seeking the grain fields and warm climate of the south. When they begin to fling their honking wedges across Lake Chicot the citizens know that winter has come.

Sportsmen from Chicago, St. Louis, Memphis and Louisville, follow to sit behind a blind and wait to outwit the craft and cunning of the water birds. Many a wild duck has come warily to a lone duck floating about, only to find, a second too late, that it is a delusion and a snare as the sound of a shotgun greets him with deadly effect.

Here, too, the quail sends forth his enticing whistle, and hunter and dog go eagerly to the quest. There is abundant supply of game to satisfy any hunter not given to wanton slaughter. State game laws

protect these helpless wild things, and it is evident that this popular resort will continue a mecca of sportsmen for years to come.

With the old southern aristocracy which still exists in Lake Village, hospitality is, to use a bit of horse talk, “bred in the bone”; and the stranger within the gates is given such a hearty welcome and accorded so much kindness, that he leaves declaring at least an annual return to this charming, little resort.<sup>4</sup>

Writing about Lake Village in June of 1923, no one realized a piece of our history had been made at a point two miles north of Lake Village at what at one time had been the Lake Village Country Club. It was April 1923.

A little known mail pilot by the name of Charles A. Lindbergh had landed on a former fairway. Because of engine trouble, he spent the night. During his stay he had taken up his host for his first ever “night flight”.

It was recorded better in an article written in August of 1930 in the *Memphis Commercial Appeal*:

A square-built, broad-galleried, two-story, wooden building, once a dark green in color, but now sadly in need of paint, situated on state highway No. 2 two miles north of Lake Village, stands a chance of becoming someday one of Arkansas’s historical landmarks. It is the old Lake Village Country Club. The idea of a town like Lake Village—two miles long and 100 yards wide—flanked on one side by cotton plantations and on the other by Lake Chicot, having a country club may strike some people as being rather droll. But Lake Village is up to date, and has been for a good long time. It has paved streets, sewers, waterworks, electricity and natural gas, all the utilities and conveniences, in fact, that the larger towns possess. So it was thought proper and fitting that it should have a country club, too, just like a real metropolis. When times are good in the Delta and boll weevil infestation is slight, it is an easy matter to organize anything. Delta people don’t always have money, but when they do they spend it freely. So when a local booster, back in the early post-war days, started an agitation for a country club for Lake Village, with golf links and all the other adjuncts, Lake Village business men took kindly to the scheme. A membership was obtained; a sum of money was raised; the house along with a tract of adjoining land was purchased—so much down and balance on credit—and the country club became an actuality. Lake Village residents began making regular trips there to rest, play golf and rusticate.

Everything went smoothly for awhile, but came a day when interest in the club began to wane. Members got behind with their dues; the golf course fell into disuse; the caretaker of the premises quit taking care; the individual holding the lien on the club property for the unpaid purchase money foreclosed; and in a short year or so after its establishment the Lake Village country club became a defunct

organization. The land was planted back in cotton and alfalfa, and the clubhouse was rented out to summer boarders.

The year 1923 saw the clubhouse being operated as an inn. A man named Henry, from Pine Bluff, had it in charge. It wasn't exactly a money-making hostelry. For the most part, its patronage was restricted to week-end vacationists who came to fish in Lake Chicot.

One day in April of that year an airplane visited Lake Village, coming from across the Mississippi River. It was piloted by a tall, lanky, young man with blonde hair. Lake Village had no airdrome and this aviator found no markers to indicate where to land. Circling around over town he spied the abandoned golf links of the ex-country club and decided to try a landing there. Skillfully he swooped down from the sky and brought his plane to rest a short distance from the clubhouse. When he had climbed from the cockpit and examined the plane's motor to see if it was still hitting on all cylinders, he made his way over to the clubhouse and asked for a lodging for the night. Mr. Henry, the proprietor, took the young man in and made him welcome. To his host the stranger appeared to be a pretty nice young chap, although he wasn't very communicative. Mr. Henry understood him to say that his name was Limberger and that he had flown from some place over in Mississippi. He ate supper at the clubhouse and spent the night there. When the moon came up in the evening, he asked his host to take a ride with him in his plane; and the two of them took off for a short flight over Lake Chicot. Back to earth they sat and talked awhile on the porch of the clubhouse. The next morning, the young man departed in the direction of Texas and Mr. Henry heard no more of him.

In May, 1927, the world was electrified by the news that this same aviator had made a nonstop flight from New York to Paris. He made the trip across the wide wastes of the Atlantic alone and won the plaudits of the entire world. It was the Lone Eagle—Colonel Charles A. Lindbergh—whom Mr. Henry had entertained. In his celebrated book "We", published after the world had marveled at his astonishing feat, the Colonel mentioned his visit to Lake Village—his stay at the clubhouse—his first undertaking of a flight at night. He states:

"After circling Lake Village I landed in a field several miles from town. The nearest building was a clubhouse and soon the keeper and his family had arrived beside the plane. They invited me to stay with them as long as I wished, but the keeper persistently refused to accept a flight in return for his hospitality. I carried only a handful of passengers that afternoon. The flying territory around that part of the country was fairly good and there were a number of fields available for planes to land in. Consequently an airplane was no longer the drawing attraction that it was farther in the interior.



“I staked the plane down much earlier than usual and went over to the clubhouse.

“Evening came on with the clearness of a full moon and open sky. The landscape was illuminated with a soft yellow light; an ideal night for flying. I decided to see what the country looked like from the air at night and jokingly asked my host to accompany me. For some reason he had no fear of a night flight although I had been unable to persuade him to go up with me in the daytime. What his reaction would have been, had he known that I had never flown after dark before, is a matter of speculation.

“We untied the plane, removed the canvasses from the engine and cockpit, and after a few minutes spent in warming up the motor, taxied down the field and took off for a moonlight flight down the Mississippi and over Lake Village.

“Later in the evening after the ship was again securely staked to the ground, and we were sitting quietly in the clubhouse, my host stated that he had never spent a more enjoyable quarter of an hour in his life.”

The clubhouse stands today just as it did when Colonel Lindbergh visited it in 1923 as an obscure pilot, only it is a little the worse for wear. It is used as a dwelling now. As an inn, it never paid very well. But what attention it might attract if it were put in repair, painted up and advertised as “Lindbergh Inn—the place where the Lone Eagle made his first night flight!”<sup>5</sup>

Sadly to say the building—the old Lake Village Country Club is no more. A fire of unknown origin destroyed it in 1993. Markers locating this historical site still let people know that something of significance happened here—something in which the citizens of Lake Village and Chicot County take great pride.

The most serious problem in the County at this time was the drainage problem. Because the economy of the county was upon agriculture the problem of drainage had to be solved, and this led to various drainage districts being formed in this and other southeastern counties. A major plan was agreed upon and work started to get rid of excess water that was hindering the farmer from making his crop. This brings us to 1927, when the greatest disaster that ever hit Lake Village occurred and is still being felt to this day. Of course, this is in reference to the great flood of 1927 and the destruction to dams and spillways and natural streams in the area to carry the water from the farm lands.

An article by James M. Moreland from the *Commercial Appeal* of April 1927 gives detail about the 1927 flood:

If you come to Lake Village and shut your eyes you never would guess the town has a flood on its hands. But you must not open your eyes, because if you do you will see the water nearly all over Lake Village. There is a high strip of land along the lake shore, dividing the

waters of Lake Chicot from the “sea of Arkansas”, which extends for a distance of 13 miles westward. But as I say, if you shut your eyes you never would know all this because you never would guess it by the conduct of the people. The same congenial people are here as on former visits. They talk in the same friendly way, boost the virtues of Lake Village, Chicot County, and Arkansas and are imbued with that same hospitality which has made the name Lake Village and Chicot synonymous with that word.

Discouraged? How dare any man insinuate that the people of Lake Village would ever get discouraged? Do you think these waters will not subside? Do you think when they do subside they will take the alluvial soil with them? They will, in fact, make the soil richer if such a thing is possible in Chicot County. No, sir-ee, these Lake Village folks are just as full of optimism as their town at the present time is full of yellow water. They are taking their flood philosophically.

