

“When the War Come Up”

Historic Resource Study,
Pea Ridge National Military Park, Arkansas



Theodore Catton

Report prepared for:

National Park Service
Midwest Region/DOI Regions 3, 4, 5
Omaha, Nebraska

June 2024



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A Note about the Title

One aim of this historic resource study is to consider what happened to the common people of Pea Ridge when the Civil War landed on their farms like a tornado in March 1862. Another aim is to focus on what happened to the enslaved people of Pea Ridge and Benton County after emancipation.

The title of the study comes from a 1938 WPA interview with Mary Myhand, who was born in slavery in 1852 and who was living in Benton County “when the war come up.”

Her eloquent words echo the famous words of Abraham Lincoln in the Second Inaugural Address: “And the war came.” Her plain diction points to what this study is largely about: the experiences of ordinary people in extraordinary times.

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Introduction

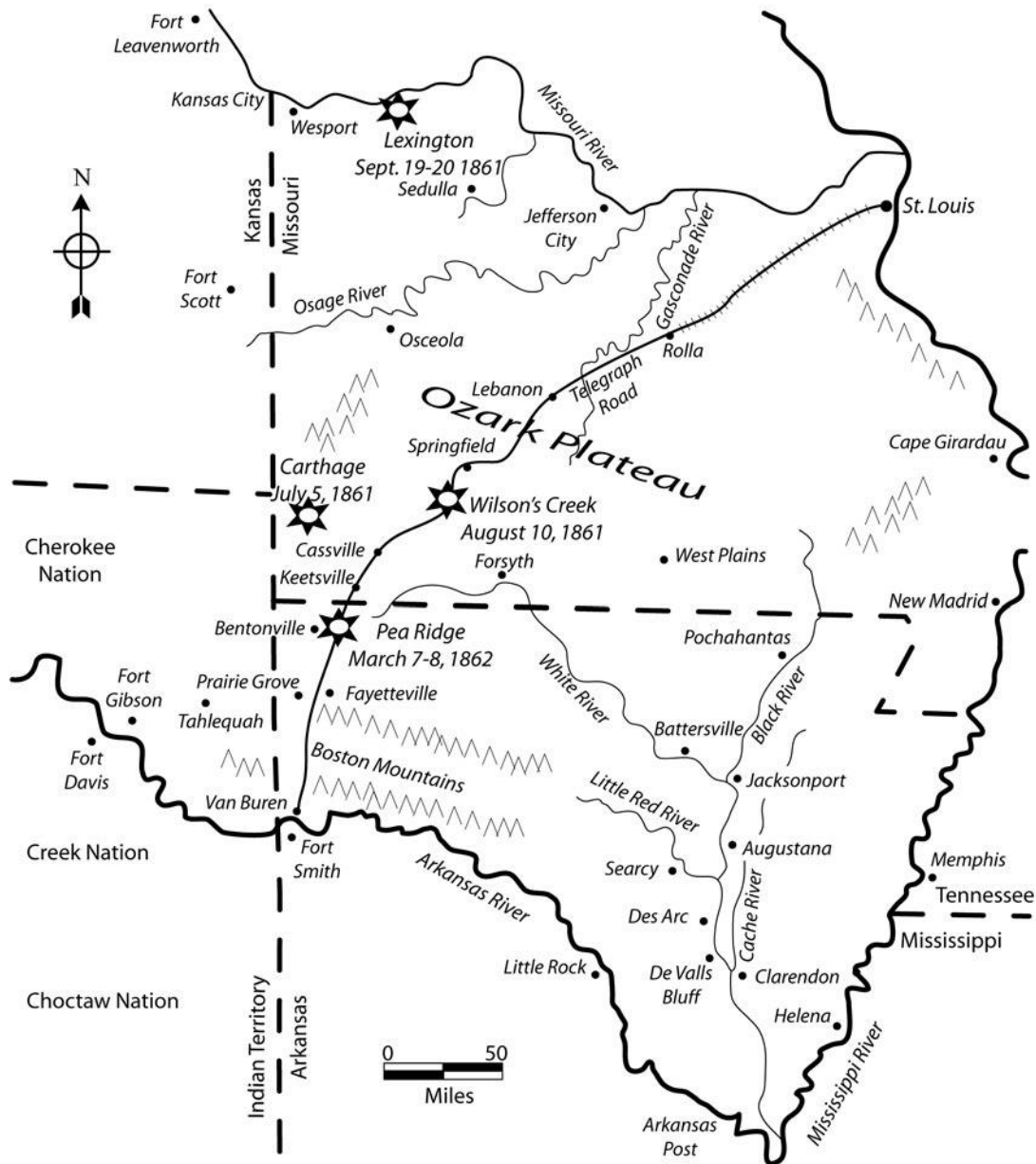
Pea Ridge National Military Park preserves the site of a major Civil War battle fought on March 7 and 8, 1862 in Benton County, Arkansas. All of the major action of the battle took place within the roughly 4,000-acre park, making this Civil War battlefield one of the best preserved in the nation.

The Battle of Pea Ridge occurred within the first year of the Civil War when the Union and Confederate armies were still being formed and the citizens of the divided nation were only beginning to grapple with the prospect of a long and bloody conflict. Around 25,000 soldiers took part in the Battle of Pea Ridge, and more than one tenth of them were killed or wounded. The human cost was a shock to the nation, though it was soon followed by the even greater shock that came from the Battle of Shiloh in Tennessee just one month later, where over 100,000 soldiers fought and around 20,000 were killed or wounded.

Pea Ridge seemed an unlikely place for one of the war's first large-scale military engagements. Located in the extreme northwest corner of Arkansas in a region of small farms and primitive roads, the place lay practically on the frontier of white settlement, 250 miles west of the Mississippi River and beyond the termini of all the nation's railroads (Map 1, next page). The battle was fought to decide which side would control Missouri, a border slave state with twice the population of Arkansas and as many slaves as its Confederate neighbor state to the south. Union victory at Pea Ridge secured Missouri within the Union, and thereafter the Trans-Mississippi theater of war became a sideshow to the eastern and western theaters of war stretching across the Upper South east and west of the Appalachian Mountains.

In the run-up to the Battle of Pea Ridge, Union forces led by Brig. Gen. Samuel R. Curtis moved south from central Missouri, driving Confederate forces into northwest Arkansas. Maj. Gen. Earl Van Dorn reorganized Confederate forces, putting Missouri State Guard and Confederate units under a unified command, and launched a counter-offensive in hopes that a decisive battlefield victory would clear a path all the way to St. Louis and cause Missouri to join the Confederacy. Before the battle, Van Dorn formed the ambitious plan to force-march his army around to Curtis's rear and cut off his opponent's path of retreat. But Van Dorn's plan fell apart when the two armies clashed before the Southern general had completed his maneuver. Curtis managed to turn his whole defensive line about face and engage the enemy before it was fully ready to attack. Following skirmishes on March 6, Curtis held off the main Confederate attack on March 7 and drove Van Dorn's force off the battlefield on the morning of March 8. This was one

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Map 1. Northwest Arkansas and Missouri in 1861-62. (Source: “Battle Raged.”)

of the few battles of the Civil War in which Confederate forces outnumbered Union forces.

In the aftermath of the Battle of Pea Ridge, northwest Arkansas became a strategic backwater to the military aims of North and South. Since Arkansas did not have strategic importance, the Union army committed a minimum number of troops to maintain control of the region. It garrisoned a few of the larger towns such as Fayetteville

and left most of the rural population to fend for itself. Outside of the garrisoned towns, the region descended into prolonged guerrilla conflict. In this conquered yet largely unsubdued region, conditions came to resemble a no-man's land where no place was safe from ambush or terror. White males of military age could not remain at home safely but had to fight or go into hiding. Women had to assume virtually all the work of tending the farm and producing food. Amidst the total breakdown of law and order, many white families abandoned their farmsteads and became refugees. A few persons among the small population of enslaved blacks in northwest Arkansas ran away from their enslavers and joined Union forces. Many more enslaved persons were taken by their enslavers to Confederate-held territory in southern Arkansas or Texas.

The violence, lawlessness, and upheaval of the war years persisted at lower levels long after the war ended. Abandoned and burnt-out farms were reclaimed and rebuilt relatively quickly, but blood feuds that were started in the guerrilla war were harder to resolve when the war was over. As whites tried to rebuild their lives amidst the ruin left by the war, blacks entered freedom in precarious circumstances. Most blacks in Benton County were enslaved on small farms before the war. Some freed persons left the county after the war, while others found marginal work as laborers or domestic servants. A few stayed put on the farm that they knew and worked for their former masters; many others sought a change and found work with other white employers. Arkansas as a whole attracted thousands of freed persons from other former slave states who were drawn to the state by the promise of cheap land and higher wages, yet Benton County did not see much in-migration and only a handful of blacks in Benton County acquired their own farms. As occurred elsewhere in the state, uprooted freed persons sought safety in numbers. A black community enclave soon formed in Bentonville that lasted from the late 1860s until the Great Depression.

Confederate veterans organized the first soldier reunion at Pea Ridge in 1887, twenty-five years after the battle. That event was followed one year later by a "Blue and Grey" reunion in which soldiers from both sides in the conflict came together in remembrance and reconciliation. These and subsequent reunions resulted in the placement of two monuments dedicated to the memory of all those who fell in battle. While battlefield reunions helped to bind the nation's wounds, they were part of a movement toward national reconciliation in the late nineteenth century that came at a terrible cost. The principle of racial equality over which the war had been fought was largely suppressed in spite of the 14th and 15th amendments to the U.S. Constitution. Former slaves who had gained their freedom in the war along with their children born after slavery were subjected to a new form of racial discrimination and repression as Southern states adopted Jim Crow laws and Northern opinion acquiesced in this act of back sliding by the whole nation.

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This study was initiated under a special funding allotment known as the Civil Rights Commemorative Initiative. Besides answering the usual purpose of a Historic Resource Study (which is to provide a comprehensive synthesis of primary and secondary source material that is pertinent specifically to Pea Ridge National Military Park) this study focuses on the civil rights struggle in Benton County from the mid-nineteenth century onward. Through the lens of local history, it focuses on the black experience in slavery before the Civil War, the collapse of slavery and the birth of freedom for blacks during the Civil War, and the black experience through the era of Jim Crow and the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s to the present. As part of the focus on civil rights, this study also emphasizes the wartime experience of the civilian populace at Pea Ridge. While the chapter on the Battle of Pea Ridge details the experiences of both combatants and civilians through the course of the battle, it emphasizes the mostly untold stories of the latter group.

The Battle of Pea Ridge fought on March 7 and 8, 1862 is at the heart of the Pea Ridge story. This study is not focused on military history, however. It does not aim to provide a detailed narrative of the leaders and units who were engaged in the battle or the strategy and tactics that determined the battle's outcome. It touches on those things but points the reader to other primary and secondary sources for more detailed narratives and more scholarly nuance. Fulfilling the objective of a Historic Resource Study, this study provides a comprehensive synthesis of the voluminous published literature on the Battle of Pea Ridge, citing hundreds of those sources in the footnotes and bibliography. Furthermore, in an effort to provide interesting and fresh material that is not already in print in other published sources, the chapter on the Battle of Pea Ridge makes use of numerous soldiers' letters and reminiscences. Many of those first-person accounts may be found in the park's history files. Some were collected from other repositories. Two outstanding sets of letters are reproduced in the Appendices.

This Historic Resource Study, like all Historic Resource Studies undertaken for every unit of the National Park Service (NPS), takes a long view of history beginning with the area's prehistory and American Indian occupation since European contact. It traces the developments that led to American Indian removal, followed by settlement of the area by white yeoman farmers and their slaves in the three decades before the Civil War. Between about 1830 and 1860, the white population on Pea Ridge grew from a few pioneer families into an established agrarian community of around 115 households. The middle third of the study is devoted to the Civil War years. The last three chapters cover economic and social change from Reconstruction to the Great Depression, the transformative effects of rising prosperity in the Ozark region in the latter half of the twentieth century, and finally a long view again of commemoration and preservation of the battlefield from 1862 to the present.

The Historic Resource Study's long view of history stands very much in contrast with this unit's intense focus on the two-day Battle of Pea Ridge. The story of the battle is filled with individual stories of courage, sacrifice, ordeal, and triumph. Likewise, the black experience in slavery and freedom and the civilian experience in the Civil War is composed of a multitude of individual stories of human drama that are both tragic and triumphant. As a way to bring those stories forward as much as possible, around two dozen white and black families were selected whose family histories provide representative views of the whole community. Most of those families are brought up at two or three or four points in the study to show how people responded on an individual basis to the challenges of frontier settlement, slavery, civil war, emancipation, postwar community building, and the long struggle for racial equality.

The American people have had an abiding fascination with Civil War history through multiple generations, but the subject matter that most fascinates them has changed with the changing times. The civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s had a major impact on Civil War history for it restored the fundamental truth that the war was fought over slavery. While the Southern man's defense of family and soil was important, the ideological struggle over the nation's founding principle of human equality could not be ignored. The ideological struggle was the driving factor in bringing the two sides into conflict. Recognizing that fact, popular interest in Civil War history shifted to the question of why soldiers and civilians on both sides of the conflict supported – or did not support – their government's war effort.

The Civil War centennial in the early 1960s proved to be only the start of a thorough re-examination of the Civil War in light of modern social movements. In the 1960s and 1970s, African American studies brought new light to the subject of slavery and the collapse of slavery during the war. The women's liberation movement led to more interest in the role of women in the Civil War, which led to important revisionist interpretations of the Confederate home front and Southern morale. The environmental movement spurred new interest in environmental factors in the war. The historic preservation movement engendered more interest in battlefield preservation as well as a fuller appreciation of cultural landscapes.

In 1991, Congress established the Civil War Sites Advisory Commission to survey the condition of Civil War battlefields, assess threats to their integrity, and explore alternatives for their preservation and interpretation. One finding by the Commission seems especially germane to this study. Civil War battlefields, the Commission stated, should be understood in *rural context*. Quoting Civil War historian Dallas Irvine, the Commission stated that “the Civil War was a rural social war [fought] within the structure of a still predominantly agricultural social order.” The author heartily agrees with the statement and thinks that the Pea Ridge battlefield and its underlying history illustrate the point well.

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The Commission continued:

Understanding a battlefield...demands that a researcher first familiarize himself with the logic and the features of the mid-19th century agrarian landscape in the vicinity of the battle. These features include the network of turnpikes, farm roads, and railroads, the distribution of small villages and hamlets, the location of isolated farms, mills, churches, and other structures, and the pattern of fields, woodlots, and forests as determined by prevailing agricultural practices. The cultural landscape, in turn, was shaped by the drainage system and elevations, gaps, fords, and even the soil quality, which determined which crops could be grown and thus which farming techniques could be used to the best advantage....

In many places, the 19th century lies close to the surface with merely a veneer of changes. The land is formed much as it was a hundred years ago. Old houses, mills, and churches survive, or their foundations may be located. The new road network is in many places congruent with the old, except that old turnpikes have been straightened to become major highways. Paved country roads follow the winding courses of old farm roads. Small villages have grown into larger towns, yet preserve their core as a historic district.

Elsewhere, however, the 19th century has been obliterated by large-scale recontouring of land, high-density development, quarrying, highway construction, or some other drastic change in land use. Civil War battles were often fought for possession of crucial transportation crossroads – a fact that continues today to spur the necessities of modern growth and development. Only where modern highways and railroads have bypassed a once important settlement, such as Appomattox Courthouse, does the 19th century landscape stand fully revealed to modern eyes. At the battlefield level, an understanding of the agrarian landscape enables an assessment of what has been lost and what remains.¹

Pea Ridge National Military Park is fortunate that it embodies much more of the preserved historic landscape than the obliterated one. The traces of old farm roads are still there, the famous Elkhorn Tavern is reconstructed to the way it presumably appeared in Civil War times, and the mosaic of forest and farm fields is more or less representative of the cultural landscape in 1862. Yet the park also bears the effects of nearby high-

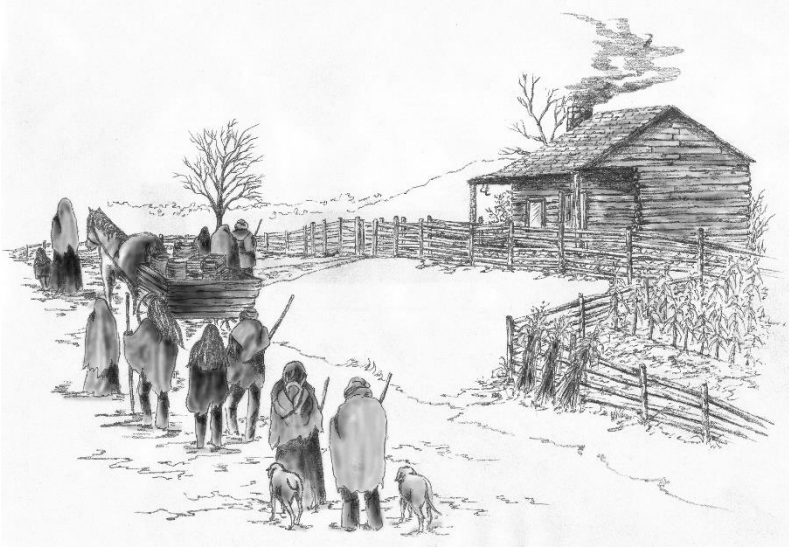
¹ Civil War Sites Advisory Commission, *Civil War Sites Advisory Commission Report on the Nation's Civil War Battlefields, Technical Vol. 1: Appendices* (1993, revised and reprinted; n.p.: National Park Service, 1999), 31.