Come to think of it, Lake Village has existed for a long time. It has passed through many vicissitudes, but it is still here upon its tantalizing lake shore, the same delightful old Lake Village as in former years. It must not be forgotten that Ditch Bayou is only a short distance from here. You know what happened down there in the hectic days of the ‘60’s. The people of this town have endured even the adversity of war right within their borders. War is a lot worse than floods. Lake Village survived the Civil War and upon the court yard here stands a handsome statue monument commemorating the valor of those Chicot County sons of other years, not more valorous, however, than their sons of 1927, who are meeting a bit of adversity with smiles upon their faces, determined to wear the victor’s crown in the end, because the lands of rich Chicot County never have failed them and will not fail this year.

I talked today to J. C. Gillison, major of Lake Village. He is as optimistic as one of the mocking birds that I heard singing this afternoon in the boughs of a tree along the beautiful lake front. He and I talked about the flood. He told me lots of interesting things about the day when the waters of the Arkansas came sweeping down through Southeastern Arkansas and caught the people unawares. One instance will illustrate some of the conditions with which the people had to cope during those troublous days.

Far out in the rural section of Chicot lived an old man named Jim Henry. He is a little deaf and not able to see without glasses. When the floods came racing down this old man elected to remain at his home, believing the water would not get high. After the water reached an abnormal height, higher than ever before in any flood of record in this section, a boy was sent back to the farm of this old man to remove him to safety. He was gone. It was naturally supposed that he had scented the danger and departed.

Nothing was heard of Jim Henry for nine days. Then some men went to his place and found him in the loft of his barn, with only about two or three feet space between his scaffold and the galvanized roof of the building. He explained that when he saw the waters were going to flood him out he made preparations to leave. Just as he started away, he accidentally dropped his glasses in the water and was not able to see to get away. Crawling to the loft of the barn he remained there in a cramped position for nine days. One old hen was in the barn with him and he also had 13 eggs. These raw eggs furnished his only subsistence for several days. At last they were exhausted. His only recourse was to kill the old hen. There was no way to cook her so the old gentleman was compelled to eat her in a raw state. His last morsel was about exhausted when he was found.

He had succeeded in cutting a hole through the side of his prison with his pocket knife, working for two days at the task. This enabled him to take a look over the flooded country. He could hear aeroplanes circling the swamps but was unable to attract the pilot's attention. He is well and happy now but has a wealth of incidents with which he amuses his friends about his long imprisonment.

It is remarkable that so few lives were lost in the floods in this county. It must be recalled that not only did the waters sweep down rapidly but the people were confident that the waters would not submerge them deeply and made little effort to get to high land until the flood was upon them. Yet only seven lives have been lost because of the flood in Chicot County. Four of those were drowned after the flood's arrival because of carelessness, making only three lives lost upon the approach of the flood.

It is entirely too early to make any estimate of the losses here. About 1,000 acres of alfalfa are a total. Many livestock have been lost. Mayor Gillison estimates that probably 20 or 25 percent of the livestock of the county have been lost, although he cautioned me that these figures should not be regarded as conclusive. The loss may be greater or less.

I chartered a gondola and rode about the streets of Lake Village. Of course I have seen more roseate scenes than those during that ride. Lake Village has been damaged-that fact is incontrovertible. But the damage is not to be compared with that at Clarendon or at Arkansas City. I saw not a single residence destroyed. Some outhouses were turned over. Parks and lawns are marred but the water did not remain long over that portion of the city which faces Lake Chicot where the most beautiful lawns are. The lawns will be saved in my opinion, though it will require some time to return them to their erstwhile loveliness. The boxwood borders around the court house lawn are dead. Already I noticed that they are being replaced. Lake Village has been noted for its beauty throughout the years. It will soon be beautiful again.

The merchants are open for business. Elevated sidewalks made of boards extend for a block down Main Street from the courthouse toward the depot. Water is in some of the stores-most of them in fact-but the merchants are smiling and affable. Ladies go shopping in gondolas.

It has been a great satisfaction to me to have been privileged to make this visit to Lake Village. I have found the spirit of the people all that could be desired and exactly like I expected to find. When I journeyed this way, riding through a yellow flood of water 13 miles wide, I kept thinking all the way over about the delectable charm of this piquant old city by its shimmering lake shore. I have loved to bask in its delectable charms in other days. As I write these lines I am sitting in a room of a hotel which overlooks the iridescent breast of my matchless Chicot. I can hear the waves murmuring a melody of gladness as they roll in and break upon the sandy beach not 20 yards from my window.

I loitered a bit this afternoon upon the steps of the quaint old Chicot County courthouse which faces that expanse of lake which, crescent-shaped, extends for a distance of 18 miles in two directions from Lake Village. This lake is widely heralded as "the home of the big black bass". People journey here in season and enjoy the sport of fishing, bathing and mingling with the hospitable folks who live down here.

The future of Lake Village is roseate. Not only is it the capital of one of the richest agricultural sections of the world, but there is no other city in Arkansas more advantageously located as a summer resort, Lake Chicot is irresistible. Within a few weeks the floods will have passed away and only a few of the scars will remain. Then folks will come down, as they have always come, and enjoy the thrill of snaring a big black bass in the pellucid waters of matchless Lake Chicot, because I know all the fish have not drowned.

Speaking of floods, Turner Catledge, entertaining news reporter for this paper, the other day in reporting his trip with Secretary Hoover through the flooded area, mentioned some of the suggestions which have been made to the secretary by willing men as to methods which should be adopted to bridle the Mississippi and thus prevent future floods. Some of these suggestions might have merit. Most of them, however, were ridiculous.

If I remember correctly, the armies of Grant came down south once for the express purpose of capturing the Mississippi River. Battles were fought at Island No. 10, Memphis, Helena, Vicksburg and other points along the river for the sole purpose of securing possession of the Mississippi River.

Now, I've an idea that may be valuable. If those folks up north still hanker after owning that great river suppose we send 'em word just to come down and get it, providing of course that they'll take it home

with 'em and keep the pesky thing up north so it will not bother us any more.<sup>6</sup>

As a result of this flood, the lake which had been a crystal clear body became a settling basin for the muddy waters of the drainage ditches from as far north as Pine Bluff in Jefferson County.

Miss Aubin Simms, a local resident recalled the flood of 1927:

The flood of 1927 was not a 'flash flood', but a slow rising flood that gave the people on the Arkansas side of the river plenty of time to prepare, or even to leave, if they wanted to.

Some on the local residents did leave, but most made preparations for the high water and stayed in their homes.

We had electric power, so the refrigerator ran, and the radio described the flood and warned of the high water that was on the way," Miss Aubin Simms said in discussing the flood.

The radio announcers made it sound much worse than it really was, she recalls. They dramatized it in such a way that it seemed very exciting and very dangerous.

She recalls that the last train was announced, and some left on the train and some left in boats later on.

The water came in from the west, flowed down through Lake Village and into the lake. It took several weeks for the water to recede and then there was a real mess to clean up.

Most people did not suffer any hardships, just inconvenience.

"Nelson Bunker had a dairy at that time and twice or three times a week he would bring milk to town and people would have fresh milk," Miss Simms recalls.

Everyone used boats to get around in, and scaffolds were built in town so that people could get inside the stores to shop later on.

"The government flew fresh vegetables in for local people, and boats brought in rations which were distributed at the courthouse and other places in town", Miss Simms said.

She remembers that her father built a scaffold from their front porch to the neighbor's porch so the families could visit back and forth.<sup>7</sup>

In the 1920's Lake Village had the largest hoop mill in the world. This was Peel's Mill located at 500 N. Court Street. Today the land is a city park. During the same period, Lake Village had a stave mill known as Fuel's Stave Mill. A stave mill made the wood sides of wooden barrels and a hoop mill supplied the bands around the barrels. Chicot County at that time had lots of hardwood and this was the material from which the staves and hoops were made.

The flood of 1927 was not the easiest thing to endure, but Lake Village came back as did other small cities in the delta. Right around the corner was something that was even bigger than a flood. No one realized that the depression would bring such severe

economic deprivation for such a long time. Everyone was more or less in the same boat; when everyone is as helpless as you are you sympathize and console each other.

In the early thirties going to school without shoes during the summer didn't seem to be as unusual as some people might think, but it was the rule, not the exception. Everyone made it by the hardest. The government supplied commodities to tide people over, even supplying fire wood.

Getting to school was not an easy task in the 1930's. Four small school buses brought children in from the rural areas when the roads were passable. Children living across Lake Chicot from Lake Village congregated at a point directly across the lake from the Courthouse and they were loaded into a small ferry and the trip across the lake was made. Sometimes as many as 65 children would be on this boat and after making the trip across the lake they would then either walk to Lakeside or Saint Mary's Parochial School. Talking with the operator of the ferry, he stated that he never had one moment of trouble from the children.

In the early thirties in Lake Village a big event was to drive out U. S. Highway 82 to Luna and cross the levee to the Mississippi River where the ferry would take you to Greenville, Mississippi.

The ferry was a stern wheeler and carried passengers and cars across the river between Luna Landing and Point Chicot on the Mississippi side. The ferry could carry about twelve cars and made a round trip once each hour from 6 A. M. until midnight. Cost for a car plus passengers was about 70 cents.

In the thirties cotton was still king in Chicot County and Lake Village had five cotton gins, Bunker's, Epstein's, Gillison's, Lovett's and Tillman's. Each had its own clientele, but as time passed gins became more efficient and it was not feasible to have so many. The only survivor is Epstein's with its modern efficient equipment.

In 1936, things were in motion to change going to Greenville forever. The City of Greenville with their foresight were able to get together the necessary mechanics to begin the construction of a bridge between Washington County, Mississippi and Chicot County, Arkansas. At a cost of \$4.2 million the Greenville-Lake Village Bridge was constructed during a four year period and was dedicated in September of 1940.

Completion was accomplished as war raged in Europe and early during this period men and some women were already enlisting in the armed forces.

Lake Village and Chicot County prepared for war as the Selective Service was initiated on September 16, 1940 and registration of all men between the ages of 18 and 35 was begun.

The Draft Board was located in the building on South Court Street now the Cannatella Building and H. R. Sessions was the Chief Clerk. People still say the "Mr. Hal sent me to war". Virginia Pesaresi was his able secretary. The Pearl Harbor attack by the Japanese on December 7, 1941 united our country as never before and hardly any family was left untouched. Those who didn't go in the service either had a disability or a special deferment.

Lake Village began to decline in the late 1950's and suffered many setbacks when agriculture became mechanized. Many of the farm laborers moved into the cities because of lack of jobs, businesses began to close, industry never came, and over the years the town became impoverished. Many who had depended on agriculture for jobs became welfare recipients as others throughout the whole Delta area.

Not only did the mechanization of agriculture displace the people as their jobs were no more, but Lake Chicot, the jewel of the area became a muddy body of water with little hope for it to recover.

Although it was discouraging, still there were people who kept remembering what Lake Chicot had been years before. The Lake Chicot Water Carnivals were revived after being cancelled during and immediately after World War II. Hydroplane races were brought back and in 1947 the revival of a once proud tradition was begun again. These lasted until 1957 when the lake got so bad that people were really embarrassed to ask anyone to come see what had happened to our lake.

The Chamber of Commerce got busy to try to get our lake back like it was and they enlisted everyone's support.

In 1957, Lake Village was at a real low point and that year Jack Rhodes was elected mayor. He was a man who really loved Lake Village as we all do. Mayor Rhodes' term as mayor lasted longer than any other mayor in Arkansas.

During his administration, a sewer plant was built and abandoned and a new one was constructed. An additional water tank was built and the water lines were extended around Lake Chicot and out many rural roads from Lake Village. The airport was improved with extended runways and hangars. Street improvements were made as well as the annexations of several areas to the city. The city park was improved with new piers and an amphitheater was built and ball parks were improved. After Mayor Rhodes retired in 1990 the lakefront park was named in his honor, a fitting tribute to a dedicated person. At his retirement, he was the senior mayor in Arkansas.

Although our lake was dying, it didn't keep the people of vision in Lake Village from realizing that we were in need of a new hospital.

An article from the *Chicot Spectator* of January 1966 gave this account:

Construction of the Chicot Memorial Hospital began on January 17, 1966. Pictured were Hermon Carlton, J. R. Burchfield, Hospital Committee Members, Judge H. L. Locke, Ben Angel, Chairman of the Memorial Committee, Henry Anthony, Chairman of the Hospital Committee, in the customary ground breaking ceremonies. It is to be completed on or before March 13, 1967.

All persons who desire to make a contribution or a memorial gift should contact Ben Angel, J. W. Loyd, or R. H. Dennington, who comprise the memorial committee.

There are many opportunities for contributors to make worthwhile and lasting acts of benevolence in connection with the hospital.<sup>8</sup>

People of Southeast Arkansas were most generous. When the need is known, people of the area respond. Rooms were furnished in memory and honor of loved ones and equipment for the operating room and other needs were quickly subscribed. Lake Village and Southeast Arkansas have been indebted to our Drs. McGehee and Burge families for their dedication over the last 75 or more years in seeing that medical facilities were available.

An article from the *Chicot Spectator* of July 16, 1975 gives in detail the extent of the new addition:

Construction began Monday morning on a new 30-bed wing at Chicot Memorial Hospital in Lake Village. It is expected that the new wing will be completed within a year. The \$1,650,000 addition to the hospital will include 22 patient rooms and an 8 bed Coronary Care Unit and Intensive Care Unit, according to Paul Steinle, hospital administrator.

Construction will provide a new area for medical records, training room, and waiting area. There will also be an expansion of the existing emergency room, X-ray room, laboratory, and the dietary facilities.

At present, Chicot Memorial Hospital has a medical staff of seven physicians, including two surgeons who are members of the American Board of Surgeons, and 125 other paramedical personnel.

The present hospital capacity is 53 beds plus the associated laboratories and emergency rooms.

When the additional 30 beds are completed, it will be necessary to add approximately 70 more personnel with various skills, Steinle said.

The new wing will be added on the west end of the hospital, around a court very similar to the existing facilities. The parking area will be increased about 50% and will extend along the front of the hospital.

Total cost of the additional space, not including furniture and movable equipment, will be \$1, 650,000. Of this amount, \$450,000 is in the form of a Hill-Burton grant. The other \$1.2 million has been borrowed with revenue bonds, making it unnecessary to vote a bond issue.

It is hoped that some of the cost of furnishing the rooms with equipment will come from memorials from persons in Chicot County.

“Anyone who wishes to provide memorials for these rooms should contact either Mr. Steinle or Jack Livingston, assistant administrator.

Individuals or groups who do agree to provide memorials, will have their names engraved on a bronze plaque.

Steinle estimated that the equipment cost per room will be slightly more than \$1,000 except for the rooms in the CCU-ICU area.

“Anyone who wishes to make a contribution of \$500 or more will have his name on a bronze plaque at the entrance of the ICU-CCU Area”, Steinle said.<sup>9</sup>

Today, Chicot Memorial Hospital continues to be one of Lake Village’s proudest possessions. In recent years a helicopter pad was added. CAT-SCAN equipment and many “state-of-the-art” additions in all departments are being added. With the Lake Village Clinic adjoining the hospital, we are indeed blessed.



During the same decade the Chamber of Commerce worked hard to acquire a state park for Lake Chicot. Even in its muddy condition the upper lake remained clear. The road across the lake at Connerly Bayou was made into a dam, keeping the muddy water out of the upper part of Lake Chicot. Lake Chicot State Park became a reality and attracted visitors from all over the Ark-La-Miss. It was started with the purchase of 25 acres. Since its humble beginnings, it has grown to now include 125 acres with 127 campsites as well as 14 fully equipped cabins with kitchens. The park also has a coin operated laundry, modern bath houses, general store and a marina as well as an Olympic size swimming pool.

During the time the Lake Chicot State Park was increasing in size, the people in Lake Village and Chicot County were not satisfied with only a fourth of Lake Chicot being usable.

People wrote letters, made trips to Washington, and kept our senators, representatives and elected officials continually bombarded with the knowledge that what was done to Lake Chicot by ill-advised drainage projects needed to be undone.