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density development. U.S. Highway 62 skirting the park's southern boundary carries an average of 12,000 vehicles daily. Bentonville, Rogers, Springdale, and Fayetteville combined form one of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in the nation, so the threat of new bedroom communities rising on agricultural lands located at the edge of the park is now near at hand.

Americans are drawn to Civil War battlefields because the preserved landscapes are appealing places that allow the imagination to conjure a nineteenth-century rural society that is long past. With the aid of NPS interpretation, the preserved battlefield is a frame for understanding this vital piece of the nation's history. It is hoped that this study, through its civil-rights focus on the lived experience of individual white and black families *and* its long view on the development of the battlefield's rural context, will contribute to an understanding of the Battle of Pea Ridge and its aftermath as a "rural social war."

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Chapter One

The Long American Indian Presence

Pea Ridge's Prehistory

Archeologists describe the pattern of cultural evolution across thousands of years of prehistoric occupation as a “culture sequence.” In the southeastern United States and Arkansas the culture sequence is divided into four major prehistoric cultures: Paleoindian, Archaic, Woodland, and Mississippian.¹

Paleoindians

Paleoindians entered North America from Asia at the end of the Pleistocene, coming by foot across the Ice-Age land bridge known as Beringia, and establishing themselves in ice-free interior Alaska. When the continental ice sheets melted and land routes southward opened up to them, they spread fairly rapidly across all of North America. Spreading generally southward, they may have entered Arkansas by way of the northern plains and the Mississippi Valley. Paleoindians lived as migratory hunters, searching out the game animals that they killed and harvested for their meat and hides as well as the animal bone they used in toolmaking. They lived in small groups, coming together to trade for valuable types of stone and perhaps other resources.²

As the climate warmed and the Pleistocene epoch gave way to the Holocene epoch, Paleoindians developed new subsistence strategies to take advantage of changes in flora and fauna. One sign of cultural adaptation was the change from a large spear point, called a Clovis point by archeologists, to a smaller projectile point, called a Dalton point, which was crafted for killing smaller game. Dalton sites are more common and widespread in Arkansas than Clovis sites, suggesting there was an increase in population, though human numbers were still very small – perhaps as few as 500 people living at once across the whole state.³

Dalton people probably occupied base camps over extended periods. One important Dalton site is the Sloan Site located east of the Ozark Plateau in the Cache River Valley of northeast Arkansas. It contains the oldest recognizable cemetery in the Western Hemisphere, dating to about 8,500 B.C. The tool assemblage recovered at the Sloan Site reveals a variety of new forms, including drills and perforators, adzes,

¹ Jeannie M. Whyne, Thomas A. DeBlack, George Sabo III, and Morris S. Arnold, *Arkansas: A Narrative History*, 2nd edition (Fayetteville, University of Arkansas Press, 2013), 16-19.

² *Ibid.*, 19.

³ *Ibid.*

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scrapers, knives, engravers, and abraders. The cemetery and other evidence of continuous occupation of the site suggests perhaps a deepening connection between the people and the particular area of land occupied. Archeologists Dan F. Morse and Phyllis A. Morse refer to a “Dalton efflorescence,” which they view as a transitional stage from Paleoindian to the next major prehistoric culture.⁴

Isolated Clovis or Clovis-like points have been found at several locations in the Ozarks, while Dalton lithic scatters or occupation sites have been found across the Ozark Plateau in a variety of upland and lowland settings. Although no Paleoindian artifacts have yet been found at Pea Ridge, archeologists see Paleoindian occupation and use of the area as entirely conceivable based on finds in similar settings across the region.⁵

Archaic Lifeways

Archeologists describe an Archaic Period extending generally from 8000 B.C. to 1000 B.C. In this period, regional cultures developed increasingly complex forms of subsistence practice and social organization. Archaic peoples in the Ozarks made seasonal rounds in which they hunted small game, fished in rivers and streams, and gathered wild foods. They camped for extended periods where food sources were most abundant, returning to the same sites year after year. They developed a more diverse material culture. New tools included the axe for chopping wood and the celt for grinding or milling seed. Living a semi-sedentary life, Archaic peoples fashioned other objects useful around camp such as baskets, sandals, and twined fiber bags.⁶

Around the middle of the Archaic Period the climate warmed, affecting the range of deciduous forest in the southeastern United States and causing a shift in Archaic people’s modes of subsistence. Archeologists refer to Early, Middle, and Late Archaic periods to distinguish broad cultural changes that occurred around the start and end of this climatic optimum. For the Ozarks, the Early Archaic dates from 8000 to 6500 B.C., the Middle Archaic from 6500 to 3000 B.C., and the Late Archaic from 3000 to 1000 B.C. By the start of the Late Archaic, there was a marked increase in settlement sites and presumably an increase in the rate of population growth, too. Arkansas may have had

⁴ James A. Scholz, “A Summary of Prehistory in Northwest Arkansas,” *The Arkansas Archeologist: Bulletin of the Arkansas Archeological Society* 10 (1969), 53; Newton, “Paleo-Indian in the Arkansas Ozarks,” 85; Milton D. Rafferty, *The Ozarks: Land and Life* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), 32; Wayne et al., *Arkansas*, 20; Dan F. Morse and Phyllis A. Morse, *Archaeology of the Central Mississippi Valley* (New York: Academic Press, 1983), 71.

⁵ Panamerican Consultants, Inc., “Archaeological Data Recovery at the Mill Creek Site (3BE756) on the Bella Vista Bypass, Benton County, Arkansas,” report prepared for Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department, August 2016, p. 18; Pea Ridge National Military Park, “Cultural Landscape Report and Environmental Assessment,” (Public Review Draft), May 16, 2014, pp. 2-5.

⁶ Rafferty, *The Ozarks*, 32; Elmo Ingenthron, *Indians of the Ozark Plateau* (Point Lookout, MO: The School of the Ozarks Press, 1970), 19-20; Daniel Wolfman, “Archeological Assessment of the Buffalo National River,” 15.

several thousand inhabitants by the end of the period, and the Ozarks would have seen a concomitant increase.⁷

As Archaic lifeways grew more sedentary, social organization became more complex. The evidence from cemeteries, some of which were in use for many generations, is reflective of a deepening spiritual connection that Archaic peoples felt toward their ancestors and ancestral lands. Valued items were buried with the dead. Earthen mounds first appeared in the Middle Archaic, signaling some kind of escalation of social complexity even though the precise meaning and purpose of the mounds remain unknown. Stone artifacts show distinct regional variation in style. The Archaic Period marks the first period in which distinct culture patterns emerged to set apart the Eastern Woodland and Plains culture areas. At the same time, there is evidence of expanding trade networks that connected Archaic peoples over long distances.⁸

A few lithic scatters dating from the Early, Middle, and Late Archaic periods have been found within Pea Ridge National Military Park at various locations. Three prehistoric sites were recorded within the park with one or two of the sites being described as possible Archaic temporary occupation sites. However, due to site disturbance two of the three were determined ineligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.⁹

The Woodland Era

The Woodland was the next culture in the culture sequence, flourishing from about 1000 B.C. to about 1000 A.D. Culture change in this era was marked by the rise of food production and the strengthening of trade networks – changes that ultimately proved transformative. While American Indians started to cultivate plants earlier, in the Late Archaic, and established trade network even in the Paleoindian Period, both the level of food production and the significance of trade grew markedly over the course of the Woodland Era.¹⁰

As with the Archaic Period, the Woodland Era is subdivided into Early, Middle, and Late periods. In the Ozark region, Early Woodland sites are scant and difficult to distinguish from Late Archaic. Increasing horticulture indicates that for part of the year a sedentary group had to perform horticultural activities. There are other indications of a

⁷ Panamerican Consultants, Inc., “Archaeological Data Recovery at the Mill Creek Site (3BE756) on the Bella Vista Bypass, Benton County, Arkansas,” report prepared for Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department, August 2016, p. 18; Wayne et al., *Arkansas*, 21-22.

⁸ Wayne et al., *Arkansas*, 22.

⁹ Pea Ridge National Military Park, “Cultural Landscape Report and Environmental Assessment,” (Public Review Draft), May 16, 2014, pp. 3-15.

¹⁰ Wayne et al., *Arkansas*, 26-28

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reorganization of social structure such as construction of earthworks, elaboration of artistic expression, and burial rituals.

There is evidence of intensification of horticultural methods, construction of earthworks, elaboration of artistic expression, and burial rituals. Pottery in the Woodland Era evolved to include grog- and sand-tempered pottery and ceramic figurines, and changes in both the material composition and the artistic style of ceramics tend to be diagnostic of each sub-period.¹¹

During the Middle Woodland period, trade networks increased in importance under the influence of the Hopewell culture, which was centered in the Ohio River Valley. A distinguishing feature of Hopewell culture was the practice of burying high-status community leaders under earthen mounds. The cult gave rise to mound building over a wide area including most of Arkansas.¹²

There is an important Woodland archeological site in the Ozarks on the floodplain of the Buffalo River. The Dirst Site was occupied intermittently in the Late Archaic and Early Woodland periods, before becoming permanently settled by Late Woodland people who occupied it from about A.D. 600 to 900. The community made shell-tempered pottery, which constituted a significant advance over earlier pottery forms because the pottery vessels could withstand placement in a bed of hot coals. This enabled prolonged boiling of water, which allowed cooking of grains. The Late Woodland settlement at the Dirst Site produced a variety of plants and grains including *Chenopodium* (close to quinoa), little barley, may grass, knotweed, squash, and corn. The inhabitants' diet also included deer and elk meat, fish, nuts, and wild fruits. Excavation of dwelling units at the Dirst Site reveal a change from light, circular pole-frame structures in Early Woodland to more substantial square structures with internal hearths and food storage pits in Late Woodland.¹³

Mississippian Culture and the Question of Cultural Diffusion

The Mississippian is the last in the prehistoric culture sequence and extends from around A.D. 1000 to the period of first contact with Europeans in the sixteenth century. Distinguishing traits of Mississippian culture include an emphasis on corn agriculture, a gathering of population on river floodplains, public architecture, and the rise of chiefdoms. Mississippian culture is also distinguished by the rise of regional variations. Six regional variations have been identified covering the greater part of the eastern

¹¹ Panamerican Consultants, Inc., “Archaeological Data Recovery at the Mill Creek Site (3BE756) on the Bella Vista Bypass, Benton County, Arkansas,” report prepared for Arkansas Highway and Transportation Department, August 2016, p. 19.

¹² Wayne et al., *Arkansas*, 28.

¹³ *Ibid*, 27-28.

United States, with the Middle Mississippian, located along the Middle Mississippi Valley, constituting a core culture area (Map 2).

In its classic form in the Middle Mississippi Valley – which included several important sites found in Arkansas – Mississippian culture exhibited great ceremonial mounds and walled cities. Archeologists Dan F. Morse and Phyllis A. Morse described a Mississippian chiefdom organization based on agriculture and characterized by permanent (year round) settlements. Usually the population was dispersed in farmsteads and villages around a paramount village or administrative center. “Farmsteads and hamlets related to villages, which in turn related to a paramount village. Redistribution and storage of surplus took place at the administrative centers. There were large pyramidal mounds arranged around open squares in the major villages.”¹⁴



Map 2. Mississippian and related cultures. Source: public domain.

¹⁴ Morse and Morse, *Archaeology of the Central Mississippi Valley*, 212-13.

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The problem confronting Ozark archeology was to understand how fully the people living in the Ozarks were integrated into Mississippian culture, with its large mound centers and extensive trade networks, when the telltale big mound complexes are mostly lacking in the Ozark highlands. Archeologists wondered to what extent, if at all, prehistoric people in the Ozarks participated in the extended trade networks and ceremonial centers of the mound builders. The notion that the Ozarks formed a cultural backwater that was mostly removed from outside developments (Appendix 4) has receded in favor of the view that the region was largely integrated with developments in the wider region. Much interest has focused on a variant of the Mississippian culture, the Caddoan, centered south and west of the Ozark Plateau. The Caddoan tradition gave rise to mound centers such as the Spiro Site located in Oklahoma on the Arkansas River floodplain about fifteen miles west of Fort Smith. It appears that the same hamlet-to-village-to administrative center linkages that Morse and Morse describe in the Central Mississippi Valley also existed in the Arkansas Valley running northward to Benton County.¹⁵

The Lee Creek Site in Crawford County, Arkansas is important to the understanding of this prehistory. Lee Creek drains the western slope of the Boston Mountains and flows southward, crossing back and forth over the Oklahoma state line before joining the Arkansas River between Fort Smith and Van Buren. Several bluff shelter sites are found in the area. A proposed federal dam on Lee Creek led to archeological investigations by the Arkansas Archeological Survey in 1979 that came to focus on fifteen bluff shelters plus two sites on the floodplain, making it one of the more intensively studied areas in the Ozarks.¹⁶

Archeologist Neal L. Trubowitz, the principal investigator, found evidence of a mixed economy of farming, hunting, and gathering. He identified the artifacts as Caddoan. Trubowitz suggested that the Caddoan settlements in the upper Lee Creek Valley “appear to be outlying farming communities associated with the Parris or Cavanaugh ceremonial centers downstream, through which the farmers were connected to the larger Caddoan interaction centered on the Spiro site.”¹⁷ Other archeologists agreed that the habitations were integral to the Caddoan culture. The settlements were part of an economic system of horticulture, wild food collection, and distribution of local food surpluses between hinterland and population centers. Farmsteads and hamlets in the

¹⁵ James A. Brown, Robert E. Bell, and Don G. Wyckoff, “Caddoan Settlement Patterns in the Arkansas River Drainage,” in *Mississippian Settlement Patterns*, edited by Bruce D. Smith (New York: Academic Press, 1978), 169-200.

¹⁶ Neal L. Trubowitz, “Caddoan Settlements in the Arkansas Ozarks: The Upper Lee Creek Valley,” *Midcontinent Journal of Archaeology* 8, no. 2 (1983), 198-201.

¹⁷ Trubowitz, “Caddoan Settlements in the Arkansas Ozarks: The Upper Lee Creek Valley,” 199.

hinterland were loosely networked into religious and political centers in the major river valleys.¹⁸

Besides the Parris and Cavanaugh mound centers noted above, mound centers are found in a few other locations in northwest Arkansas such as along the White River lowlands near Huntsville in Madison County, and at the Collins Site in southeastern Washington County. Small mounds are common in some areas around the edge of the Ozark Plateau, such as in central Missouri.¹⁹

Toward the end of the Mississippian period the world of the Mississippian chiefdoms became unstable and in places war torn. The largest of all Mississippian administrative centers, Cahokia, near present-day St. Louis, went into decline around the 1200s and the population largely dispersed to outlying fortified towns. All through the middle and lower Mississippi Valley other chiefdoms showed similar evidence of decline. As the system for growing and redistributing food became strained, borders between peoples were more contested and settlements had to be fortified against enemy raids. To the west in what is called the Caddoan Culture Area, there seems to have been less conflict but a similar population dispersal from administrative center to villages to hamlets. The administrative center at Spiro is thought to have had a population of some 10,000 at its peak in the 1300s and 1400s. By the late 1400s, however, the population of Spiro went into sharp decline and by the 1500s the place was practically abandoned.²⁰

The Protohistoric Period

This time of turmoil in the Late Mississippian period preceded first contact between American Indians and Europeans in the 1500s. The protohistoric period in the Southeast spans approximately A.D. 1500 to 1700. It is called protohistoric because the Spanish expedition of De Soto in 1539-43 and a few French expeditions in the late 1600s produced the first written records, yet the descriptions are so fragmentary and imperfect that they barely constitute a historical record at all, at least by later standards. Researchers

¹⁸ Ann M. Early, "Caddoan Settlement Systems in the Ouchita River Basin," in *Arkansas Archeology in Review*, Arkansas Archeological Survey Research Series 15, edited by Neal J. Trubowitz and Marvin D. Jeter (Fayetteville: Arkansas Archeological Survey, 1982), 233-34.

¹⁹ Timothy K. Perttula, *The Caddo Nation: Archaeological and Ethnohistorical Perspectives* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992), 142; Carmelita Angeles, "The Dirt on the Collins Mounds Site," Master's Thesis, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, 2016, pp. 1-3; D. I. Bushnell, Jr., "Archeology of the Ozark Region of Missouri," *American Anthropologist*, New Series 6, no. 2 (April-June 1904), 294-98.

²⁰ Kathleen DuVal, *The Native Ground: Indians and Colonists in the Heart of the Continent* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 26-27; Heide Brandes, "The little-known Native American society was once as powerful as the Aztecs and Incas," *National Geographic*, March 9, 2021, at <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/article/spiro-and-the-art-of-the-mississippian-world-in-oklahoma>.