To get us up to date as to how it all happened, we are indebted to an article which appeared in the *Chicot Spectator* of February 5, 1975:

A \$2 million contract has been awarded to an Iowa architect engineer firm for the preparation of design plans and specifications for constructing the Lake Chicot Pumping Plant, it was announced by Judge J. R. Burchfield Monday morning. Colonel Gerald E. Galloway, district engineer, Vicksburg district, U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, informed Judge Burchfield the contract was awarded to Stanley Consultants, Inc. of Muscatine, Iowa, on January 29, 1975.

The awarding of the contract is a major step forward in the restoration of Lake Chicot which is being damaged daily by the muddy run-off from large farm areas above the lake which enters the lake via Connerly Bayou.

The general plan for the improvement of Lake Chicot is to construct a pumping plant and floodgate at the Mississippi River levee north of Lake Chicot to deliver flood flows from Connerly Bayou and Macon Lake directly to the Mississippi River.

A gated control dam is to be built near the confluence of Macon Lake and Connerly Bayou to control inflow into Lake Chicot.

A smaller structure to control outflow from Lake Chicot into Bayou Mason will be built in Ditch Bayou, south of the lake.

Efforts to restore Lake Chicot began many years ago. This is the biggest step forward in the project which hopefully will be completed within the next three or four years.

The contract price for preparation of all design features, plans, specifications, and estimates is \$1,963,000, and the work is scheduled to be completed in March 1977.

Gayland McGregor, Chief architect engineer, Vicksburg district, said that survey parties should be in the area by February 17, to begin

preliminary surveys of the channel of Connerly Bayou and Rowdy Bend to see how much channel work will have to be done.

Col. Galloway and three others from the Corps of Engineers office in Vicksburg, were in Lake Village Monday last week, talking to Bill Goldston, Houston, who owns much of the land which will provide right-of-way for the pumping project and access roads.

It was reported that Mr. Goldston was very receptive to the project and indicated that he would co-operate in any way possible.<sup>10</sup>

People in Lake Village had waited long enough and finally their dream would be a reality. Plans were being drawn and a \$2,000,000 contract awarded. Although many of the people who worked so hard on this project would never live to see its completion, today, it is finished and many generations to come will be indebted to the men and women of vision who wouldn't take no for an answer.

The restoration of Lake Chicot was a monumental event and it was featured in an article from the *Arkansas Gazette* of June 19, 1988:

They are rare, but some examples of man cleaning up the mess he has made do exist.

Lake Chicot in Southeast Arkansas is one of these examples.

Its lower three-fourths destroyed for all practical purposes as a living viable lake, Chicot was a victim of silting. Year after year, runoff came from a large drainage area to the north where fertile lands had been cleared and planted edge to edge with the Big Three of agricultural East Arkansas: cotton, soybeans and rice.

The lands drained. They drained with heavy rains and sent their fine topsoil including pesticide and herbicide residues southward through a funnel of bayous and streams and ditches to Macon Lake then Connerly Bayou and into Lake Chicot, a giant C shape formed several centuries ago in a course change of the Mississippi River.

The lake was in trouble before the farming economy was. Talk of "they need to do something about the lake" was common in the late 1950's. Active planning for stopping the runoff of silt-heavy waters into Chicot took place in the 1960's, and in the mid-1970's the Army Engineers launched a complex, multi-million-dollar renovation project.

The key facility was a massive pumping plant north of Lake Chicot that would pump millions of gallons of silty water from Connerly Bayou through a levee into the Mississippi River, bypassing Lake Chicot.

And by keeping the silty water out of Chicot, it would keep it from draining into Louisiana and creating more problems.

Without the pushing and prodding of Louisiana interests and that state's influential congressmen, the Arkansas leaders of the renovation idea might not have been able to swing it.

But the project did come about. The needed diversion dams were built and the pumping plant constructed and utilized. The lake was

drawn down in 1985 and rough or undesirable fish species were killed and the lake was restocked.

Presto! Lake Chicot cleared up. Fish thrived, and the angling has been little short of amazing.

Now, the economic benefits are slowly taking shape.

As rapidly as the turnaround in sportfishing has been, the economic upswing has been much less dramatic. It's just beginning.

"We are having a lot of people build new homes (on the lake) and move in here," Lake Village banker Freddie Black said. "They are coming from Monticello, Hamburg, Crossett, El Dorado, Monroe (La.), but more than anywhere else, they are coming from Greenville (Miss.);" just across the Mississippi River.

Black said, "You can't buy a lot, a 100-foot lakefront lot, for under \$20,000 now. They are selling for \$200 a front foot."

The homes run the scale from converted school buses to those costing more than \$100,000, some of them well above this figure. Campers, cabins and castles line the Chicot shore. Most of the new construction is on the east or "inside" of the lake's crescent.

Lake Chicot State Park on the upper end of the lake, the part much less affected by silt down through the years, has been improved, spruced up and is enjoying heavy usage most of the year. Its 14 cabins stay booked far in advance, and camping sites can be at a premium on weekends and holiday periods.

On the other end of the lake, Lake Chicot County Park was built by the Engineers, given to Chicot County and is also heavily used. It offers a large camping area with hookups, boat launching ramps, picnic facilities, a group pavilion and swimming area.

In the fall of 1987 the Mr. Bass of Arkansas Classic was held in Chicot. Some eyebrows were raised when the site was announced three days in advance. Chicot? Whoever heard of an important tournament on Lake Chicot?

The Mr. Bass Classic anglers caught bass at a pace that may be unsurpassed anywhere or anytime. First day, 19 of 27 fishermen had seven-bass limits. Second day, 23 of the 27 limited out. The strings were well sprinkled with 4 pound bass.

The 7-, 8-, 10-pound bass still may be in the future, but the Mr. Bass experience showed Arkansas that Chicot is back.

A Lake Village civic leader phoned a Little Rock television station a few days ago to tell of an upcoming festival. The station's sports announcer asked haughtily, "Where is Lake Chicot?"

He'll learn.<sup>11</sup>

People did learn and today we see an unprecedented number of new homes being built around the lake. Also, the Lake Chicot Water Festival is in full swing. Started again in the early 1980's by the Lake Village Lions Club, it has now grown into an event

with an annual budget of over \$50,000. Lake Village citizens were excited to see this article in the same June 19, 1988 issue of the *Arkansas Gazette*:

Hydroplane boat races, featuring 14-foot craft that can hit speeds of 135 miles an hour, will return to Lake Chicot for the first time since 1957, June 24, 25, and 26 in the lake's annual Water Festival.

The hydroplane races will be the first U. S. Title Series sanctioned event of the season, and the boats will run a course marked with pylons in the lower part of the lake.

Other festival events will include a community barbecue, Miss Lake Chicot beauty pageant, music by several bands, pancake breakfast, a 5K run/walk, frog jumping contest, arts and crafts exhibition, bocci ball tournament, tobacco spitting contest and a fireworks display.<sup>12</sup>

In 1986, Arkansas celebrated its Sesquicentennial. Each county was asked to help the state celebrate this event in the best way possible to make this a memorable year. A special issue of the *Chicot Spectator* was published commemorating the year. Clubs and schools had special programs. Chicot County Historical Society members decided they wanted to do something special. Society members Marvin Buffington and William N. Sessions went before the Chicot County Quorum Court and requested that there be appropriated \$12,000 to \$15,000 to erect markers around Lake Village and throughout the county denoting places of historical interest. The court at that time under the leadership of County Judge James R. Burchfield was most enthusiastic in endorsing the idea. With their enthusiasm evident, the Historical Society proceeded in getting the necessary information together and the following markers were erected:

Cariolla Landing – near Grand Lake  
Charles A. Lindbergh – First Night Flight  
Columbia – First County Seat  
Chicot County Seats  
Dr. Charles McDermott – Permanent Settler  
Early Railroads in Chicot County  
Eudora Under the Hill  
Lakeshore Hotel  
New Hope Baptist Church – Oldest Negro Church in Arkansas established by a slave  
Sunnyside – Italian immigrants  
Saunders, Petit, Cook Home – Civil War Hospital

Lake Village has always taken great pride in its men and women who have served in the military. Two days will long be remembered. People lined the highway to bid farewell to the 216<sup>th</sup> Medical Company as they were called up to report for duty in Saudi Arabia for Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm. The unit served well and was one of the first in the U. S. to be called up and unfortunately, the last to return home. A

parade was held in Little Rock on July 6 to welcome each of the units from Arkansas as the 216<sup>th</sup> stayed in Saudi Arabia. Our unit finally arrived and Lake Village, not to be outdone, put on its own parade. Articles from the *Arkansas Gazette* and *Arkansas Democrat* of October 6, 1991 give us the details:

Operation Welcome Home officially ended for the Arkansas Army National Guard along the banks of Lake Chicot on Saturday afternoon.

About 7,000 spectators watched a parade honoring the 130 members of the 216<sup>th</sup> Medical Company from Lake Village in Chicot County – the last unit in the state to return from Operation Desert Storm.

“We were medical personnel. We had to be the last ones home,” Spec. 4 Naja Gooley, 20, of neighboring Eudora (Chicot County) said as he watched the procession from a reviewing stand on Main Street. “It’s late, but it’s really nice.”

The operation started in October 1990 as Operation Yellow Ribbons with a group formed by Deborah Hurt, a Pine Bluff (Jefferson County) day care operator, when the mission was Operation Desert Shield. It expanded as that became Operation Desert Storm and had a grand finale July 6, in Little Rock.

The Lake Village company did not return until last month after 248 days overseas.

Sunny skies and perfect 70-degree weather drew people from Monticello (Drew County), Hamburg (Ashley County) and McGehee (Desha County) and enough military personnel and equipment from Little Rock to make this town of 3,088 look like a military base. About 880 people participated in the parade.

Lake Village Mayor JoAnne Vencill said she didn’t care how large the crowd had grown, her town and its Guard members intended to celebrate.

“I’m not going to say it’s better late than never. We’re here, we’ve gotten more help from state officials than I ever expected, and we’re going to have a good time,” she said.

Mayor Harold West of Monticello watched as the 1122<sup>nd</sup> Transportation Co. from Monticello marched by, along with a float and the Monticello High School marching band.

“We were the first to go, and they were the last to come home,” West said. “I was beginning to think they weren’t going to get home for a while.”

Spec. 4 Jewel Wisecarver, 21, of Hamburg said it hurt when the company missed the big celebration in Little Rock. “It made it seem like they’d forgotten us, but we knew they hadn’t,” she said.

Saturday’s parade kicked off shortly after 3 p.m. and the floats, military vehicles and bands stretched along Main and two other nearby streets.

Lt. Gov. Jim Guy Tucker highlighted a group of afternoon speakers that included Maj. Gen. James A. Ryan, adjutant general of the Arkansas National Guard, and Hershel Gober, who introduced the speakers and had organized the Little Rock parade.

Vencill said the Guard had guaranteed that 500 tickets would be sold to the \$2-a-plate fish fry after the parade. “We were going to have a party here no matter what,” she said.

It took nearly a half-acre parking lot to handle the vehicles and charter buses for Guard members, who also helped with traffic and crowd control.

Ray Smith, 62, a Lake Village native, said he’d seen a lot of crowds come and go in the town.

“When the lights go out at 5, it’s a ghost town,” Smith said.

The lights weren’t going out Saturday – a street dance was planned to end the day’s festivities.

Elaine Pope, wife of parade organizer Joe Pope, said the parade was important to show the appreciation of the public.

“My husband was a Vietnam veteran. We really want these people to feel good,” she said.

Serving in an Arab country took a lot of getting used to, said Hale.

“Arab customs were kind of hard to get used to, like praying 25 times a day. If you were in their shop, they threw you out to lock the shop to pray,” he said.

Other than watching Scud missiles fly overhead and land a few miles away, Staff Sgt. Roger J. Wilkins of the unit said, the most hazardous aspect of his tour was driving along Arab highways.

“You could be traveling 60 mile per hour and the Arabs would pass you like you were parked,” Wilkins said.

Tracie Nowlin, a psychiatric technician, said her tour of duty from Dec. 31 to May 8 involved talking to a lot of women who were homesick and guards stressed because they dealt with so many prisoners. She also said some troops were scared that the war was going to turn into another Vietnam.

Some members of the unit did not want to be quoted, but they said 99 percent of them felt their job was not done.

“We should have gone into Baghdad. It would have taken just one more hour to finish the job,” said one soldier.<sup>13</sup>

This brings us up to the present time and although Lake Village and the surrounding area are showing some signs of economic recovery, much needs to be done. Our being included in the EZ-EC program could be of real benefit to everyone in Chicot County. I am indebted to Libby Borgognoni for summing up our needs that have been brought out at the recent town meetings in Lake Village:

The town of Lake Village now needs work incentives and job training to instill pride and to eliminate welfare and programs presently in existence that destroy motivational skills. It needs encouragement to bond the family as a unit, and upgrading of the justice system, with punishment for crimes committed. It needs direction and monetary help to improve education, for mosquito abatement, red ant eradication, expanded sewer systems, four laned highways, health and recreational facilities for all, improved housing, and elimination of state and federal mandates which engulf and swallow up all the tax base leaving nothing for city and county services, roads and other improvements.

Motels and condominiums along with meeting halls, and development of its civil war historical sites, and capitalization of its ethnic diversity are the way to attract tourism. Lake Chicot is the largest oxbow lake in the nation, and the largest natural lake in the state of Arkansas. It abounds as a fisherman's and hunter's paradise, a recreational haven, and has the potential to make revitalization and economic recovery a reality for Lake Village and the surrounding area.<sup>14</sup>

Lake Village is indeed a good place to live and our goal is to continue to make it better for everyone. The recent passage of a bond issue to finance construction of a new elementary and middle school shows how concerned our people are in giving our children the opportunity for a good education, on which the future of Lake Village depends.

The above original article was prepared by Mr. Sessions for an empowerment program. In it he thanked Angela Hatch and Simmons First Bank of Lake Village, Arkansas for their help in the typing and printing of the article.

Early history of Lake Village contributed by J. Marvin Buffington.

1. “Whiskey Shoot” Was Named Near End of Murrell Gang Rule, from *Chicot Spectator*
2. Italian Immigration information contributed by Mrs. Libby Borgognoni.
3. By Ruby Erwin Livingston, in *The Courier-Democrat*, Russellville, Ark., June 21, 1923
4. Lindbergh Made His First Night Flight From Field Adjoining Building Once Lake Village County Club, 1930
5. OVER IN ARKANSAS by George M. Moreland, 1927 edition
6. Miss Simms recalls flood of 1927
7. CHICOT MEMORIAL HOSPITAL GROUND BREAKING MONDAY, from *Chicot Spectator*, January 1966
8. “Chicot Memorial Hospital begins construction on 30 bed wing”, *Chicot Spectator*, July 16, 1975
9. “Contract Is Part Of Lake Chicot Restoration”, *Chicot Spectator*, February 5, 1975
10. “Topsoil runoff from farms choked once healthy lake”, from *Arkansas Gazette*, June 19, 1988
11. “Hydroplane races coming back”, from *Arkansas Gazette*, June 19, 1988
12. “Long after Storm, 7,000 welcome last unit home”, *Arkansas Democrat*, October 6, 1991
13. Contributed by Mrs. Libby Borgognoni



## FAMILY BIOGRAPHIES

by Patricia Ann Schiro

### P. H. FINNEY

Little is known about the life of P. H. Finney who migrated to the Old McConnell Township area of Chicot County, Arkansas in the late 1850's. He was born in Virginia circa 1818 and married in Logan County, Kentucky, February 22, 1843, Miss Mary S. Anderson who was born in Kentucky circa 1820. Shortly after their marriage P. H. and Mary migrated to Carroll Parish, Louisiana where most of their children were born. Henry A. Finney born circa 1846; David B. Finney born circa 1847, married Mary Brawner; Mary Alice Finney born July 5, 1848, married George Samuel Brawner; George A. Finney born circa 1853; John M. Finney born circa 1857 and Sarah Frances (Fannie) Finney born circa 1859, in Chicot County married Thomas J. Hunnicutt born circa 1855 the son of John and Susan Parker-Hunnicutt of Chicot County.