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have pieced together the history of this period using a combination of archeological and ethnohistoric evidence and perspectives.²¹

One challenge to forming a picture of this two-hundred-year period is that it was a time of great turmoil and disruption brought about by the introduction of European diseases. The Europeans carried diseases across the Atlantic to which native peoples in the Caribbean Islands and in North and South America had had no prior exposure and therefore possessed no natural immunity. “Virgin soil epidemics” erupted in the Western Hemisphere that swept through native populations with devastating effect. Mortality rates in some populations ran as high as 100 percent. Sometimes native groups were struck by epidemic after first contact with Europeans and sometimes they were decimated even before Europeans came into the area as the disease spread from one native group to another through intertribal trade networks. The effect on the native people’s economies, political structures, and cultural outlooks was profound. Adding to this cataclysm, the Spanish quest for native slave labor led to slave raids and wars between tribes on a scale not present before. One scholar, Robbie Ethridge, has termed this rapid and far-reaching impact of first contact the “Mississippian shatter zone.” In Ethridge’s work, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw: The European Invasion and the Transformation of the Mississippian World, 1540-1715*, she looks at the combined effects of disease, warfare, and enslavement in causing the Mississippian chiefdoms to disintegrate and nearly cease to exist over the course of this relatively short period.²²

Many studies of the protohistoric period have focused on one ethnic tribe known in historic times and have attempted to trace its lineage back through the protohistoric period to late prehistoric times. Ethnohistorians call this the study of ethnogenesis. Archeologist Timothy K. Pertulla has studied Caddoan archeology and the ethnogenesis of the Caddo nation. At the start of the protohistoric period, Caddoan peoples occupied a wide area stretching from east Texas northward to the Springfield Plain on the edge of the Ozark Plateau. Pea Ridge and Benton County fell within what is termed the Caddoan Culture Area. Caddoan peoples in the vicinity of Benton County – an area described by Pertulla as the western Ozark Highland – developed a seasonally mobile settlement system that was anchored around larger settlements with corn production. From these corn producing areas, Caddoan peoples made seasonal forays into the more rugged hill country to hunt deer and collect plants. They also hunted bison on the nearby prairies.

²¹ For an overview of how archeological and ethnohistoric perspectives differ, see Marvin D. Jeter, “From Prehistory through Protohistory to Ethnohistory in and near the Northern Lower Mississippi Valley,” in *Transformation of the Southeastern Indians, 1540-1760*, edited by Robbie Ethridge and Charles Hudson (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2002), 178-80.

²² Robbie Ethridge, *From Chicaza to Chickasaw: The European Invasion and the Transformation of the Mississippian World, 1540-1715* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 4; Denise Ileana Bossy, “Review: Shattering Together, Merging Apart: Colonialism, Violence, and the Remaking of the Native South,” *William and Mary Quarterly* 71, no. 4 (October 2014), 611-31.

The larger corn producing settlements were located in the larger river valleys along the Arkansas, Grand, and White rivers.²³

In the mid-seventeenth century, the Caddoans were pushed out of the area by the Osage tribe. By about 1700, the Caddo nation was consolidated into three confederations with their respective homelands in east Texas, northwest Louisiana, and along the Red River Valley of Texas, Oklahoma, and southwest Arkansas. One of the three confederations was known to the French as the Kadohadacho, hence “Caddo.” Caddoan society in 1700 still had elements of the hierarchical society once identified with Spiro and other administrative centers of the old Mississippian chiefdoms. It had both religious and political leaders. It had both warriors and priests. The people lived in dispersed settlements of varying size from farmsteads to hamlets to villages. While the larger settlements included separate religious buildings and spaces, the Caddoan people no longer built mounds. The Caddoan people raised corn and engaged in hunting, fishing, and gathering wild plants. With the introduction of the horse, they often went on bison hunting expeditions to the western plains in the winter. However, the Caddo occupancy of the Pea Ridge area was now in the past as the powerful Osages claimed the whole Ozark highlands as their own.²⁴

The Ozarks at the Edge of Empire

Europeans came to the New World initially seeking riches that could be transported back to Europe. Soon the Europeans established colonies to support their efforts of resource extraction, and then they established their own administrative centers in the New World to bring order over their colonies. As the European colonial presence in North America grew through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the area of Pea Ridge and the whole Ozark highlands remained remote from all European administrative centers. Three European powers, Spain, France, and Great Britain, became rivals for empire in the interior of North America. Spain’s administrative center was in distant Mexico City, so Spanish influence and power mostly reached the Ozark region by way of Texas and the southern plains. France’s primary administrative center was far to the north at Quebec, with a second one at New Orleans. French influence in the Ozark region began with their establishment of Arkansas Post where the Arkansas River flows into the Mississippi. Britain was the last of the three European powers to show interest in the Ozark region. British influence and power emanated from the thirteen British colonies on the Atlantic seaboard. Although British colonists were involved in the North American fur trade from Hudson Bay south to the Carolinas, British interest did not touch the Ozark region until fairly late in the colonial period.

²³ Perttula, *The Caddo Nation*, 141-42.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 15-18.

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Historian Richard White developed the concept of the “middle ground” to describe the shifting balance of power between European and native peoples as they came together and competed for territory and hegemony in the colonial period. White’s point was to understand the European colonization of North America as a process in which native power weighed significantly in the competition for empire and persisted even as it slowly ebbed in the face of European might. White’s focus was on the Great Lakes region, an area encompassing today’s Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin. Historian Kathleen DuVal pushed White’s middle-ground concept a bit further, arguing that a “native ground” existed in the Arkansas Valley from the time of De Soto through the eighteenth century. In DuVal’s native ground, native peoples maintained hegemony while Europeans operated in the area only on native sufferance. DuVal’s interpretation of events in the Arkansas Valley applies about equally to events in the adjoining Ozark region.²⁵

The Quapaws were the first tribe in Arkansas to form an alliance with any European power. They made contact with the French explorer Robert Cavelier de La Salle when he journeyed down the Mississippi River in 1682, and two years later they welcomed a return party under Henri de Tonty and allowed the establishment of Arkansas Post. The Quapaws were interested in trading furs for guns, and in having the French on their side against hostile tribes. Quapaw territory in the late seventeenth century extended from the area around Arkansas Post westward up the Arkansas Valley and northwestward into the Ozark highlands. The Quapaws did not have permanent settlements in the Ozarks but treated the area as their hunting grounds. Soon, however, the Quapaws were driven out of the Ozarks by the Osages. Furthermore, they were devastated by a series of epidemics. Their population fell from perhaps 8,000-10,000 in 1673 to perhaps fewer than a thousand at the end of the eighteenth century. Despite the tribe’s dwindling size, the Quapaw-French alliance continued to hold sway in the Mississippi Valley, forming a bulwark against British incursion into the area. But westward of the Mississippi Valley the Quapaws were eclipsed by the more powerful and numerous Osages.²⁶

The Osages, along with the Quapaws, were originally part of a larger group of Dhegian-Siouan speaking people in the lower Ohio River Valley. In the mid-seventeenth century the Dhegians were forced to migrate south and west, pushed out of their homeland by their eastern and northern neighbors who were newly provisioned with European firearms. As the Dhegians migrated, they divided into five autonomous groups known as Quapaws, Kansas, Omahas, Poncas, and Osages. The Osages came to occupy

²⁵ Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991); DuVal, *The Native Ground*.

²⁶ Arnold, *The Rumble of a Distant Drum*, 143-44, 151-54; Theodore Catton, *A Many-Storied Place: Historic Resource Study, Arkansas Post National Memorial, Arkansas* (Omaha: Midwest Regional Office, National Park Service, 2017), 75-77; DuVal, *The Native Ground*, 74-78.

the Ozark region and adapted to their new environment of mixed forest and prairie. They became a semi-sedentary people who lived in wood-frame longhouses through the winter and spring, cultivated corn around their villages, and went away on bison hunting expeditions to the west in the summer and fall. They also became involved in the fur trade with Europeans. They rose as a new power in the region, their new homeland being strategically located on the frontier between the French and Spanish empires. They obtained iron and guns from the French and horses from the Spanish. From their fortress in the headwaters of the Osage River, they had access to both the Mississippi River and the southern plains. Still pressed by hostile tribes from the north and east, the Osages steadily expanded their territory to the west and south at the expense of other tribes. They became aggressive hunters, traders, and raiders. More aggressive in warfare than the Caddoan peoples, the Osages forced the latter to abandon their villages and farms without much fight and retreat southward. The Osages raided Caddo and Wichita villages as far south as the Red River, taking captives whom they traded as slaves to the Spanish. They became a fearsome tribe even as they cultivated a strong friendship with the French.²⁷

The Osage tribe grew more populous and thrived as it increased its domain. By the late eighteenth century the tribe numbered perhaps 5,000, including 1,000 warriors. At the height of Osage power from around 1750 to 1800 the tribe dominated an area the size of Montana. The Osages' domain covered half of Missouri, Arkansas, Kansas and Oklahoma. The Osages became the most powerful nation in the midcontinent.²⁸ Pea Ridge fell within the Osage empire; indeed, it was located fairly near the seat of empire where the Osages maintained their villages. While the Osages laid claim to a vast area, their winter villages were clustered in just a few locations which were all within about 100 miles of Pea Ridge.

In the bottomlands nearby the villages the Osages grew corn, beans, and pumpkins, which they planted in April and gave one hoeing before they departed on the hunt in May. About August they returned to harvest the crops, some of which they cached for winter, and then they left again for the fall hunt. Returning again in about late December, they stayed in the village for two to three months before setting out on the spring hunt. On this hunt they sought beaver and bear for the value of their furs and hides, and they carried these animal products to trading posts, and then returned to the village for the spring planting. Such was the usual seasonal round of the Osage tribe, augmented here and there by the gathering of wild foods and raiding expeditions.²⁹

²⁷ Willard H. Rollings, *The Osage: An Ethnohistorical Study of Hegemony on the Prairie-Plains* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1992), 4-9; Louis F. Burns, *A History of the Osage People* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004), 27-28.

²⁸ James B. Christianson, "The Early Osage – 'The Ishmaelites of the Savages,'" *Kansas History* 11, no. 1 (Spring 1988), 3-6; Burns, *A History of the Osage People*, 29; DuVal, *The Native Ground*, 103-04.

²⁹ Jedidiah Morse, *A Report to the Secretary of War of the United States on Indian Affairs [1822]* (Reprint, St. Clair Shores, MI: Scholarly Press, Inc., 1972), 205-06.

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In spite of their economic prosperity, however, the Osages faced growing pressures by the end of the eighteenth century. The Osages’ aggressive ways earned them the enmity of surrounding tribes, including plains tribes to the west such as the Kiowa, Comanche, and Pawnee, who, like the Osages, were experienced in warfare. Those western tribes, already equipped with horses from the Spanish, became a bigger threat to the Osages as they acquired guns. The Osages’ raiding undermined Spanish authority over southern plains tribes, prompting the Spanish to make repeated efforts to unite the tribes in a war against the Osages.³⁰

There were other perils attending the tribe’s economic prosperity. The fur trade and raiding presented new opportunities for individuals to gain wealth and prestige, which eroded the traditional leadership structure of the tribe. Under the influence of Spanish and French intrigue, the tribe splintered. The splinter group, followers of a headman named Clermont, moved their winter village to the lower Verdigris River in what is now northeast Oklahoma. This so-called “Arkansas band” of Osages soon came to outnumber the parent group, and it showed a greater disposition toward raiding and conquest than the other two bands.³¹

The Advent of American Influence

The Ozark region was part of French Louisiana until 1763, when the whole territory was conveyed to Spain by the Treaty of Paris as reward for Spain’s part in the Seven Years War (the French and Indian War). Nearly forty years later, in 1800, France recovered the huge territory of Louisiana when it took control of Spain during the Napoleonic Wars. France held it again for just a few years until 1803 when President Jefferson purchased the territory from France on behalf of the United States. The Ozark region, still being “native ground” until this time, was scarcely effected as it was passed back and forth like a poker chip from one distant sovereign power to another. But the advent of American sovereignty over the area soon began to have much more pronounced effects.

Unlike the European powers, whose interest in the remote lands still came down to resource extraction, the young American Republic had a burning interest in obtaining land for white settlement. That gave the United States a fundamentally different outlook on the native peoples. In the original thirteen states many indigenous peoples had been pushed off their lands and forced to retreat across the Appalachian Mountains even before American independence. A few had already moved as far west as the Ozark region. One native group from north of the Ohio River, the Kickapoos, relocated to land west of St. Louis. The Spanish administrators of Louisiana saw an advantage in allowing

³⁰ Rollings, *The Osage*, 10-11; Christianson, “The Early Osage,” 6-7.

³¹ Rollings, *The Osage*, 11; Christianson, “The Early Osage,” 6-7.

displaced eastern tribes to relocate on lands west of the Mississippi River as they might reinforce Spain's shaky control over the area. So, in the years immediately following American independence, Shawnees and Delawares found refuge in Spanish Louisiana, mostly settling in the low country north of Arkansas Post. Later on, many of those same groups relocated again to the upper White River in the Ozarks. A few Cherokees moved into the area in the 1780s as well.³²

U.S. intentions toward American Indians first became clear in the Ohio Valley. The United States acquired that region after it won independence, and set it up as a federally-administered territory under the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. Thus, when American Indians and settlers clashed in the Ohio Valley, it became a signal challenge for federal American Indian and land policies. Following the Treaty of Greenville of 1795, the federal government began to coerce tribal leaders to sign treaties ceding American Indian title to the United States. In exchange for American Indian land cessions, the federal government promised the tribes annuities and protection if they would vacate their hunting grounds and move farther west. Jefferson claimed that land cessions were in the American Indians' best interest, for they removed American Indians from conflict with Euro-American settlers and created conditions whereby the federal government could teach them the "arts of civilization" and prepare them for eventual assimilation into the American Republic as equal citizens. Consistent with Enlightenment thought of the day, Jefferson perceived all American Indian peoples as belonging to a primitive race of hunters and gatherers. All human races, in this view, advanced by stages from a so-called "primitive state" or "state of savagery" through higher and higher levels of civilization. Having been cut off from the rest of humankind for eons, the thinking went, American Indians occupied a lower rung on the ladder of humankind's evolutionary development. In Jefferson's view, two centuries of European colonization of the New World left the U.S. government with no other choice than to raise American Indians from their primitive state or else they would be overwhelmed by the tide of white settlement and perhaps driven extinct. These ideas were lofty and idealistic on one hand, and dark and malevolent on the other. Jefferson's "civilization program" provided a humanitarian cover for what was truly a U.S. offensive to wrest control of the Ohio country. The offensive against American Indian tribes began more than a decade before the Louisiana Purchase, and it continued through the end of Jefferson's administration, by which time the U.S. had extinguished American Indian title in all of Ohio and parts of the future states of Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin.³³

Meanwhile, Jefferson initiated the "civilization program" for the many American Indian nations in the Louisiana Purchase starting with the Osages. In 1804, Jefferson

³² Rafferty, *The Ozarks*, 33-35.

³³ Roy M. Robbins, *Our Landed Heritage: The Public Domain 1776-1936* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1962), 20-22.

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invited the Osage nation to send a delegation to Washington. A dozen leaders went, headed by Chief Pawhuska. After meeting with the president, the party continued onward to Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York, a tour of eastern cities that Jefferson compared with Lewis and Clark’s contemporaneous tour of American Indian nations out west. The United States treated with the Osages before any other American Indian nation because the powerful Osages had aggressed against all its neighbors and held a lot of territory. The Osage nation, for its part, was beset by internal division as well as enemy tribes all around, so its leaders believed they needed U.S. friendship.³⁴

All of Jefferson’s initiatives surrounding the Louisiana Purchase were in one way or another directed toward making more native lands available for American settlement. Jefferson committed to exploring the West, arranging for Lewis and Clark to ascend the Missouri River and find a path to the Pacific while sending Lt. Zebulon Pike on a separate expedition to the southwest. Jefferson also sent three different civilian-led expeditions up the Red River in southern Louisiana: the first led by Dr. John Sibley, whom he appointed Indian agent; the second by William Dunbar, and the third by Thomas Freeman.³⁵ All of the expeditions were aimed at shoring up American territorial claims by right of discovery and gathering information about the indigenous peoples. Jefferson wanted knowledge about the tribes so that the tribes could be brought under U.S. control. He wanted Americans to replace British and French fur traders who were operating on American soil. The motivation was not so much to capture the fur trade for American enterprise as it was to encourage the tribes’ dependency on American goods and ultimately make them subservient to the American government. In particular, United States diplomacy in the West was aimed at preventing the British from uniting the western tribes in a war against the American Republic.³⁶

As the explorers returned and reported their discoveries, the idea formed that the area now encompassed by the state of Arkansas was rugged and lightly inhabited and therefore would make a good place of refuge for displaced eastern tribes. But first the Osages must be made amenable. With that strategy in view, U.S. officials met with the Osages at Fire Prairie, south of today’s Kansas City, in the fall of 1808 to arrange a treaty. First they established a government trading post or “factory” with which to secure trade relations. This became known as Fort Clark, later Fort Osage. Then they gathered some chiefs and drew up a treaty, promising American friendship and protection if the Osages would remain peaceful with all their neighbors. By this treaty of November 10, 1808, the Osages ceded all of their territory east of a line drawn due south from Fort

³⁴ Grant Foreman, *Indians and Pioneers: The Story of the American Southwest before 1830* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930), 36-37; DuVal, *The Native Ground*, 183-89, 200-05.