P. H. Finney was a farmer and first appeared on the tax rolls of Chicot County, Arkansas in 1860. He died sometime between 1860/70, perhaps a casualty of the Civil War. His wife, Mary S. Anderson-Finney remained in Chicot County with her children and died sometime after 1880, date and place are unknown.

### SAMUEL PARKER

[Ed. Note: for more on the Parker family see the article entitled: *The Parker Family of Chicot County.*]

Samuel Parker was born in Indiana circa 1794. He was a farmer and one of the earliest settlers in the newly formed Chicot County, Arkansas. There is very little information available on Samuel Parker and his life. His wife's name is unknown, however we do have some of his children:

Samuel Parker, Jr., birth unknown married Susan Archer, April 2, 1848 in Hempstead County, Arkansas.

Wade H. Parker, birth unknown, married Mrs. Susan Geter-Stewart in Chicot County.

Granville Parker born circa 1825, Chicot County, married #1 Nancy Purvis, December 23, 1847. Nancy died shortly after their marriage and Granville married #2 Lucinda Estill on April 18, 1850 in Chicot County.

Isaac M. Parker born circa 1823, was said to have been the first white child born in Chicot County. He married Sarah J. Bigham, July 25, 1850 in Jefferson County, Arkansas. Their only known daughter, Sarah (Sallie) T. Parker born circa 1856 married in Chicot County on April 30, 1874, Daniel B. Brawner, born circa 1850, the son of

William B. Brawner and Drucilla Sumner-Brawner. Daniel was a farmer, ran a mercantile store, was sheriff of Chicot County for a while and also Chicot County Tax Assessor. They had the following children: Parker Brawner born circa August, 1878, married Maude Allen Williams; Robert F. Brawner born circa November 1882; Reuben F. Brawner born circa August 1886; Walter Edward Brawner born circa September 1889. After the death of Sallie T. Parker-Brawner, circa 1895 Daniel Brawner married Mattie P. McMahon in Chicot County on August 8, 1895.

Ann Eliza Parker born circa 1827 married in Chicot County, George W. Brawner on January 6, 1848. George W. was a carpenter and they moved frequently, however they always returned to live in Chicot County for short periods of time. It has always been my belief that George W. Brawner, William B. Brawner and James Brawner were brothers or maybe cousins. James Brawner married in Chicot County, October 11, 1855, Amanda Monholland, daughter of John and Mary Monholland also early settlers of Chicot County. It is believed that James Brawner died prior to 1861 as Amanda Monholland-Brawner married Lewis Bagley on October 13, 1861 in Chicot County.

George W. and Ann Eliza Parker-Brawner had the following children: Cornelia Clarinda Brawner born July 11, 1853, Jefferson City, Texas; Mary Brawner born circa 1856 in Chicot County; George Samuel Brawner born circa March 1859 in Chicot County, Arkansas.

### **GEORGE W. BRAWNER AND ANN ELIZA PARKER**

George W. Brawner was born circa 1819 in Virginia, his parents are unknown. He first appeared on the Chicot County Tax Rolls in the year 1846 and was there off and on for many years. On January 6, 1848 he married at the home of Lavina Estill in the Old River Township area of Chicot County, Miss Ann Eliza Parker, who was born circa 1827 in Chicot county the daughter of Samuel Parker. On March 27, 1862 in Jacksonport, Arkansas, George W. Brawner enlisted for a period of one year, in the Confederate States Army, as a musician. He was assigned to Company G, 23 Regiment of the Arkansas Infantry. On July 9, 1863 he was captured at the battle of Port Hudson. The next day July 10, 1863 he was released to return home to Chicot County. George W. and Ann Eliza Parker-Brawner had the following children.

Cornelia Clarinda Brawner born July 11, 1853 in Jefferson City, Texas, married the Reverend Thomas Jefferson Rooke at the home of Isaac M. Parker on February 25, 1875 in Chicot County. Cornelia died in Atlanta, Georgia on April 26, 1929. She and Reverend Rooke had six children: George Beard Rooke, born February 9, 1876; Ann Amelia Rooke, born April 24, 1877; Thomas Jefferson Rooke, Jr., born September 10, 1878; Cornelia Brawner Rooke, born August 23, 1882; Mary Maude Rooke, born September 6, 1888; Lalla Rooke, born March 17, 1893.

Mary Brawner, born circa 1856, Chicot County, married circa 1875, David B. Finney. Mary and David had two known children: Emma Finney born circa 1876 and Julia Finney born circa 1878.

George Samuel Brawner born circa March, 1859 in Chicot County, died in

Mineola, Texas circa 1922. He married in Chicot County on April 4, 1882, Mary Alice Finney, born July 5, 1848 and died October 20, 1926 at the home of her son, in Dallas, Texas. George Samuel, like his father, was a carpenter and moved frequently. He and Mary Alice had two children that died as infants and two sons that lived: Carney J. (Connie) Brawner, born March 17, 1884 and died of malarial fever on November 1, 1898 at the age of fifteen. These three children are buried in Greenwood Cemetery, Camden, Arkansas. George Henry Brawner, born March 7, 1886 in Little Rock, Arkansas and died January 12, 1965 in Houston, Texas. He married November 9, 1908 in Dallas, Texas, Edna May Clifton, born January 4, 1892 in Houston, Texas, the daughter of Robert Newman Clifton and Mary Melissa Gentry. Edna May died July 12, 1980 in Tomball, Texas. George was the owner of the Imperial Auto Garage in Dallas, Texas. When the depression came in the early 30's he lost his business and moved his family to Houston, Texas where he went to work for the Mosher Steel Company as their chief tool and dye machinist, he remained there until his retirement at age 70. George was also an inventor and had a number of patents. He and Edna had the following children: Thelma May Brawner, born January 5, 1911; George Edward Brawner, born August 17, 1913, died May 31, 1976; Ima Lee Brawner born July 9, 1917; Arther David Brawner, born May 16, 1922; Roy Norman Brawner, born September 9, 1924; Patricia Ann Brawner born February 7, 1934. George Henry Brawner and wife Edna May Clifton-Brawner are buried in Brookside Memorial Cemetery in Houston, Texas.

The date and place of death for George W. Brawner and his wife Ann Eliza Parker-Brawner is unknown at this time.

**The Parker Family of Chicot County**  
A Story of Courage  
**(Reprinted from the *Times-News*, February 26, 1981)**

One of Arkansas' earliest pioneer settlers was Samuel Parker who was born in Virginia and came to Arkansas in 1815. He settled in Chicot County and was well known in Clark County and at the Arkansas Post.

He married Miss Nancy Mills who came to Arkansas from Indiana with her parents in 1812, and whose home was in that part of Chicot County which is now Ashley County.

Samuel Parker fought in the War of 1812 and in the Mexican War. He was part owner in the first steamboat which came down the Mississippi River. He died in 1861.

Samuel and Nancy Mills Parker had nine children, three of whom lived to be grown. They were Isaac Montgomery, Eliza and Granville Parker.

Isaac Montgomery, the oldest son of Samuel Parker, was born June 20<sup>th</sup>, 1818, on Point Chicot. He was the first white child born in Chicot County.

Nancy Mills Parker died when her children were still young, so their father, Samuel Parker, took them to his uncle and aunt, Isaac and Sallie Thomas, who were living in Mayesville, Kentucky, where he left them to be educated

Later on the Parker children returned to Arkansas where Isaac became acquainted with and married into the Bingham family.

Samuel Bingham was born in Brownsville, Tennessee in 1807. He came cross-country with his aunt, the widow White and her family, who were from northwest Alabama. They settled in Pulaski County, and in 1827 Samuel Bingham married Maria White, a daughter of Widow White. They had nine children, six of whom were girls.

It was this family of attractive girls whom Isaac Parker met when he returned to Arkansas from Kentucky. He married the oldest daughter, Jane Bingham, who died soon afterwards, leaving a little girl, Nancy, who later married Joshua Seamans.

Joshua B. Seamans was born in Mississippi April 8, 1839. During the Civil War, he enlisted with the Confederate 25<sup>th</sup> Mississippi at Corinth, Mississippi on June 9, 1861. This Company was later transferred to the Confederate 55<sup>th</sup> Alabama.