³⁵ Milford F. Allen, “Thomas Jefferson and the Louisiana-Arkansas Frontier,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 20, no. 1 (Spring 1961), 45-64.

³⁶ Theodore Catton, *Rainy Lake House: Twilight of Empire on the Northern Frontier* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2017), 41, 316.

Clark. The line stood about twenty-five miles east of the present state lines running north and south between Missouri and Kansas to the north and Arkansas and Oklahoma to the south; thus, by and large, the ceded area covered most of Missouri south of the Missouri River and most of Arkansas. The north-south line cut through today's Benton County a few miles west of Pea Ridge. The terms of the land cession were confusing and led to misunderstanding; the Osages retained the right to hunt on vacant, unsettled lands in the area, while any tribe "in amity with the United States" would not be allowed to hunt there. However, the United States held the right to assign portions of the tract to other tribes at a later time. Some of the Osage chiefs saw where this was leading and rejected those terms, but through patient diplomacy the American negotiators found other Osage chiefs who were willing to sign. Clermont and his band did not participate in the proceedings or recognize the treaty as legitimate. The Americans, in turn, treated Clermont's band as renegade.³⁷

Historians of the Ozark region have pointed to the Jefferson administration's actions in exploring the Louisiana Purchase and then securing the land cession from the Osages as a deliberate strategy of turning the Ozark Highlands and the Arkansas Valley into a "dumping ground" for displaced eastern tribes.³⁸ The U.S. policy of Indian removal was still inchoate at this time. Indian removal west of the Mississippi River became de facto policy as tribes were pushed out of the Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois country in the decades surrounding 1800, but the idea of an "Indian Territory" lying somewhere out on the Great Plains, where tribes would find a "permanent" place of refuge from white encroachment, still lay in the future. The harsh "dumping ground" label is apt in light of the fact that the displaced tribes were mostly left to their own devices when they moved into the ceded area. In increasing numbers, emigrant groups of Cherokees, Chickasaws, Delawares, Shawnees, and others left their tribal homelands in the eastern states and settled along the Arkansas and White River valleys, where they encroached on the Osages' hunting grounds with little or no U.S. protection or sanction. Conflicts arose between the Osages and the newcomers. The strife generally increased as the Osages were thrown more and more on the defensive.

White fur traders ventured into the area at their peril. A few lost their lives, but others suffered no harm and even chose to settle there. One American fur trader hunted in the area for a year and a half without encountering any opposition. John Shaw, a young adventurer from New England, set out from Cape Girardeau on the Mississippi River with two companions in the summer of 1809. They traversed the Ozark Plateau on a latitude a little north of the present Arkansas-Missouri state line, making their base camp somewhere in the headwaters of the White River, perhaps not too far from Pea Ridge.

³⁷ Charles J. Kappler, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*, Vol. 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), 95-96; Burns, *A History of the Osage People*, 154-56; Rollings, *The Osage*, 223-28.

³⁸ Rafferty, *The Ozarks*, 33.

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From the fall of 1809 through the following year and into the spring of 1811, the three men hunted beaver in what would become eastern Kansas, southwest Missouri, and northwest Arkansas. Surprisingly, they did not seem to have any conflict with the Osages though they did their trapping in the heart of the Osages' hunting grounds. Altogether they collected about fifty beaver and otter skins, 300 bear skins, and 800 gallons of bear oil. They managed to get their load of commodities down the White River by canoe, only to learn upon their arrival in New Orleans in 1812 that the United States, now on the brink of war with Great Britain, had instituted a trade embargo that crashed the market for what they had to sell.³⁹

Few historical records exist that provide specific details on Osage use or occupancy of the Pea Ridge area or other parts of the southern Ozarks. What is known about the Osages' use or occupancy of the southern Ozarks comes from written accounts of fur traders and explorers. Historian Willard H. Rollings, examining the records of the Arkansas Trading House for 1806-07, deduced that the Osages hunted in the southern Ozarks prolifically. Rollings computed that in the span of one year the Osages brought \$20,000 worth of furs down the Arkansas River. Assuming an average selling price of \$1.50 to \$2.00 per bear skin and \$.40 per deer hide, Rollings suggests that the total figure computes to a harvest of thousands of animals. Nor was this the whole extent of it, for the Osages traded at Fort Clark as well.⁴⁰

Yet despite their continuing prosperity in the early nineteenth century, the Osages were besieged. They had few friends and many enemies. Their time in the Ozarks was approaching an end.

The Coming of the Cherokees

The Cherokees who moved from their tribal homeland in the southern Appalachians to the other side of the Mississippi River in the 1780s through the 1820s are often called “emigrants” or “pioneers,” not the usual appellation given to American Indians on the frontier. That is because they parted with the main body of the Cherokee nation and traveled to the west in search of new lands remote from the pressures of encroaching white settlement. Moreover, when they arrived in their new home they established farmsteads that looked and functioned about the same as white farmsteads in the region. Still, the Cherokee migration was a distinct movement that differed in marked ways from the simultaneous movement of white settlers into the region. Emigration was a collective action taken by many groups of tribal members. More importantly, it was a political choice couched within Indian-white relations. With the U.S. government bent on removing the Cherokees (and other eastern tribes) to the other side of the Mississippi

³⁹ Col. John Shaw, “Shaw’s Narrative,” *Wisconsin State Historical Society Collections* 2, 1856 (Reprint, 1903), 201-02.

⁴⁰ Rollings, *The Osage*, 218-20.

River, emigration seemed like an act of liberation to some, an act of capitulation to others. Once established west of the Mississippi, the Cherokee emigrants were treated by the U.S. government as a western branch of the Cherokee nation; indeed, the U.S. government tried to persuade the remaining Cherokees to join them there. The history of the Cherokees in Arkansas is complicated because these emigrants continued to be affected by the internal politics and external pressures besetting the main body of the Cherokee nation in the southern Appalachians.

Cherokee Colonization West of the Mississippi

The Cherokee nation was divided in the Revolutionary War, a portion siding with the Americans and another portion with the British. The pro-British faction suffered the destruction of their homes and fled to Chickamauga Creek, where their settlements became known as the Lower Towns. These Cherokee were distinguished from the pro-American or Patriot faction in the Upper Towns. In 1782, the people of the Lower Towns relocated to the Tennessee River, where they were joined by many Loyalist refugees. After the Revolutionary War, these Cherokees of the Lower Towns continued to resist American subjugation and with their Creek allies fought numerous small engagements with white settlers on the Tennessee frontier. In 1785, the tribe made peace with the United States in the Treaty of Hopewell. This precipitated the first emigration to the west as a small contingent of Cherokees refused to accept the treaty and departed for Spanish Louisiana, making the journey by way of the Tennessee, Ohio, and Mississippi rivers. Settling on the upper St. Francis River in what is now the southeast corner of Missouri, these Cherokees remained in contact with the rest of the tribe and were joined by a trickle of other tribal members over the next two decades. The largest influx in this early period occurred in 1796, when a man named Connetoo and a band of followers arrived on the St. Francis River.⁴¹ William Treat, the factor at Arkansas Trading House, estimated there were 600 Cherokees living along the St. Francis River in 1806.⁴²

Meanwhile, factionalism within the tribe continued to prompt more emigration. A chief named Little Turkey managed to unite the tribe tenuously in the late 1790s but the Upper and Lower Towns took bribes from a U.S. agent for their support of land cessions. When the Upper Town chiefs learned of this betrayal, a group of them murdered one of the chiefs of the Lower Towns, a man named Doublehead. In response, the Lower Town chiefs threatened to make an agreement with the United States to exchange all of their

⁴¹ Robert A. Myers, "Cherokee Pioneers in Arkansas: The St. Francis Years, 1785-1813," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (Summer 1997), 130-34. Connetoo also went by the name of John Hill and was probably either a mixed-blood or a white man adopted into the tribe.

⁴² Rollings, *The Osage*, 236-37.

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part of the Cherokee lands for an equivalent tract in the west. This constituted the tribe’s first removal crisis.⁴³

In May 1808, President Jefferson received a delegation of Cherokees from the Upper and Lower Towns and listened to a recitation of the tribe’s grievances and internal differences. In a second communication in January 1809, Jefferson stated that the U.S. government was a “friend of both parties” – supportive of those who would stay and live by tilling the soil and those who would go west and continue to live by the hunt. Regarding the latter, Jefferson encouraged them to send an exploring party to the Louisiana Territory to decide upon a suitable place on the Arkansas or White rivers where they might relocate. Jefferson promised that the government would then arrange for a reservation of land there proportional to the amount of land that the tribe would cede in the east and the number of emigrants going west.⁴⁴

The promise of a reservation in the west was enough to trigger a much larger emigration – perhaps 1,100 people during the next two years.⁴⁵ One documented emigrant party was that of the Bowl and his sixty-three followers. In January 1810, the United States issued the Bowl a passport to lead his group down the Tennessee River in a dozen canoes and one flatboat. According to the passport, the Bowl intended to settle on either the Arkansas or White rivers. The Bowl was implicated with other chiefs in the bribery scandal of 1805 and may have feared the same fate as Doublehead if he remained in the Lower Towns. In any case, he stayed in Arkansas just a few years and then went to Spanish Texas.⁴⁶

It was customary to imagine the western Cherokees as a self-selecting group among the Cherokee people who were less interested in farming and more intent on preserving an orientation to the hunt than the rest of their tribe. That was Jefferson’s formulation, and the Cherokees sometimes stated it that way themselves. But the distinction was not as sharp as it sounded. The Cherokees who lived along the St. Francis River were farmers as well as hunters. They grew corn and raised cattle and hogs. They dressed in homespun clothes in more or less the style of their white neighbors and dwelt in houses of vernacular American design. Some owned stores. Some owned slaves. Like the eastern Cherokees, the western Cherokees assimilated black slavery into their culture during this period. Unlike the eastern Cherokees, the western Cherokees remained avid hunters of big game, and their hunting excursions probably took them as far west as the

⁴³ William G. McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries, 1789-1839* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 31.

⁴⁴ Thomas Jefferson to Deputies of the upper and lower towns, January 9, 1809, in *The New American State Papers, Indian Affairs* 6 (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1972), 201; Charles C. Royce, “The Cherokee Nation of Indians,” *Fifth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution 1883-84* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1887), 203-04.

⁴⁵ McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries*, 31.

⁴⁶ Myers, “Cherokee Pioneers in Arkansas,” 137.

upper White River. By 1811, the Cherokee emigrants could boast to their kinsmen back home that they had plenty to eat in their new home and were prospering there. But the desired sanctuary from white settlers still eluded them. Hundreds of white settlers were squatting on lands that they had settled, and bad men among the whites were stealing their livestock and committing other depredations against them. The whites, for their part, petitioned the secretary of war for protection from the Cherokees after one individual was murdered and disemboweled in an apparent highway robbery.⁴⁷

In 1812, the Cherokees on the St. Francis River suddenly left. A major factor in their departure was the occurrence of three massive earthquakes that shook the St. Francis River valley in the winter of 1811-1812. While the catastrophe caused few deaths, the earthquakes displaced many people from their homes as land elevations were altered and a large swamp was formed where none had existed before.⁴⁸ Many Cherokees took the earthquakes as a doomsday sign or even the work of Tecumseh, a Shawnee leader who had been warning tribes up and down the Mississippi Valley of the need to renounce American cultural influences and return to the old ways. In June 1812, a Cherokee prophet named the Swan, claiming to have been visited by a messenger of the Great Spirit, warned of more disaster if the people remained on the St. Francis River. An American naturalist, Louis Bringier, witnessed the Swan make a speech in the Cherokee settlement of Crowtown. Reporting on the event five years later, Bringier stated that the prophecy so rattled the Cherokees that in two or three months the place was abandoned. Leaving their farms and cattle behind, the Cherokees moved west to the White and Arkansas rivers. According to Bringier, those who went to the White River soon moved onward to the Arkansas. By this time, they may have numbered around 2,000.⁴⁹

In the Arkansas Valley the Cherokees found fertile land for farming and relative seclusion from white settlers. They had also situated themselves on a main route to bison country (by continuing up the Arkansas River), and nearer to good hunting grounds in the Ozarks, which they could approach by any number of routes leading north from the Arkansas Valley. However, these beneficial features brought them into further conflict with the Osages. And they were still not free from occasional depredations at the hands of lawless whites in the neighborhood.

⁴⁷ U.S. Congress. House. *Cherokee Indians: Memorial of John Rogers, Principal Chief and James Carey and Thomas L. Rodgers*. 28th Cong., 1st sess., H. Doc No. 235, at 3-4 (1844); Myers, "Cherokee Pioneers in Arkansas," 152-53. For an account of a westering and slave-owning Cherokee family, see Tiya Miles, *Ties that bind: The Story of an Afro-Cherokee family in slavery and freedom* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015).

⁴⁸ Wayne et al., *Arkansas*, 112.

⁴⁹ Myers, "Cherokee Pioneers in Arkansas," 154-55; Blevins, *A History of the Ozarks: Vol. 1, The Old Ozarks*, 48; L. Bringier, "Notices of the Geology, Mineralogy, Topography, Productions, and Aboriginal Inhabitants of the Regions around the Mississippi and its confluent waters," *American Journal of Science and Arts* 3 (1821), 41.

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Partly to assist the western Cherokees in making peace with the Osages and partly to mediate their troubles with the whites, the U.S. government sent an Indian agent, Maj. William H. Lovely to serve them. In July 1813, Lovely established his agency beside a huge orchard of mature plum trees on the site of an abandoned Osage village near today's Fort Smith. Already settled around that site were a few immigrant Choctaws, Delawares, Miamis, Pawnees, and Quapaws. Besides the immigrant American Indians, there were a few hundred white “squatters” residing in hamlets and isolated farmsteads throughout the country – so-called because they were unauthorized by the U.S. government to enter or acquire title to the lands they occupied. Lovely had disparaging words for these squatters, calling them “the worst banditi” and asserting that all but a few had “made their escape to this Country guilty of the most horrid crimes.” The whites stole from the American Indians, Lovely reported, and they slaughtered bison and bears only for the tallow and oil. Lovely named two hunters, Scull and Louismore, who were of French and Quapaw extraction, as the most notorious offenders.⁵⁰

A few years after the Cherokees arrived on the Arkansas River, they were joined by yet another wave of emigrants from the tribal homeland in the southern Appalachians. Once again, the emigrant wave was precipitated by a political crisis in the east. In September 1816 and June 1817, Maj. Gen. Andrew Jackson and other U.S. officials met with a cabal of Cherokee chiefs. Using threats and bribery they obtained two treaties with devastating consequences for the Cherokee nation. In the first, the Cherokees ceded 2.2 million acres in Tennessee. In the second, the Cherokees ceded additional lands in Tennessee, Georgia, and Alabama. In the second treaty the United States pledged to establish a reservation for the Cherokees in Arkansas between the Arkansas and White rivers, matching the ceded area acre for acre. Treaty annuities were to be divided proportionally between the eastern and western Cherokees based on a census to be taken of both populations one year hence. This gave eastern Cherokees an opportunity to move west and be enumerated in their new home. Ostensibly the second treaty was supposed to fulfill the terms that Jefferson had presented so benignly in 1809, but in reality it involved coercive measures that plunged the tribe into another removal crisis.⁵¹

With so much riding on the population split between eastern and western Cherokees, the numbers were soon in dispute. The Cherokee council maintained that no more than 3,000 to 3,500 of their tribesmen were in Arkansas or enrolled to go there, and reported that 12,000 to 13,000 would remain in the east. Tennessee Governor Joseph McMinn reported that 5,291 Cherokees resided in Arkansas or were enrolled to go,

⁵⁰ Foreman, *Indians and Pioneers*, 38-39.

⁵¹ Kappler, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*, Vol. 2, 133-34, 140-44; McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries*, 107-08.

leaving about 10,000 Cherokees in the east. The Cherokees finally accepted the U.S. government's figures as a basis for apportioning tribal annuities.⁵²

Meanwhile, hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Cherokees who at first enrolled to emigrate later refused to leave. The U.S. agent, Return J. Meigs, responding to official pressure, registered many more people than were willing to make the journey. The trip to Arkansas took from sixty to seventy days and was fraught with danger. White settlers were known to plunder the eastern Cherokees as they made their way west. The flatboats that the U.S. government procured for the voyage down the Tennessee, Ohio, and Mississippi rivers were sometimes leaky and rotten. Emigrant parties had been known to run out of provisions along the way.⁵³

Lovely's Purchase and the Cherokee Reservation in Arkansas

The new emigration strengthened the western Cherokees' position in relation to the Osages, but the Cherokees' hamlets and farmsteads that were now strung along the Arkansas and White River valleys still faced incessant attacks by Osage raiders. The Cherokees sometimes made preemptive attacks on the Osages as well. In the preceding year, Maj. Lovely brought the chiefs of the Osages and Cherokees together in council and offered to settle all U.S. claims for Osage depredations in return for a further cession of territory by the Osages that would serve as a buffer between the two tribes. The tract covered an area north of the Arkansas River and east of the Verdigris River. Clermont agreed to it, but the two peoples soon resumed fighting in spite of the land settlement. Lovely, who was an old man, died in February 1817 as his peacemaking effort was imploding. Lovely had exceeded his authority in negotiating a land cession, so the result of his personal diplomacy became known dubiously as Lovely's Purchase. As the land settlement failed to bring peace and the U.S. Indian agent was now dead, the Cherokee chiefs decided to take matters into their own hands and mount a war of extermination against their Osage enemies. Raising an army of about 600 men, composed of Cherokees, Shawnees, Delawares, Quapaws, and a few whites, the Cherokee-led force advanced up the Grand River to attack the largest of the Osage villages. Accounts varied as to what happened next. Some accounts stated that the Osage men of warrior age were away hunting while the women, children, and old men were left in the village; others stated that the warriors fled to the hills and the women, children, and old men hid in a cave. The accounts agreed that the Cherokees and their allies slaughtered the defenseless Osages whom they found there and then burned the village.⁵⁴

⁵² McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries*, 120.

⁵³ Foreman, *Indians and Pioneers*, 75.

⁵⁴ Catton, *Rainy Lake House*, 58.

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After this massacre, and in the face of escalating tensions over the doubtful legitimacy of Lovely’s Purchase, the U.S. Army sent a force with Maj. Stephen H. Long to establish a military post in the area to enforce a peace settlement. The army cantonment became Fort Smith. One year later, in 1818, U.S. officials made a treaty with the Osages that essentially replicated Lovely’s Purchase and put the force of a treaty behind it. In a separate treaty that pledged peace between the Osages and the Cherokees, the Cherokees believed they were given hunting privileges and safe passage through an outlet to the western plains. This understanding, too, soon fell apart. Despite efforts on all sides, the lands remained contested.⁵⁵

In the meantime, the western Cherokees were waiting to get their long-promised reservation west of the Mississippi River in Arkansas. The reservation boundaries were slow to take shape. As stipulated in the 1817 treaty, the eastern boundary began at Point Remove, or Budwell’s old place, on the Arkansas River, and followed a straight line in a northeast direction to Chataunga Mountain, or the hill above Shield’s Ferry, on the White River. After one failed effort, the U.S. General Land Office accomplished this survey in 1819, clearing the way for the removal of white squatters on the Cherokee side of the line between the Arkansas and White rivers. But the western limits of the reservation were left undetermined to allow more time for eastern Cherokees to remove to the west, because the reservation was to include enough area to match further cessions in the east “acre for acre” and provide a quantity of land in “just proportion” to the number of emigrants. Recognizing the open-ended and unsatisfying nature of this arrangement, the eastern Cherokees made another cession by treaty in 1819 “in final adjustment” of the terms contained in the treaty of 1817.⁵⁶ Still the United States did not complete the western boundary of the Cherokee reservation in Arkansas until 1825, when it ran a line from Table Rock Bluff on the Arkansas River in a northeast direction to the mouth of the Little North Fork on the White River. The reservation formed a rough parallelogram lying athwart the Ozark Highlands to the east of Pea Ridge.⁵⁷

Lovely County and Cherokee Removal in Arkansas

As resolution of both the Cherokee reservation in Arkansas and the Cherokees’ rights in Lovely’s Purchase dragged on, it became more and more evident that the tide of white settlement was as much a menace to the Cherokees as the Osages were. The Cherokees appealed to the U.S. government to evict whites who were squatting on

⁵⁵ Foreman, *Indians and Pioneers*, 82; Burns, *A History of the Osage People*, 158-160, 168; Rollings, *The Osage*, 244.

⁵⁶ H. Doc. No. 235, at 6 (1844).

⁵⁷ Royce, “The Cherokee Nation of Indians,” 245, 251.

Cherokee lands, but they had little success. The whites, meanwhile, clamored for the government to open those same lands to white settlement. The white population was growing all the time. The 1810 census counted 1,062 white people in the Arkansas district; the 1820 census enumerated 14,273. While both censuses probably undercounted the actual population by a considerable amount, the more than ten-fold increase was telling. In 1818, the whites in Arkansas scored a huge victory for white settlement when they petitioned Congress and succeeded in their goal of securing a major land cession from the Quapaws. The Quapaws gave up all land south of the Arkansas River for a small reservation in the Arkansas Valley. In 1819, Arkansas Territory was formed out of the Missouri Territory in order to smooth Missouri's path to statehood. The new territorial government gave the white population a political voice that they had not had before. Now that nearly all the Quapaws' lands were secured, the whites would soon seek Cherokee removal. But first they turned their attention to Lovely's Purchase in the northwest corner of Arkansas Territory, demanding that it be opened to settlement.⁵⁸

By the 1820s, the western Cherokees in Arkansas faced pressure similar to what the eastern Cherokees in Georgia had been contending with for more than a generation. Once characterized as the sector of the Cherokee people who preferred hunting to farming, now they came under intense pressure to show they were "civilized." In fact, most of them already had individual farms and dwellings that were practically indistinguishable from the whites' habitations. But now they were pressed to demonstrate that they were as capable as the whites of governing their affairs. In 1824, the western Cherokees adopted a written constitution and code of laws. They formed a government with three separate branches like the federal government. The executive branch was headed by a principal chief and an assistant principal chief. They had their own mounted police force to keep law and order: three units of light horse, each numbering ten men led by a captain. Principal Chief John Jolly welcomed the establishment of a Protestant mission in the Arkansas Valley even though the church and school would be a threat to Cherokee traditions.⁵⁹

In 1826, Arkansas citizens pressed the government to survey townships in Lovely's Purchase as a step toward opening the area to settlement. An order was given to start the survey, but the Cherokees protested and blocked the action through the intervention of their agent, Maj. Edward W. DuVal. The Arkansas citizens responded by urging their territorial government to form a new county from the area. The territorial

⁵⁸ Wayne et al., *Arkansas*, 123-25; Foreman, *Indians and Pioneers*, 159-74; W. David Baird, *The Quapaw Indians: A History of the Downstream People* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980), 53-60; Ina Gabler, "Lovely's Purchase and Lovely County," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 19, no. 1 (Spring 1960), 33-34.

⁵⁹ H. Doc. No. 235, at 7 (1844); Edwin James, "Account of an Expedition from Pittsburgh to the Rocky Mountains Performed in the Years 1819, 1820," [1823], in *Early Western Travels, Vol. 4*, edited by Reuben Gold Thwaites (New York: AMS Press, Inc, 1966), 17, 23-24; Morse, *A Report to the Secretary of War of the United States on Indian Affairs*, 255; Foreman, *Indians and Pioneers*, 92-94.

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assembly obliged, creating Lovely County by an act of October 13, 1827. In fact, the area of Lovely County took in more than Lovely’s Purchase, adding a wedge of territory that took it up to the Missouri state line. That wedge more or less covered the western two-thirds of what would become Benton County. Pea Ridge and the eastern third of Benton County lay just east of Lovely County’s northeast corner (Map 3).⁶⁰

The provocative action taken by the territorial assembly had the desired effect. The western Cherokees sent a delegation to Washington to get the territorial law rescinded, but Secretary of War James Barbour had another idea. He drew a compromise line down the middle of Lovely County and proposed that it form a new boundary line between Arkansas Territory and the unorganized Indian Territory. To the west of that line, the Cherokees would have a reservation with the desired outlet to go on hunts on the western plains. To the east of that line, the land would be opened to white settlement. As part of the bargain, the western Cherokees would give up their reservation in Arkansas. Barbour’s plan was put into a treaty that was submitted to the western Cherokees in April 1828 and approved by a western Cherokee delegation on May 6, 1828. The Senate ratified the treaty on May 28, 1828, thereby establishing the western boundary of Arkansas between Missouri and Fort Smith. The Arkansas territorial legislature followed up by passing a law on October 17, 1828 that extinguished Lovely County and formed Washington County in the new northwest corner of the territory.⁶¹

The movement of Cherokees out of Arkansas got under way in 1829. Most left homes in the Arkansas Valley and went up the valley not far past Fort Smith. Places chosen for resettlement included the banks of the tributary stream Saliseau, a community now called Sallisaw, the east bank of the Illinois River about a mile above the mouth, and both sides of the Arkansas River above the mouth of the Canadian River.⁶²

A few small parties of Cherokees in the east were prompted by the treaty to remove from Georgia and join the western Cherokees on their new reservation. The government produced twenty-six flatboats to take them on their journey by water all the way to the new Cherokee Agency above Fort Smith. A few eastern Cherokees, or white men with Cherokee families, traveled west on a reconnaissance. Apparently liking what they saw, they returned to the east and tried to persuade more to remove. However, the eastern Cherokees were now overwhelmingly opposed to removal, so the scouts found few people to join them.⁶³

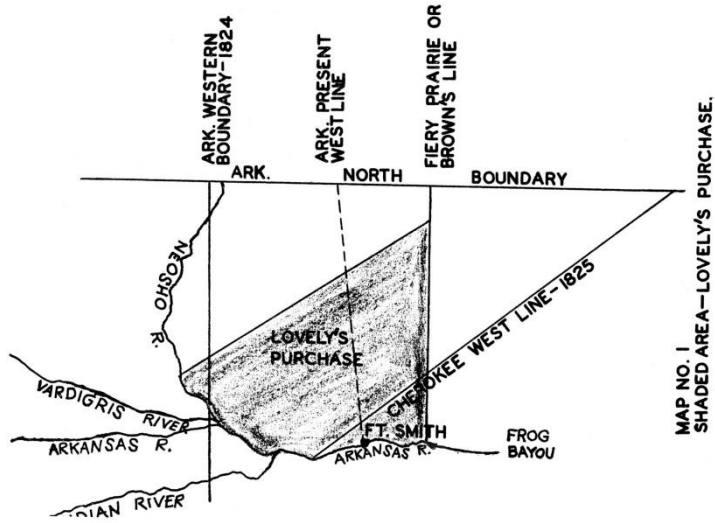
⁶⁰ Gabler, “Lovely’s Purchase and Lovely County,” 34-35.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 35-39.

⁶² Foreman, *Indians and Pioneers*, 263-66.

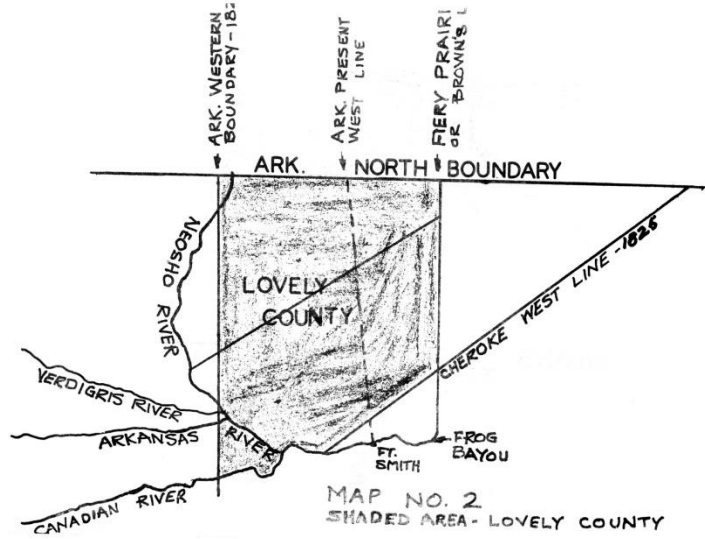
⁶³ *Ibid*, 263-66.

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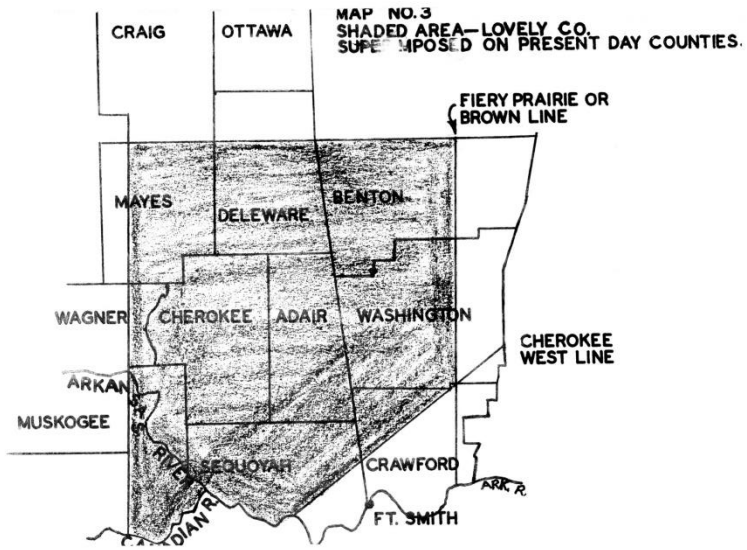


MAP NO. 1
SHADED AREA - LOVELY'S PURCHASE.

Map 3. Evolution from
Lovely's Purchase to
Lovely County.
Source: Gabler.



MAP NO. 2
SHADED AREA - LOVELY COUNTY



MAP NO. 3
SHADED AREA - LOVELY CO.
SUPERIMPOSED ON PRESENT DAY COUNTIES.

Background to the Trail of Tears

The Cherokee Nation’s third and final removal crisis began with the election of Andrew Jackson as president in 1828. A military hero and Indian fighter by background, and a U.S. senator from Tennessee who consolidated his Democratic political support along sectional lines in the South and West, Jackson was a strong advocate for Indian removal. His election boded ill for the Cherokees’ strenuous efforts to resist removal and remain in their homeland. Within one year of taking office, Jackson sent a message to Congress calling for legislation to compel the southeastern tribes to remove to lands west of the Mississippi River.

The state of Georgia soon tested Jackson’s commitment to Indian removal as well as his stand on states’ rights. Eleven days after Jackson sent his message to Congress, the state legislature passed a slew of laws aimed at removing the Cherokees from the state and taking over their lands. One law made it a criminal offense to oppose removal. Another banned the Cherokees’ institutions of self-governance. Another annulled Cherokee land title and made five new counties from the Cherokees’ land base. The discovery of gold in the area provided a pretext for the state to take swift action to prevent bloodshed as white gold seekers invaded the Cherokees’ lands. Another state law prohibited Cherokees from digging for gold or testifying against whites in court or entering contracts with whites unless witnessed by two whites. When bloody conflict did threaten to break out, Jackson sent federal troops. But he withdrew them when the Georgia Guard was sent to maintain order.⁶⁴

The following May 1830, Congress enacted the Indian removal bill sought by the Jackson administration. The law gave the president broad powers to effect the removal of any tribe in the east to a new reservation west of the Mississippi River. For each tribe to be removed, it authorized the president to compensate the tribe for the appraised value of property tribal members would leave behind, to provide assistance for the tribe’s westward movement, to place a federal superintendency over the tribe in its new place of residency, and to protect the tribe from interference by other tribes or persons.⁶⁵ The law was controversial with the American public and bitterly opposed by missionary groups, but the Jackson administration was undeterred. It was soon in negotiations with all of the Five Civilized Tribes: the Cherokees, Choctaws, Chickasaws, Creeks, and Seminoles – starting with the Choctaws that fall. By 1832, the administration had treaties with all the tribes except the Cherokees.⁶⁶

Early in this crisis the Cherokees stood firm against removal and rallied around their leader, Chief John Ross, whose message to the tribe was strength through unity.

⁶⁴ Grace Steele Woodward, *The Cherokees* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), 158-59.

⁶⁵ Act of May 28, 1830, P. L. 21-148, 4 Stat. 411.

⁶⁶ Woodward, *The Cherokees*, 161.

However, by 1832, a pro-treaty faction emerged headed by Major Ridge and his son John Ridge, and Major Ridge's nephews Elias Boudinot and Stand Watie. All prominent mixed-blood chiefs (as was Ross), these men contended that the tribe should face the inevitable rather than prolong the agony and strife of attempting to remain in the east. Although the pro-treaty or Ridge party was unable to recruit more than about ten percent of chiefs to their side, the party leaders entered secret negotiations with the Jackson administration and the Georgia governor's office to obtain the desired treaty. The result was the Treaty of New Echota, concluded by U.S. officials and a small, non-representative minority of the tribe in December 1835, and ratified by the U.S. Senate on May 23, 1836. The tribe had two years from the date of ratification to effect its removal.⁶⁷

Many Trails of Tears

The removal of the five largest tribes from the Southern states was a massive forced migration. Although the United States government was committed to assisting the emigrants on their journeys, it never provided them with adequate resources. Dozens of separate expeditions of Cherokees, Choctaws, Chickasaws, Creeks, and Seminoles set out from various starting points in Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida and went by various routes to the Indian Territory, some by water transport, some overland. Inevitably, given the racial attitudes that compelled the tribes to leave their homes, the removal unfolded as a humanitarian disaster. By the time the Cherokees were drawn into this exodus, they saw what calamities had befallen the other tribes.