Joshua B. Seamans and Nancy (Nannie) Parker were married December 24, 1867. Joshua was a carpenter by trade and while living in Arkansas City, Arkansas built the spiral staircase in the last Pauline Ross' home. There are no nails in this staircase. He also helped build the first bridge across Ditch Bayou in Chicot County. In 1880 he moved to Dermott, Arkansas where Pinckney Samuel Seamans was born on December 26, 1880. The 5<sup>th</sup> child born in their family.

Joshua Seamans died December 24, 1904 in Dermott, Arkansas and Nancy Parker Seamans died December 27, 1905 at Antonie, Arkansas.

(Editor's Note: Marriage Record found in Chicot County, Arkansas—Joshua Seamans, age 27, and Nannie Parker, age 16, both of Chicot County, Arkansas, were married on December 29, 1867 at the residence of Isaac Parker by W. A. Chamberlin, M.G. Old Book "C", Page 51.)

## THE PHILIP BOOTH FAMILY

by Joy Moon Shealy

Philip Booth was born September 2, 1797 in England and died April 25, 1854 in Eudora, Arkansas. He married (1) Jane before 1825 in unknown location. He married (2) Francis before 1839 in Chicot County, Arkansas.

Philip Booth, possible son of John Booth, was born in England September 2, 1797. The first account of him is in Chicot County, Arkansas in the 1830 Census with his wife Jane, two sons and a daughter. Jane was born January 10, 1804 and died January 15, 1836 and is buried in Mt. Carmel Cemetery on one side of Philip.

Philip Booth married Francis \_\_\_\_\_, born ca. 1800, sometime before 1839. From the 1840 Census of Chicot County, Arkansas, Francis appears to have had children by her first marriage to a Steen (Stern). Francis' daughter, Susan Steen married Calib S. Hill. Francis died ca. 1861 and is buried beside Philip in the Mt. Carmel Cemetery. There was a Robert Steen in the Chicot County, Arkansas 1829 Tax List.

Philip Booth was a very large land owner. He owned most of the Eudora, Arkansas now stands on and also land extending into the middle of the county including the town of Masona (present Chicot). He was instrumental in the layout of the town and streets in Masona. Specific street and blocks of land were willed to his children. He served as a Justice of the Peace and served on the committee for Judges of the election for Planters Township. In 1846 (Chicot County Court Records Book 3-pp 541-2-3) Philip and Francis donated land to the Presbyterian Church for a Church, Seminary for Girls and Mt. Carmel Cemetery (2 and 17/100 acres, in South end of the East half of SW Quarter of Sec 25 Twsp. 18 to Benjamin Shaw, S. E. Sweet, Philip Booth, J. C. Lydrand, John Laughlin and Caleb Hill; Trustees of Mt. Carmel Church and Academy.

Philip died April 25, 1854 and is buried in Mt. Carmel Cemetery in Eudora, Arkansas.

### Children of Philip and Jane Booth:

1. Mary Ann Booth, born ca. 1826 in Arkansas; married Rufus I. Moore February 29, 1844 Chicot County, Arkansas.
2. William Rufus Booth, born October 23, 1827 in Chicot County, Arkansas; married Elizabeth Tursy Rawls August 2, 1850 in Woodville, Texas. William died January 15, 1878 in Brazoria County, Texas.
3. Albert Booth, born ca. 1829 in Arkansas, married Mary Lois Moore May 17, 1855 in Chicot County, Arkansas. Albert died ca. 1876-79 in Chicot County and is buried in Mt. Carmel Cemetery, Eudora, Arkansas.
4. James P. Booth, born ca. 1835 in Arkansas; married H. E. E. (tombstone in Mt. Carmel Cemetery.)

### Children of Philip and Francis Booth:

1. Infant Booth, died 1840, buried in Mt. Carmel Cemetery, Eudora, Arkansas (tombstone damaged.)
2. Sarah T. Booth born February 6, 1843 and died February 15, 1843, buried in Mt. Carmel Cemetery.

3. \_\_\_\_\_ Booth, died 1844, Mt. Carmel Cemetery, Eudora, Arkansas.

REFERENCES:

1. Chicot Co. AR Census 1830, 40, 50, 60
2. Chicot Co. AR Tax List 1830-1839
3. Chicot Co. AR Will Book p. (Philip's).
4. Chicot Co. Ar Deed and Mortgage Book F.pp 99.
5. Mt. Carmel Cemetery Tombstones
6. Family Stories

Letter written to County Clerk, Arkansas County, AR; 1966-Naturalization record of Philip Booth is in Circuit Court record Book II, p. 162, under date of May 14, 1845. Philip Booth did more than two years since make a declaration in one form of law of his intention to become a citizen (1842 or 43). We have not been able to find the marriage of Philip and Jane Booth.

Letter written to County Clerk, Chicot Co., AR 1966-Naturalization application form lost in the old records.

**THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT OF PHILIP BOOTH**

I Philip Booth being at this time in good sound mind make this my last wish as to the disposal of my worldly effects after my departure from this world of trouble:

First: I wish my body to be decently buried and all funeral expenses paid and as I am not in the habit of contracting debts I don't expect there will be any other to settle, but if there should be any I wish them all paid.

Second: I leave to my Daughter Mary Ann Moore one hundred dollars to be paid out of any money that may be on hand at the time of my death; and to each of her children that she may have at the time one hundred dollars each, the money left those children to be left in the hands of their uncle Albert Booth to be paid to them as they become of age or sooner if they are in actual need of it, but providing their mother and said Mary Ann Moore should become a Widow then the money to be paid over to her, to assist her in raising them, but on no considerations to be paid unto the hands of their Father.

Third: Any other money or promissory notes that may be in my possession of I wish to equally divided unto my wife Frances Booth and my three sons William R., Albert and James P. Booth each to have an equal share.

Fourth: My personal property and land I leave to the management and control of my wife and my son Albert for the use of my wife and two sons Albert and James P. Booth, as long as my wife may live and at her death her to dispose of a third of the personal property as she may think fit, the other two thirds and the land to be divided equally between Albert and James P. Booth. There is in my possession at this time a negro girl Mary but I have no claim to her as my property, she belongs to my wife Frances Booth to

be joint Executors in carrying out my last request and if possible to keep the property together as long as my wife may live:

And I hereunto affix my hand and seal this 4<sup>th</sup> day of August in the year of our lord 1853.

Philip Booth S. S.  
Signed and Sealed in Presence  
A.Cohn  
Henry Godfrey

### **CODICIL OF PHILIP BOOTH**

Whereas I Philip Booth of the County of Chicot and State of Arkansas having made and duly executed my last will and Testament in writing bearing date on or about the fourth day of August A. D. 1853, and subsequent to the execution of said will the county Site of Said County and town of Masona, having been located on a certain tract or lot of land situated in said County belonging to me, I have caused a part os said tract of land South of the Public buildings, to be divided out unto Streets and Lots, in number twenty five, as part of said town, and sketched of a plot of said twenty five lots to be made on paper and hereto annexed so as to be identified by number. When the lots shall be actually surveyed and here to annexed said plot as part of this Codicil, said tract of land being the South West fractional quarter of the North West fractional quarter of fractional Section N. Two (23) in Township No. Seventeen (17) South of Range No. Two (2) West, containing thirty seven acres and thirty one hundredths of an acre; Now I the said Philip Booth do hereby declard this present writing to be a Codicil to my said Will and direct the same to be annexed there to and taken as part thereof: and

Item the First: I give and bequeath unto my dutiful and affectionate wife Frances Booth the West Range of said Twenty five Lots being Nos. 1,2,3,4, & 5 on said plat, to her and her heirs forever in fee simple:

Item the Second: I give and bequeasth unto my Daughter Mary Ann Moore the second range of said twenty five lots being Nos. 6, 7, 8, 9, & 10 the name of Mary Ann Moore being written on said range of Lots and said Plat, to her and her heirs forever in fee simple:

Item the Third: I give and bequeath unto my son William R. Booth, the second range of said twenty five lots being Nos. 11, 12, 13, 14, & 15 the name of William R. Booth being written on said range of Lots and said Plat, to him and his heirs forever in fee simple:

Item the Fourth: I give and bequeath unto my son Albert Booth, the second range of said twenty five lots being Nos. 16, 17, 18, 19, & 20 the name of Albert Booth being written on said range of Lots and said Plat, to him and his heirs forever in fee simple:

Item the Fifth: I give and bequeath unto my son, James P. Booth the second range of said twenty five lots being Nos. 21, 22, 23, 24, & 25 the name of James P. Booth being

written on said range of Lots and said Plat, to him and his heirs forever in fee simple:

Item the Sixth: I hereby authorize and empower my Executrice Frances Booth and my Executor Albert Booth to sell either at public or private sale all the rest and residue of the above described tract or parcel of land, lying East of the town of Masona, and East of the said twenty five town lots bequeathed in this codicil at their discretion to make a good and sufficient bill to the same to the purchaser or purchasers thereof, and I hereby give and bequeath the proceeds and monies arising from said sale to my wife Frances Booth, William R. Booth, Albert Booth and James P. Booth my sons to be equally divided share and share alike, one fourth part to each, and their heirs forever:

(there is no Item the Seventh,-Joy Moon Shealy)

Item the Eighth: In my will I have directed that the plantation Slave Stock and all other personal property therunto attached should be kept together during the life of my wife; Now my wish is that in the event my wife or sons Albert and James to who said property is divided, should prefer or desire a division of said property at any time my Executors are hereby empowered to cause the same to be divided unto three equal parts my wife to have one third part of the personal property including the slaves to her and her heirs forever and one third part of the real estate during and at her death the same to go in equal parts to my two sons Albert Booth and James P. Booth and their heirs forever in fee simple, as directed in my will:

Item the Ninth: I hereby constitute and appoint my dutiful and affectionate wife Frances Booth Executrice, and my son Albert Booth Executor of my last Will and Testament with this Codicil annexed thereto as part with full power to execute all and every requirement contained in my will: and I do ratify and confirm my said will in everything except where the same is hereby changed and altered as aforesaid:

Signed sealed and published by the said Philip Booth as a codicil to be added to his last will and testament in presence of us who have subscribed our names in his presence.

Philip Booth S. S.

W. Johnson  
A.S. Hill



## THELMA DOWNING PULLEY

by Wendy Savins

*[This information about Mrs. Pulley was provided by her great niece, Wendy Savins,  
[wgsgss153@email.msn.com](mailto:wgsgss153@email.msn.com) ]*

Thelma Downing was born in Eudora, Chicot County, Arkansas on December 22, 1908 to Eugene and Mitie Holt Downing. She was one of six siblings: Lucile, Thelma, James H., Frankie E., Eugenia F., and Gena Lea. They all grew up in Eudora. Eugene and Mitie ran a boarding house in Eudora one street up from Main Street. After Mitie's death, her only son sold the family houses that were located side by side.

Some of the family remembered that Mitie's father, Henry Holt, originally owned quite a bit of land in Eudora but lost most of it during or after the Civil War due to non-payment of taxes.

Thelma married Thomas Nicholson Pulley III on March 3, 1929 and then made her home in Oak Grove, West Carroll Parish, Louisiana. They had one child, Donna Gail, who is still living. Thelma's sister, Lucile married Maben Pulley (Thomas' brother) in 1933. They were both working as telephone operators when they met their prospective husbands.

Thelma, who was a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution, was a librarian in Oak Grove. She was an avid collector of historical and genealogical information. She not only did genealogy for her family, but for other people as well. Wendy said that although Thelma had really bad arthritis in her hands, she hand-copied the entire family tree to share with Wendy.

[Mrs. Pulley wrote several of the articles in this book and her contributions have helped to preserve the history of Chicot County.]

## LATTIN/LATTING FAMILY MYSTERIES

by Sue Lattin

[This article was contributed by Sue Lattin, [SLattin@aol.com](mailto:SLattin@aol.com)]

The Lattin family, like all families has its share of mysteries. One of the more intriguing mysteries is that of the Andrew Latting family of Columbus County, New York. In 1800 this was a large affluent family who owned large tracts of land in three states and helped in the settlement of Morehouse Parish, Louisiana and Chicot County, Arkansas. Andrew was a plantation owner in Chicot County as well as a Justice of the Peace, Coroner and State Representative. His brother, Richard Latting, served both as Justice of the Peace and Postmaster in Chicot County. By the 1850's, however, the wealth was gone, most of the family was dead or had disappeared, and one of Andrew's remaining sons appears to be a murderer. What happened?

The downward spiral seems to begin with Andrew's untimely death from Dengue Fever while on a business trip to New Orleans in 1828. He left a widow with eight children and an estate valued at about \$30,000 (not bad for the time). His wife Betsy remarried soon after his death and the children, most of them minors and some possibly from a previous marriage, appear to have been farmed out to various relatives. The younger children were sent back to New York to live with Andrew's mother's family, the Morehouse's. For whatever reason, the Morehouses and Andrew's widow did not seem to get along and there was substantial litigation in Arkansas over Andrew's estate as well as custody of the children (or at least over the control of their money). As a result, the estate was not settled until 1839 (more than 10 years after Andrew's death), and was split into so many pieces that no single person really benefited from the wealth.

Of Andrew's eight children, only two sons can be accounted for after 1851: Refine and Andrew Jr. Thanks to probate and census records, we know that Refine was sent to New York after his father's death and that he remained there for the rest of his life working as an artist and photographer. In 1850 he married Ann Bellows, but sadly they never had any children. Refine fought for the Union in the Civil War while his brother Andrew Jr. fought for the South.

What happened to Andrew Jr. immediately after his father's death is not clear though he appears to have gone to New York along with the younger children. While he is listed as a minor in the will, Andrew was probably at least 18 in 1839 and appears to have rejoined his brothers Harry, Abraham and Morehouse in Chicot County, Arkansas. Sometime during this period, Andrew "married" a Choctaw Indian woman named Liza Taylor, possibly in Mississippi. Unfortunately this Andrew, of a rich and privileged family, turns out to be a brute and drunk. He apparently murders Liza and abandons his young daughter Emmeline and a son who may have been named Andrew. We know that Emmeline returned to her mother's tribe and eventually walked the Trail of Tears with

them to Oklahoma. Emmeline married and remained in Oklahoma until her death in 1928. Her Dawes application listed an Andrew Latting as her father.

The identification of Liza and Andrew Jr.'s son is the real mystery. He may have been murdered along with his mother (family stories talk about his father hanging him upside down by his heels from the fireplace mantle), or he may have been adopted by Andrew Jr.'s older brother Abraham Latting who was at this time living in East Carroll Parish, Louisiana.

In any case, after murdering Liza Taylor, Andrew Jr. married Sarah Solovin in East Carroll Parish in 1846. By 1850, Sarah has disappeared off the face of the earth (hmmm....) and Andrew is alone working as a laborer on the Smith plantation. Around 1855, Andrew marries his third wife Rachel Newcomer/Herrin and has a daughter Susan L. Latting who is born in 1856; Andrew is not listed with them in the 1860 Louisiana census and may actually have been in California. In 1862, Andrew can be found fighting in the Civil War for the South having enlisted in Louisiana and fighting with units from Texas and Missouri. Interestingly, his "son", Andrew the 3<sup>rd</sup>, is fighting with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Arkansas Cavalry...on their enlistment forms both men use the name Andrew Jackson Latting.

By 1870 Rachel has been left to her own devices in East Carroll Parish and Andrew, along with daughter Susan, is living in Morehouse Parish. In 1872 Andrew marries his fourth wife, Sarah Ann Houze of Alabama, in Chicot County but by 1880 he is living in Morehouse Parish with three new children.

You may be thinking that for a mystery, we know an awful lot about his family and I suppose we do. What we don't know, however, is far more significant. For example, we don't know when Andrew Jr. was born, what actually happened to him after his father's death, or what caused him to go "bad". When did Andrew marry Liza and did he really kill her? Did he kill Sarah Solovin, too? Did Abraham adopt Andrew Jr.'s son? When and where did Andrew Jr. die?

So you see....as is often the case in genealogy....the more you learn the less you actually know!!



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