The Choctaws were the first to go. From their homeland in Mississippi, the first wave of Choctaws, about 4,000 people, journeyed by wagon and steamboat to the Indian Territory in the fall and winter of 1831. As the Choctaw removal was the first, the army underestimated how complex the movement of so many people would be. Organizers in Washington had no grasp of how rugged the conditions for travel across Mississippi and Arkansas were. Civilian agents on the ground failed in their tasks owing to slow communications and an overall lack of coordination, as well as the federal government's constant demands for economy. The choice to set out in the fall was made to avoid traveling in the heat of summer when heat exhaustion and summer fever would have deadly effect. But as the movement of thousands of people fell behind schedule, winter set in and several Choctaw parties became stranded for weeks in subfreezing temperatures at Arkansas Post awaiting steamboat transport up the Arkansas River. After this fiasco the army relieved all civilian agents and took over complete control of the

⁶⁷ McLoughlin, *Cherokees and Missionaries*, 307-08; Woodward, *The Cherokees*, 174-91; Dee Brown, "The Trail of Tears," *American History Illustrated* (June 1972), 34-35.

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operation, and the second and third waves of Choctaws followed in 1832 and 1833 with fewer problems.⁶⁸

The Chickasaws ceded their lands in Mississippi in 1832 but they did not immediately remove. By the terms of the treaty each Chickasaw adult male received an allotment of land for himself and his family, which was to be sold to raise money for their journey and resettlement in the Indian Territory. About four-fifths of the Chickasaw tribe eventually enrolled for removal in 1837. They numbered 4,914 together with 1,156 enslaved persons. The Chickasaw Trail of Tears ended in Choctaw territory, as the U.S. government had not yet completed arrangements for a Chickasaw reservation to be carved from the Choctaw country. There, the emigrants languished in refugee camps for several years, ill-treated by their reluctant hosts the Choctaws and under threat from hostile western tribes, until the Chickasaw and Choctaw leaders were finally able to agree on a land settlement.⁶⁹

The Creeks, like the Chickasaws, made a treaty in 1832 that ceded their tribal land in Alabama while providing for individual land allotments for each adult male and his family. Whites in Alabama were not satisfied to see the Creeks remain on their individual land allotments and tried to defraud allottees or drive them off their allotments. The Creeks mostly retreated out of Alabama onto Cherokee lands in Georgia, where they were harassed by the Georgia militia. War broke out between Creeks and whites in Georgia in 1836. That led to the capture and forced removal of some 800 warriors who were marched and transported in chains under military guard all the way to the Indian Territory. Accompanied by their families, this group numbered about 2,500 people altogether. The rest of the embattled Creeks, numbering about 12,000, soon followed. One young survivor of the exodus, Sallie Farney, told her story of the Creek (Muskogee) Trail of Tears to her granddaughter Mary Hill, who recited it to an interviewer in 1937:

The command for a removal came unexpectedly upon most of us. There was the time that we noticed that several overloaded wagons were passing our home, yet we did not grasp the meaning. However, it was not long until we found out the reason. Wagons stopped at our home and the men in charge commanded us to gather what few belongings could be crowded into

⁶⁸ Grant Foreman, *Indian Removal: The Emigration of the Five Civilized Tribes of Indians*, new edition (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1953), 44-49; Muriel H. Wright, “The Removal of the Choctaws to the Indian Territory 1830-1833,” *Chronicles of Oklahoma* 6, no. 2 (June 1928), 9-10; Ethan Davis, “An Administrative Trail of Tears: Indian Removal,” *American Journal of Legal History* 50, no. 1 (January 2010), 83-84; Francis Paul Prucha, *The Great Father: The United States Government and the American Indians*, abridged edition (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 79-80; Catton, *A Many-Storied Place*, 170-75.

⁶⁹ Prucha, *The Great Father*, 82; “Chickasaw,” *The Encyclopedia of Oklahoma Culture*, at <https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry.php?entry=CH033>.

the wagons. We were to be taken away and leave our homes never to return. This was just the beginning of much weeping and heartaches.

We were taken to a crudely built stockade and joined others of our tribe. We were kept penned up until everything was ready before we started on the march. Even here, there was the awful silence that showed the heartaches and sorrow at being taken from the homes and even separation from loved ones.

Most of us had not foreseen such a move in this fashion or at this time. We were not prepared, but times became more horrible after the real journey was begun.

Many fell by the wayside, too faint with hunger or too weak to keep up with the rest. The aged, feeble, and sick were left to perish by the wayside. A crude bed was quickly prepared for these sick and weary people. Only a bowl of water was left within reach, thus they were left to suffer and die alone.

The little children piteously cried day after day from weariness, hunger, and illness. Many of the men, women, and even the children were forced to walk. They were once happy children - left without mother and father - crying could not bring consolation to those children.

The sick and the births required attention, yet there was no time or no one was prepared. Death stalked at all hours, but there was no time for proper burying of ceremonies. My grandfather died on this trip. A hastily cut piece of cotton wood contained his body. The open ends were closed up and this was placed along a creek. This was not the only time this manner of burying was held nor the only way. Some of the dead were placed between two logs and quickly covered with shrubs, some were shoved under the thickets, and some were not even buried but left by the wayside.

There were several men carrying reeds with eagle feathers attached to the end. These men continually circled around the wagon trains or during the night around the camps. These men said the reeds with feathers had been treated by the medicine men. Their purpose was to encourage the Indians not to be heavy hearted nor to think of the homes that had been left.

Some of the older women sang songs that meant, "We are going to our homes and land; there is One who is above and ever watches over us; He will care for us." This song was to encourage the ever downhearted Muskogees.

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Many a family was forced to abandon their few possessions and necessities when their horses died or were too weary to pull the heavy wagons any further.⁷⁰

The Seminoles made a treaty in 1832 but their consent to remove was made on condition that select members of the tribe would be given an advance inspection of the reservation in Indian Territory and find it acceptable. U.S. officials accompanied a Seminole delegation to the reservation and manipulated the delegation into approving what they saw. When the tribe recognized the chicanery and balked at removing, the U.S. government insisted that the tribe was bound to remove by the treaty. The impasse led to the Second Seminole War (the first one having been waged by Gen. Andrew Jackson in 1818). The war dragged on until 1842. In its course, some 2,833 Seminoles surrendered and were relocated to the reservation in Indian Territory.⁷¹

The Cherokee removal began much earlier, as we have seen, with westward migrations to the Arkansas country beginning in the 1780s and continuing through the 1820s. Perhaps 4,000 Cherokees joined in that first stage of removal that occurred before the Treaty of New Echota over the preceding half century. After the Treaty of New Echota was ratified, the next contingent to go consisted of the so-called Treaty party Cherokees. These were the Cherokees who were inclined to follow the advice of John Ridge, cooperate with the U.S. government, and move according to the provisions in the treaty. They emigrated in three main parties, the first by an overland route, the second by water, and the third by overland again. Altogether, about 2,000 Treaty party Cherokees removed during the two-year window allowed by the treaty. Most went in the year 1837. The final stage of Cherokee removal began after the two-year window closed. At this stage there were 15,000 or more Cherokees remaining in the east. Resisting removal to the last and fearing for their lives when they contemplated the dangerous and brutal journey, they were moved out of their homeland at the point of a bayonet. A total of seventeen emigrant parties made the exodus in this final stage: four by water and thirteen by land. They went in the years 1838 and 1839.⁷²

The Cherokee Trail of Tears

For most Cherokees the Trail of Tears was an overland journey. While some rode on horseback and some rode in wagons, many walked. For the great majority, the journey

⁷⁰ Lorrie Montiero, ed., *Family Stories from the Trail of Tears*, American Native Press Archives and Sequoyah Research Center, at <https://ualrexhibits.org/tribalwriters/artifacts/Family-Stories-Trail-of-Tears.html#TheMigration>.

⁷¹ Prucha, *The Great Father*, 84-85.

⁷² Woodward, *The Cherokees*, 195; John Ehle, *Trail of Tears: The Rise and Fall of the Cherokee Nation* (New York: Doubleday, 1988), 322.

began in the fall of 1838 and took around five months to complete. The emigrant parties were called “detachments.” Many if not most of the detachments followed a route that went across Pea Ridge. Elkhorn Tavern, known then as Ruddick’s place, was one of the last places used for camp and resupply on the long trek. This final section of the chapter presents an overview of the Cherokee Trail of Tears experience with close attention to what is known about the experience on the final stage of the journey through northwest Arkansas.

The Treaty-party Emigration

The first party to depart in 1837 was not representative of others to follow. It was composed of the wealthiest Cherokees, all belonging to the pro-treaty faction, who were inclined to make their own way without government supervision and cash in on the “allowance for removal and subsistence” that the treaty offered for such pioneers. (As Georgia Governor Wilson Lumpkin cynically remarked about this arrangement: “The policy of making prudent advances to the wealthy and intelligent, has gone far to remove opposition to the treaty among the most influential.”) Numbering around 600, they gathered at New Echota with their many slaves, their horses and oxen, and their valuables loaded in wagons. Whites who witnessed the procession said they traveled in the manner of white aristocrats, being sharply dressed, amply provisioned, and mounted on strong horses. This party traveled at twice the speed of later overland parties. Departing in January 1837, they took the overland route through Kentucky, the southern tip of Illinois, Missouri, and the northwest corner of Arkansas, arriving in the Indian Territory in time to put in their spring crops.⁷³

For the mass of Cherokees who were to remove, the U.S. government was to furnish “steamboats and baggage wagons” for transport. Each detachment was to have a “physician well supplied with medicines.” At the end of the journey each family would receive subsistence for one year in the new country. Any Cherokee family who wanted to opt out of the government assistance and provide their own subsistence could apply for a “commutation.” For each commutation, the family head would receive \$20 per family member on the journey and \$33 per family member in lieu of one year’s rations. Some Cherokees received commutations even as they traveled with an official detachment. They were “commuters” who went with the group without drawing government rations.⁷⁴

The first party to set out under the government’s supervision was made up of 466 Cherokees, about half of whom were children, and five Creeks. Major Ridge was in this party. Their agent in charge, or “conductor,” was Dr. John S. Young, and the physician was Dr. C. Lillybridge. There were also three interpreters assigned to the outfit. The

⁷³ Foreman, *Indian Removal*, 273; Woodward, *The Cherokees*, 195.

⁷⁴ Kappler, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties*, Vol. 2, 443. See also Foreman, *Indian Removal*, 49.

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Young party departed from Ross’s Landing on March 3, 1837, aboard eleven flatboats. Their journey by water transport took three and a half weeks, which was about six times faster than the typical overland trip, but the conditions were miserable and dangerous. Crowded together for day after day, the party suffered much sickness. They were exposed to chill winds and rain. The boats themselves were terrifying, springing leaks, colliding with snags, and running aground on sandbars. Moreover, the Cherokees attached mystical powers to rivers and they drew their own conclusions whenever the river pilots accidentally steered the boats into danger. Word of the miseries and hazards of the river voyage was carried back to the homeland, reinforcing the people’s inclination to go overland instead of by water.⁷⁵

The next party to emigrate departed on October 14, 1837 from Cherokee Agency in Tennessee with 365 enrolled Cherokees. An overland party, it was conducted by B. B. Cannon. Included in the detachment were at least 43 “commuters.”⁷⁶ Most of the commuters had families; five families had enslaved persons with them. Altogether, the commutations covered 171 Cherokees and 39 enslaved persons. As the “commuters” comprised nearly half of the total detachment, it would appear that this group was relatively well-to-do. One of the leaders, James Starr, was an erstwhile delegate to Washington. As the detachment crossed the Tennessee River at Nashville it paused while Starr “and others of the emigrants visited Genl. Jackson who was at Nashville.” (Andrew Jackson had recently completed his two terms in the White House, and his Democratic successor, Martin Van Buren, was now president.)⁷⁷

It bears noting that this Cannon detachment is perhaps the best documented expedition of any that went on the Cherokee Trail of Tears. It was the last detachment overseen by the federal government, and as such the official records of the detachment are preserved in the National Archives. The route taken is clearly indicated in the expedition’s logbook. Overnight stops and sources of resupply can be traced in the record of expenses made along the way. Later detachments’ official records, which mostly ended up in the custody of the Cherokee Nation, were not as well preserved. A few records of later detachments are found in the papers of Chief John Ross, and historians maintain hope that additional records will be found scattered in various historical archives. The Oklahoma Chapter of the Trail of Tears Association sponsored a team of researchers who made three week-long forays to the National Archives in 2006, 2007, and 2008 in search of more records. They found numerous records relating to the entire

⁷⁵ Foreman, *Indian Removal*, 273-75; Woodward, *The Cherokees*, 195-96; Ehle, *Trail of Tears*, 322.

⁷⁶ “Who (perhaps) went with the Cannon contingent?” copy of research notes provided to the author by Daniel Littlefield, Sequoyah Research Center.

⁷⁷ Foreman, *Indian Removal*, 281; Woodward, *The Cherokees*, 169, 196.

Cherokee removal episode but few connected to specific detachments. The records of the Cannon detachment are still unmatched.⁷⁸

The Cannon detachment took a route that numerous other detachments followed afterwards. Starting from the Cherokee Agency, the party crossed Cumberland Mountain; traveled northwestward through Tennessee by way of McMinnville, Murfreesboro, and Nashville; traversed the western tip of Kentucky by way of Graves, Hopkinsville, and Salem; crossed the Ohio River on Berry's Ferry at Golconda, Illinois; went across the southern tip of Illinois through Jonesboro; crossed the Mississippi River near Cape Girardeau, Missouri; traveled across the state of Missouri via Jackson, Farmington, Caledonia, the Iron Works on the Marmac, Waynesville, and Springfield; and took the Missouri state road leading toward Fayetteville, Arkansas.⁷⁹

By the time the party entered Arkansas it had suffered a major run of illness and members were feeling the effects of exposure as winter came on. The crossings of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers took a few days apiece and the wait on each side of the river was exhausting in cold weather. So many of the party got sick that the attending physician, G. S. Townsend, insisted on calling a halt on November 25, which lasted for ten days as the sickness ran through two thirds of the expedition members. By the time the expedition resumed the journey and entered northwest Arkansas, it faced bitter cold as well as more cases of illness. Fifteen expedition members died from illness and exposure. Eleven of the victims were children and eight were under the age of two.⁸⁰

The expedition logbook recorded that the party was often "detained on account of sickness." Many mornings began with the burial of a deceased. Crossing northwest Arkansas, the expedition typically started out at 8:00 or 9:00 a.m. and marched until 3:00 or 3:30 p.m., when Cannon called a halt and issued corn, cornmeal, sometimes a ration of beef or pork, and fodder for the animals. Generally they covered about fifteen miles per day.⁸¹

The Cannon party reached Ruddick's place on December 23, 1837. The log recorded on that day:

⁷⁸ "Manuscript Collection: John Ross Papers," Gilcrease Museum, at <https://collections.gilcrease.org/finding-aid/manuscript-collection-john-ross-papers>; Marybelle Chase, "Research Project of the Oklahoma Chapter of the Trail of Tears Association: Research at the National Archives, College Park, Maryland and Washington D.C." at <https://www.nps.gov/trte/learn/historyculture/trailwide-research.htm>; consultation with Daniel Littlefield, September 16, 2022.

⁷⁹ Daniel F. Littlefield and Amanda L. Paige, "The Pea Ridge National Military Park Site: Interpretive Contexts," paper presented to the Arkansas Chapter of the National Trail of Tears Association, January 19, 2002, copy at Pea Ridge NMP, history files. (Hereafter cited as Littlefield and Paige, "The Pea Ridge National Military Park Site.")

⁸⁰ Littlefield and Paige, "The Pea Ridge National Military Park Site."

⁸¹ Ibid.

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Buried Rainfrogs daughter (Lucy Redstick’s child). Marched at 8 o’c A. M., halted at Reddix, 3 o’c P.M., encamped and issued corn & fodder & beef. 16 miles to day.⁸²

There may have been 356 Cherokees and enslaved persons in the encampment on that date. The population estimate takes into account the fifteen deaths recorded enroute as well as a few late joiners who were mentioned in the log. The expedition purchased from William Ruddick 30 ¾ bushels of corn, 326 pounds of fresh pork, and 549 bundles of fodder. It also paid him for furnishing quarters and subsistence to the “driver of the wagon carrying public funds, etc.” The next day’s march began at the usual time, 8:00 a.m., and proceeded to Cross Hollows. From there, the party proceeded to John Fitzgerald’s place, then to Cane Hill, and then to Bean’s place in the Cherokee Nation, where it made its last camp and military officials relieved Cannon of duty on December 30, 1837.⁸³

The Army’s Mass Roundup

During the treaty party emigration, Chief John Ross appealed to the federal government to lift its order for Cherokee removal but his efforts were unavailing. Meanwhile, President Van Buren, through Secretary of War Joel R. Poinsett, directed Gen. Winfield Scott to prepare to compel all remaining Cherokees to remove when the two years from the date of ratification of the Treaty of New Echota was up on May 23, 1838. Scott issued a proclamation on May 10 warning the Cherokees that if they did not cooperate they would be forced out of their homes by armed soldiers. Scott divided the Cherokee territory into three districts – eastern, central, and western – and had his soldiers construct around a dozen concentration camps at various locations for assembling and holding the Cherokees until they could all be assigned to detachments and carried on boats or marched westward.⁸⁴

Commencing on May 23, the army’s mass roundup began. Squads of soldiers went to every Cherokee farm and hamlet they could find. They burst in on families at dinner, seized men working in their fields, took women from their spinning wheels, and

⁸² Daniel Littlefield, ed., “Bring out the Cannon Diary,” paper presented to the Trail of Tears Association Meeting, Springfield, Missouri, October 11, 2006, prepared by Daniel F. Littlefield, Jr., Sequoyah Research Center, University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

⁸³ Littlefield and Paige, “The Pea Ridge National Military Park Site.”

⁸⁴ Ehle, *Trail of Tears*, 323-24. The U.S. Army also constructed thirty-one forts or stockades to serve as short-term holding pens during the roundup until the Cherokees were ultimately assembled at the larger concentration camps. Some Cherokee oral history accounts refer to the “stockades.” See “Trail of Tears National Historic Trail,” *Baxter County Historical & Genealogical Society* 22, no. 4 (October, November, and December 1996), 70-71.

grabbed children at play. When Cherokees resisted, the soldiers beat and abused them. Whites who were keen to claim the Cherokees' lands were only a few steps behind the soldiers, and sometimes the Cherokees saw these plundering whites set fire to their homes even as they were being led away under soldier guard. Other survivors of the Cherokee removal would recount how the greedy whites pillaged their homes, drove off their livestock, "and even rifled the graves for any jewelry, or other ornaments that might have been buried with the dead." That was how Eliza Whitmore described the roundup in 1838 when she was interviewed one hundred years later at her home in Estella, Oklahoma at the ripe old age of 105. A black woman, Whitmore was born in slavery in Georgia, her enslaved parents both belonging to a Cherokee planter named George Sanders.⁸⁵

The army's roundup was still underway when the first of four detachments to go by boat was herded aboard six flatboats at Ross's Landing on June 6. This detachment of around 800 Cherokees commenced the journey by descending rapids on the upper Tennessee River. Much to the horror of the captive Cherokees, their densely packed flatboats seemed about to break up as they jostled down the rough and rocky rapids. At Decatur, Alabama, the river journey was aborted in favor of putting the frightened and bewildered travelers aboard a railroad train instead. Three more river-borne detachments followed, and though they had more success in navigating the river, the crowded and unsanitary conditions aboard each boat bred cholera and other diseases, so that by the time these latter detachments made their way up the Arkansas River they were losing several people each day. A few persons escaped and made their way back to the camps, warning the rest of the unwilling emigrants who were still being detained not to board the boats no matter what they were told.⁸⁶

The four detachments that went by river were as follows:

1. Lt. Edward Deas, conductor. Departed on June 6, 1838 with about 800 people. Arrived June 19, 1838 with 489 people.
2. Lt. Monroe, conductor. Departed on June 12, 1838 with 164 people. Arrival unknown.
3. Lt. R. H. K. Whitely, conductor. Departed on June 13, 1838 with about 800 people. Arrived August 5, 1838 with 70 deaths recorded.
4. Captain Gustavus S. Drane, conductor. Departed on June 17, 1838 with 1,072 people. Arrived on September 7, 1838 with 635 people and 146 deaths recorded.

Meanwhile, the poor, unsanitary conditions in the concentration camps grew worse. The camps were supposed to afford shade, water, and security, but they were

⁸⁵ Brown, "The Trail of Tears," 36; Montiero, ed., *Family Stories from the Trail of Tears*, American Native Press Archives and Sequoyah Research Center, at <https://ualrexhibits.org/tribalwriters/artifacts/Family-Stories-Trail-of-Tears.html#TheMigration>.

⁸⁶ Brown, "The Trail of Tears," 36.

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death traps. Hundreds of Cherokees perished in the camps from heat stroke, cholera, and heartbreak. Ross pleaded with federal officials to postpone the mass migration until the fall when cooler weather would make overland travel feasible in lieu of the river journey. He also asked the federal government to turn over the administration of the forced migration to the Cherokee government, insisting that the Cherokees’ self-governance would save lives. Gen. Scott granted the first request and then, surprisingly, the second as well. The Cherokees were by and large relieved to make the journey by land instead of by water. But if the decision to suspend further expeditions until fall was life-saving in some respects, it also put a further strain on life in the camps. The camps were intended to keep the Cherokees penned up for days or weeks but not for three full months. So the camps, too, turned into breeding grounds for diseases. Hundreds, perhaps thousands, of interned Cherokees caught cholera and died.⁸⁷

The Overland Journey

As the forced migration was brought under Cherokee administration, the Cherokee government, already restructured to deal with life in the camps, now went into action to organize the remaining detachments. There would be thirteen detachments with about 1,000 people in each. All going by land, they would depart at intervals so as not to get stacked up at the great river crossings. Each one would have its own Cherokee leader (conductor) and its own Cherokee police. If any U.S. soldiers or officers accompanied the detachment, they would be observers only.⁸⁸

The first of the thirteen Cherokee-led detachments set out on August 28, 1838. The next left a few days later on September 1, and the next a few days after that. Ross recorded an official count of 729 in the first detachment, 859 in the second, and 950 in the third, while a U.S. officer made a smaller tally of the first and third detachments, stating that they numbered 710 and 846 persons, respectively.

Records of the thirteen Cherokee-led detachments are incomplete, as noted above, but researchers have assembled information on them largely based on reports surrounding each one’s arrival at the end of the journey in present-day Oklahoma. Most concluded their journey at a place called Woodall’s Farm (now Westville, Adair County.). In 2003, the Arkansas Trail of Tears Association developed a summary list of the thirteen Cherokee-led detachments, which was published in the *Benton County Pioneer*. In order of departure, the thirteen were as follows (each one named for its conductor):

1. Hair Conrad/Daniel Colston. (Colston replaced Conrad when Conrad got sick.)
Departed from Cherokee Agency area at the end of August with 729 people, 36

⁸⁷ “The Cherokee Trail of Tears in Northwest Arkansas,” *Benton County Pioneer* 48, no. 4 (Fourth Quarter 2003), 12; Ehle, *Trail of Tears*, 325-27; Woodward, *The Cherokees*, 208-14.

⁸⁸ Ehle, “Trail of Tears,” 348.

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- wagons, 288 horses. Arrived at Woodall's Farm on January 11, 1839 with 654 people.
2. Elijah Hicks. Departed from Cherokee Agency area on September 1, 1838 with 858 people. Arrived at Woodall's Farm on January 4, 1839 with 744 people.
 3. Rev. Jesse Bushyhead. Departed from Cherokee Agency area on September 3, 1838 with 950 people, 48 wagons, and 329 horses. Arrived at Woodall's Farm on February 27, 1839 with 898 people.
 4. Situagi. Departed from Savannah Branch, Cherokee Agency on September 7, 1838 with 1,250 people, 62 wagons, and 436 horses. Arrived at Woodall's Farm on February 2, 1839 with 1,033 people.
 5. George Hicks. Departed from Mouse Creek, Cherokee Agency area on September 7, 1838 with 1,118 people, 56 wagons, and 448 horses. Arrived at Woodall's Farm or Beattie's Prairie on March 14, 1839 with 1,039 people.
 6. Captain James Brown. Departed from Ooltewah Creek near Vann's Plantation on September 10, 1838 with 850 people, 42 wagons, and 338 horses. Arrived at Woodall's Farm on March 5, 1839 with 717 people.
 7. Choowalooka/Thomas N. Clark, Jr. Departed from Cherokee Agency area on September 14, 1838 with 1,150 people, 58 wagons, and 462 horses. Arrived at Woodall's Farm on March 1, 1839 with 970 people.
 8. Richard Taylor. Departed from near Vann's Plantation on September 20, 1838 with 1,029 people, 51 wagons, and 358 horses. Arrived at Woodall's Farm on March 24, 1839 with 942 people.
 9. Captain Old Fields/Rev. Stephen Foreman. Departed from Candies Creek, Cherokee Agency on September 24, 1838 with 983 people, 49 wagons, and 392 horses. Arrived at Woodall's Farm on February 23, 1839 with 921 people.
 10. Captain John Bengé. Departed from a point eight miles south of Fort Payne, Alabama on September 28, 1838 with 1,200 people, 60 wagons, and 480 horses. Arrived at Woodall's Farm on January 17, 1839 with 1,132 people.
 11. Moses Daniel. Departed from Cherokee Agency area on September 30, 1838 with 1,035 people, 52 wagons, and 415 horses. Arrived at Woodall's Farm on March 2, 1839 with 924 people.
 12. John A. Bell. Departed from Calhoun, Cherokee Agency on October 11, 1838 with 660 people. Arrived at Vineyard (now Evansville), Washington County, Arkansas on January 7, 1839 with 650 people.
 13. Peter Hildebrand. Departed from Cherokee Agency area on October 23, 1838 with 1,766 people, 88 wagons, and 705 horses. Arrived at Woodall's Farm on March 25, 1839 with 1,311 people.

The researchers who compiled the list included some additional information for each detachment on recorded deaths, births, desertions, and accessions, and notable people (such as assistant conductors, physicians, or escorting federal officials). The researchers

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noted that the horses tallied were riding horses. Wagons were drawn by teams of oxen or horses not included in the tally.⁸⁹

Several generalizations can be made from the data. For the non-treaty Cherokees who emigrated under Cherokee direction over the fall and winter of 1838 and 1839, the journey took between four and five months. Not all detachments left from the same place, but most left from the Cherokee Agency area. Despite efforts to stagger the departures so they would not stack up or overtake one another, those problems occurred anyway because the detachments did not all move at the same pace. The number of deaths enroute was recorded for ten of the thirteen detachments. Mortality rates on the journey can be calculated from these figures in an approximate way, setting aside the fact that most parties gained a few people along the way from births and accessions and lost a few by desertion. In round numbers then, the detachments experienced mortality rates of from 3 to 8 percent, with half of the detachment’s mortality rates falling in the range of 4 to 6 percent. The mortality rate for the entire Cherokee removal is often said to have been around 25 percent. It would seem, therefore, that the journey itself, while deadly, was not the deadliest part of the whole removal experience. Many more lives must have been lost in the roundup, the concentration camps, and during the first year of resettlement in a new land.⁹⁰

The John A. Bell party, twelfth in the list above, was a late departing treaty party and somewhat of an outlier to the other twelve, taking a unique land route and completing the journey in under three months. Led by Ridge partisans, this detachment sent emissaries to the other detachments that were then making the journey in an effort to spread discord and undermine Chief John Ross’s leadership.⁹¹ Bell’s detachment was also the only Cherokee-led detachment to consent to a military escort, which was headed by Lt. Edward Deas.⁹²

The routes taken by the thirteen overland detachments in 1838-39 are not all known in detail but researchers have deduced that most of them essentially followed the route taken by the Cannon detachment in 1837. The Bengé detachment was a notable exception. It turned southward after crossing the Mississippi and went through the Ozark Highlands, rejoining the main or northern route in Washington County. The Bell detachment took an even more southerly route. The Hildebrand detachment deviated from the northern route across southern Missouri.⁹³

⁸⁹ “The Cherokee Trail of Tears in Northwest Arkansas,” *Benton County Pioneer*, 13.

⁹⁰ “The Cherokee Trail of Tears in Northwest Arkansas,” *Benton County Pioneer*, 13.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² National Park Service, “Trail of Tears Bell Route on the Natchez Trace, Milepost 370,” at <https://www.nps.gov/places/trail-of-tears-bell-route-on-the-natchez-trace.htm>.

⁹³ For a map of the various routes, see National Park Service, *Comprehensive Management and Use Plan, Trail of Tears National Historic Trail* (Denver, CO: National Park Service, 1992), following p. 20.

Probably all but the Benge and Bell detachments passed by Elkhorn Tavern in the early months of 1839, and as the stops along the route were fairly standard perhaps many of the detachments that passed that way camped at that site. The experience of the Taylor detachment while in the vicinity of Pea Ridge may serve as an example. The Taylor detachment is one of the more well documented detachments, because the accompanying missionary and physician both kept diaries that have survived. Daniel S. Butrick, a well-known Presbyterian missionary among the Cherokees, maintained a journal that has been published by the Oklahoma Chapter of the Trail of Tears Association. Dr. William I. I. Morrow kept a diary of which the trans-Mississippi portion is extant, a transcript of which is held at the Western Historical Manuscript Collection at the University of Missouri-Columbia.⁹⁴

The Taylor detachment passed through the Pea Ridge vicinity in the third week of March. It passed Springfield at midday on March 13, and it got to Pea Ridge five days later. Butrick recorded that they covered eight miles on March 14, seventeen miles on March 15, twelve the next day, fifteen the next, and eighteen or twenty miles on March 18, which put them at Lewis Pratt's homestead according to the Morrow diary. (Morrow stated that they covered eighteen miles that day, while Butrick gave the figure as twenty.) They had had cold, clear weather over the previous few days. As they traveled on March 18, Butrick wrote, "the day was windy and dry so that dust was often troublesome." His diary continues:

Early in the evening it began to thunder, and we had just composed ourselves to sleep in our little carryall, when we were awakened by loud peals of thunder & a heavy rain falling upon us. One shower followed another so that we had but little sleep. The high trees, however, hanging over us, were not commissioned to do us any harm.⁹⁵

The rain continued into the morning and Taylor waited for the rain to cease to give the order to break camp and move out. After noon, some of the party stayed put at the Platt homestead while a contingent proceeded just nine miles further and pitched tents on a hill. The rain set in again and another boisterous lightning storm lasted through most of the night.

The next day, March 20, was cloudy and cool and the detachment, after reassembling somewhere south of the military park, marched onward to John Fitzgerald's place. On March 21, it reached the Cunningham place near Fayetteville, and on March

⁹⁴ Littlefield and Paige, "The Pea Ridge National Military Park Site."

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

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22, it proceeded to Col. Thomason’s place in western Washington County. On March 23, it covered the last eight miles to Wooddall’s Farm.⁹⁶

All during this last stage of the trip from Springfield to Wooddall’s Farm, the Hildebrand detachment was coming close behind. It arrived at Wooddall’s Farm one day later. One can infer that Taylor was driving the group forward to keep ahead of Hildebrand and avoid a pile-up on the trail, which would cost everyone more time. Indeed, the entire project of dividing a population of 13,000 refugees into thirteen trains of 1,000 people each was fraught with the imperative to keep each one marching at a steady pace so they would not get entangled.

The Mississippi River crossing, which was reached about midway on the journey, was a place where the procession inevitably got backed up, and the very fact that the detachments stalled out there made it a greater ordeal. Many Cherokees perished in camp awaiting their turn to cross. White settlers in Illinois exploited the Cherokees mercilessly, charging exorbitant prices for assisting with burials, making false accusations to take advantage of them in court, and possibly murdering some. The Rev. Evan Jones, assistant conductor in the Situagi detachment, described the scene at the river edge in December 1838 in a letter published in *Baptist Missionary Magazine*:

At the Mississippi river, we were stopped from crossing, by the ice running so that boats could not pass, for several days. Here br. Bushyhead’s detachment came up with us, and we had the pleasure of having our tents in the same encampment; and before our detachment was all over, Rev. Stephen Foreman’s detachment came up, and encamped along side of us. I am sorry to say, however, that both their detachments have not been able to cross.⁹⁷

Butrick noted deaths on the trail in his journal, and it seems that none occurred in the Taylor detachment through the final stretch of the journey from Springfield to Wooddall’s Farm. Butrick did, however, record a close call on March 15, the day they passed into Arkansas. “Just before arriving at the encampment, a little boy was run over by a large wagon, the wheel passing over his neck & the back part of his head. The physicians were called, but supposing he would certainly die, did nothing for him.” The boy survived the accident and apparently recovered. The next day Butrick wrote, “We understand that the wounded boy is better.” The physician Morrow’s diary mentions the

⁹⁶ Littlefield and Paige, “The Pea Ridge National Military Park Site.” Note that Butrick headed each day’s journal entry by the day of the week only, and the transcription made by the Oklahoma Chapter of the Trail of Tears Association supplied the calendar days but here they are off by one week. The transcription has the Taylor detachment at the Pratt homestead on March 25 when it was actually March 18. (Copy of transcribed journal provided to the author by Daniel Littlefield.)

⁹⁷ Rev. Evan Jones, “Cherokees,” *Baptist Missionary Magazine* 19, no. 4 (April 1839), 89.

accident only in passing: “A Waggon run over a little Indians head, had to go to Camps & see him – stayed in Camps, the 1st time since I left Gore’s in Illinoise.” Morrow’s diary, in fact, is largely a chronicle of his efforts to find his own accommodations all along the route, which put him often a few miles away from the detachment. His focus on finding decent meals and accommodations for himself kept him so busy that he had little time for helping the sick or injured people who were purportedly in his charge.⁹⁸

Oral History

The Cherokee Trail of Tears experience remains largely undocumented today. Much of the feeling of the experience comes down through the oral history of the Cherokee people rather than through written documents like the Morrow diary and the Butrick journal. The oral history naturally does better than Morrow or Butrick at conveying the hardships of the journey while being less informative about routes taken, numbers involved, and precise dates.

Kate Rackleff of Fairland, Oklahoma, interviewed in 1937, recounted what she had been told about the Trail of Tears experience by her mother, Rebecca Ketcher (Neugin), a full-blood Cherokee born in Georgia about 1829. Rebecca was ten years old when the Ketcher family made the journey in 1839. Rackleff, in her account, did not name which detachment her mother and grandparents were in, but she did provide a detail that confirms it was the Bell detachment. Rackleff stated that her mother’s detachment was escorted by soldiers under the command of Gen. Winfield Scott. She mentions that Scott himself left the detachment around the middle of the trip so that he could attend the National Whig Convention.⁹⁹ From other sources, it is known that Gen. Scott arranged to accompany the Bell detachment as an observer, and that he left the group in Nashville in November, putting Lt. Edward Deas in charge of the troops. The Whig Party held its first national convention in December, and Scott attended it.¹⁰⁰ Rackleff continues her mother’s story:

In those days there were no roads and a few trails and very few bridges. Progress of travelers was slow and often times they would have to wait many days for the streams to run down before they could cross. Each

⁹⁸ “Copy of a Diary Kept By Dr. W. I. I. Morrow, 1837,” copy of typescript provided to the author by Daniel Littlefield). The year in the supplied title of this document is in error. The entries for March 1839 begin on page 2 of the typescript.

⁹⁹ Montiero, ed., *Family Stories from the Trail of Tears*, American Native Press Archives and Sequoyah Research Center, at <https://ualrexhibits.org/tribalwriters/artifacts/Family-Stories-Trail-of-Tears.html#TheMigration>.

¹⁰⁰ John S. D. Eisenhower, *Agent of Destiny: The Life and Times of General Winfield Scott* (New York: Free Press, 1997), 193-94.

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family did its own cooking on the road. People then had no matches and they started a fire by rubbing two flint rocks together and catching the spark on a piece of dry spunk held directly underneath the rocks. Sometimes, they would have to take away the snow and clear a place to build the fire. Travelers carried dry wood in the wagons to build their fires. The wagons were so heavily loaded and had traveled so many days that when they came to a hill the persons in the wagons would have to get out and walk up the hill. They did not ride much of the time but walked a good deal, not only to rest themselves but to save their teams.

Often teams would give out and could go no farther and then those who were with that wagon would be divided up among the other wagons and hurried along. One day mother saw a team of oxen fall dead, hitched to their wagon. The party she was with were in a severe snowstorm on the way which caused much suffering. Many died from exposure on the trip and mother said that she thought that a third of those who started died on the way, although all of her family lived to reach the new country. Those who came over the Trail of Tears would not stop for sickness and would stop only long enough to dig a rude grave when anyone died and then the bereaved family was forced to move right along.

Mother said that their food lasted them till they reached the Indian Territory but towards the last of the trip that they had little to eat and had no plan to make it last. It was indeed a pitiful band that finally reached the new home promised them for they had been a year on the road, food had become scarce, their clothes which were homemade were wearing out many had died on the trail, some had lost their teams and wagons and had been placed with other families and there were small children in the band who had lost their parents.¹⁰¹

Rackleff’s statement that “they had been a year on the road” perhaps exaggerates the case only a little. Bell’s detachment officially completed its journey in three months, but it is not known how long it took this family to get re-housed afterwards. When the Bell detachment began its journey on October 11, 1838, the family had been in a concentration camp for four and a half months already. So, the family was “on the road” or homeless for at least eight months and probably longer.

¹⁰¹ Montiero, ed., *Family Stories from the Trail of Tears*, American Native Press Archives and Sequoyah Research Center, at <https://ualrehibits.org/tribalwriters/artifacts/Family-Stories-Trail-of-Tears.html#TheMigration>.

More problematic is Rackleff's mother's perception that a third of the people in her group died in the removal. The Bell detachment, by its own official count, suffered about 8 percent mortality on the journey. There is no record of the mortality rates surrounding this family's experience in the roundup in May 1838 or in the concentration camp through the long, hot summer. Rackleff noted that no one in the immediate family died. Was the mortality rate exaggerated?

Many historical accounts of the Cherokee Trail of Tears state that around one fourth of the Cherokees who were forced to emigrate did not survive the experience. It is often said that upwards of 15,000 Cherokees were forced to remove and that around 4,000 died. The oft-repeated estimate of 4,000 dead probably stems from a single source in 1839, a missionary named Dr. Elizur Butler. In 1984, sociologist Russell Thornton suggested that the actual death toll was much higher: perhaps 8,000. Thornton based his estimate on Cherokee population estimates made at eight points in time from 1809 to 1880. The Cherokee population fell by about 6,000 between 1835 and the next time it was counted in 1851. Analyzing population curves across the whole period, Thornton concluded that "more than 10,000 additional Cherokees would have been alive during the period 1835 to 1840 had Cherokee removal not occurred." In Thornton's demographic model, non-births (rather than deaths) would account for some of the population deficit. Therefore, Thornton landed on the figure of 8,000 as a "reasonable estimate" of deaths resulting from removal. Some recent historians note Thornton's perspective and acknowledge that the traditional death toll figure of 4,000 may be short by half.¹⁰²

The Cherokees were poorly clothed for wintertime travel through the Midwest. Their flimsy government-issue tents were inadequate for the cold nights. Wintry conditions were hardest on the old, the young, and the infirm. Many old people and small children dropped dead from exhaustion as they were walking, and their surviving kin had to leave them behind after a hasty burial. A Cherokee woman named Josephine Pennington who was interviewed in 1937 described the suffering and death along the route as it was related to her by her elders.

In due time parties were started west, under the charge of soldiers. These parties were driven through like cattle. The sick and weak walked until they fell exhausted and then were loaded in wagons or left behind to die. When streams were to be crossed if not too deep all were compelled to wade. The water often times was to the chins of the men and women, and the little

¹⁰² Russell Thornton, "Cherokee Population Losses During the Trail of Tears: A New Perspective and a New Estimate," *Ethnohistory* 31, no. 4 (1984), 289-300. See also Amy H. Sturgis, *The Trail of Tears and Indian Removal* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2007), 60.

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children were carried high over their heads. If the water was over their heads they would build rafts and cross on them.¹⁰³

So many Cherokees died along the trail that when the Cherokee people came to be relocated in the Indian Territory they looked upon the trail as one long graveyard reaching back across the country to their homeland. With the Trail of Tears seared into the tribe’s cultural memory, later generations of the Cherokee people continued to view the trail that way and still do today.

¹⁰³ Montiero, ed., *Family Stories from the Trail of Tears*, American Native Press Archives and Sequoyah Research Center, at <https://ualrexbits.org/tribalwriters/artifacts/Family-Stories-Trail-of-Tears.html#TheMigration>.

Chapter Two

White Settlement to 1861

White Settlement and Indian Removal

White settlers moved into northwest Arkansas behind the departing Cherokees as soon as the Cherokees were made to leave Arkansas at the end of the 1820s. There were a few hundred whites living among the Cherokees before that time, and there were a few hundred Cherokees who stayed in the country after that time, but in broad terms one immigrant population precipitously replaced the other. The population replacement in northwest Arkansas occurred in the context of the Jackson administration's pending removal of the southeastern Indian tribes to Indian Territory in the 1830s. However, the origin of this population replacement is to be found much earlier in President Jefferson's Louisiana Purchase in 1803.

The U.S. acquisition of Louisiana secured the whole Mississippi Valley for American expansion. Jefferson famously sought western lands to fulfill his vision of an expansionist "republic of liberty" comprised of democratic citizen-farmers. Less remembered was Jefferson's accompanying vision of Indian removal. Jefferson's idea of Indian removal was a more uplifting, less draconian mode of Indian removal than the policy that President Andrew Jackson implemented in the 1830s, but it sowed the seeds of the latter policy.¹

The existing pattern of non-Indian settlement along the Mississippi River in 1803 soon determined the geographical contours of how American settlement and Indian removal would proceed after that date. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the small white population of Louisiana Territory was concentrated around two urban centers: New Orleans and St. Louis. A long stretch of the Mississippi Valley lying in between the two population centers was virtually devoid of white settlement; the small community of Arkansas Post was practically the only exception. Upstream of Arkansas Post, the plain lying west of the river was too swampy to attract white settlement and so it formed a kind of natural barrier to the country beyond. Since white emigration seemed destined to pour across the Mississippi River at New Orleans and St. Louis but to hold up along the central Mississippi Valley, President Jefferson eyed the midsection of the Louisiana Territory – the future state of Arkansas together with the future state of Oklahoma lying due west of it – as a suitable domain for relocated eastern tribes. There,

¹ S. Charles Bolton, "Jeffersonian Indian Removal and the Emergence of Arkansas Territory," in *A Whole Country in Commotion: The Louisiana Purchase and the American Southwest*, edited by Patrick G. Williams, S. Charles Bolton, and Jeannie M. Whyne (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2005), 77-90.

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he imagined, the tribes could live in relative peace at a safe remove from white settlement. In 1805, Congress divided the Louisiana Territory into upper and lower territories with the dividing line running along the future Louisiana-Arkansas state line. Lower Louisiana was called Orleans Territory, and became the state of Louisiana in 1812. Upper Louisiana became the Missouri Territory. Arkansas Territory was formed out of the Missouri Territory in 1819 two years before Missouri acquired statehood. A census in 1819 counted 14,273 non-Indians including 1,617 slaves living in Arkansas Territory.²

Once Arkansas Territory was formed, its small white population had a representative government to push for Indian removal within Arkansas and to demand the opening of ceded Indian lands to white settlement. Even before the Cherokees relinquished their reservation in northwest Arkansas, the U.S. General Land Office initiated public land surveys of township lines in their territory. In the 1830s, as the federal government undertook the removal of the southeastern tribes, white immigration into all parts of Arkansas Territory increased significantly. The editor of the *Arkansas Advocate*, a Little Rock newspaper, wrote appreciatively of the trend. “Not only is every steam-boat crowded with cabin and deck passengers, but the roads also are lined with wagons, conveying families to the Eden of Arkansas.”³

When it became clear that Indian removal would involve the federally supervised migration of tens of thousands of Cherokees, Choctaws, Chickasaws, Creeks, and Seminoles across Arkansas Territory, the Indian removal operation itself created an added stimulant for white settlement. The U.S. government’s commitment to manage the forced migration constituted a massive federal undertaking for that era. First, there was the construction of new roads, or more accurately, the improvement of existing trails. While the government-led road construction was necessary in order to prepare passage through Arkansas for the long wagon trains of emigrants that were soon to come, the roads also made the new lands in Arkansas more accessible to white settlers. These early highways were called “military roads” because the army was in charge of making arrangements for the pending Indian removal. One military road traversed the territory east and west, linking Little Rock with Memphis and Fort Smith. Another, the old Southwest Trail from Missouri to Texas, went on a diagonal across the territory. Still another military road went from Fort Smith almost due north to Fort Scott, Kansas. As this road ran along the border of the Indian Territory, or what would become the Arkansas-Oklahoma state line, it was known locally as the “Line Road.” A major spur road was opened into the Ozark highlands. Starting at Batesville on the White River, it cut through the Ozarks on a northwest trajectory, linking the hamlets of Yellville and

² Bolton, “Jeffersonian Indian Removal and the Emergence of Arkansas Territory,” 77-90.

³ S. Charles Bolton, *Arkansas 1800-1860: Remote and Restless* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1998), 17.

Carrollton and ending in Fayetteville. Known as the Carrollton Road, it was used by the Benge detachment in the Cherokee removal.⁴

Another well-used trail that was upgraded to a “road” at this time, and would shortly serve as a thoroughfare for the Cherokee migration through Benton County, was the State Road, so named because it linked up with the Missouri State Road coming south from Springfield. The State Road went from Fayetteville northward to the Missouri state line. In 1835, the road was improved to a width of twenty feet. A few years later, thousands of Cherokees in a dozen caravans came over this improved road. Hundreds of white settlers used the same thoroughfare in the 1830s, and after a few more years passed the number of white settlers on the road probably reached into the thousands as well.⁵

Along with the development of roads came the development of stage stops. Wherever transportation routes drew a sufficient number of long-distance travelers, enterprising farmers would establish travelers’ rest stops or overnight accommodations as a sideline business for their farm. Such accommodations typically appeared at intervals of ten or twelve miles along the route. They provided travelers with meals, beds, whiskey, and pens for their livestock. Ruddick’s place became such a stop, later acquiring the name Elkhorn Tavern.⁶

The generic stage stop often served another purpose as a hub where farmers in the area came to sell their extra produce. Such places were often called “stands” in reference to the temporary stands that were erected on market day. Stands were important for the Indian removal operation. Each detachment sent runners ahead to get farmers to bring produce to the stands to supply the detachment. For the farmers, supplying the detachments gave them a rare opportunity to sell a portion of their corn crop for cash. The Ozark region still lay on the western frontier in the 1830s. Remote from commercial markets, Ozark farmers mostly raised corn for their own subsistence rather than for sale. Provisioning the thousands of Cherokee emigrants afforded them a temporary bonanza.⁷

If Indian removal smoothed the way for white settlement in northwest Arkansas, ironically, it may have created conditions that inhibited white settlement somewhat in the following decade. The existence of the Cherokee Nation at northwest Arkansas’s “back

⁴ Goodspeed Publishing Co., *Reprint Benton County Section of Goodspeed’s Benton, Washington, Carroll, Madison, Crawford, Franklin, and Sebastian Counties Arkansas* (1889, reprint; Bentonville, AR: Benton County Historical Society, n.d.), 40; Wayne et al., *Arkansas*, 126; Rafferty, *The Ozarks*, 105.

⁵ Pea Ridge National Military Park, “Cultural Landscape Report and Environmental Assessment,” (Public Review Draft), May 16, 2014, pp. 2-11; Chris Huggard and Greg Kizer, “Springfield to Fayetteville Road, Elkhorn Tavern Segment,” National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, 2004, typescript, copy obtained from the National Park Service; Littlefield and Paige, “The Pea Ridge National Military Park Site.”

⁶ Goodspeed Publishing Co., *Reprint Benton County Section of Goodspeed’s*, 40-41; Littlefield and Paige, “The Pea Ridge National Military Park Site.”

⁷ Littlefield and Paige, “The Pea Ridge National Military Park Site,” and consultation with Daniel Littlefield, September 16, 2022.

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door” made Benton County a dead end for westward moving white settlers at that latitude. Not only was the Cherokee Nation and the whole Indian Territory closed to entry for white homesteaders, the Indian lands were also a refuge for fugitive slaves and outlaws. Enslaved blacks in Arkansas recognized that blacks generally had better prospects in Indian Territory than they had under the slave code in Arkansas. Arkansas slaveowners often searched for their runaway slaves in the Cherokee Nation. At the same time, Cherokees could treat their slaves harshly, too, and fugitive slaves sometimes fled from the Indian Territory into Arkansas. To what extent white migration to Arkansas was depressed in the 1840s on account of Arkansas’s challenging border with the Indian Territory cannot be known, but what is clear is that the state grew at a considerably slower rate than neighboring Missouri, Louisiana, and Texas.⁸

Early Settlement in the 1830s and 1840s

The people who settled in the vicinity of Pea Ridge and elsewhere in Benton County and the Arkansas Ozarks in the antebellum period came predominantly from Tennessee as well as three other states that were nearest to the Arkansas Ozarks in latitude: North Carolina, Virginia, and Kentucky. All of these states contained mountainous areas with a similar climate and growing season to what was found in northwest Arkansas. According to census data, more than half of white adult settlers living in Benton County in 1850 came from Tennessee. Another 17 percent came from North Carolina, while another 10 percent came from Kentucky and a similar percentage came from Virginia. In Sugar Creek Township, which encompassed most of Pea Ridge, the pattern was nearly the same. More than a third of families originated in Tennessee, while 18 percent came from North Carolina, 12 percent came from Virginia, and 7 percent came from Kentucky. Altogether, the white population in Benton County hailed from twenty-four different states and five foreign countries. There were only twenty-four foreign-born settlers in Benton County in 1850, fourteen of those from Germany, the rest from Ireland, England, Scotland, and Denmark.⁹

William Ruddick and his wife Elizabeth were probably fairly typical members of the population. William was born in Tennessee in 1784. Elizabeth was born in North Carolina in 1787. Both their families moved to Knox County, Kentucky, and William and Elizabeth met and married there in 1808. The couple had ten or more children, seven of whom grew to adulthood. In 1820, they moved to Bartholomew County, Indiana, and in 1827 they moved to Vermillion County, Illinois. In each of these westering moves they

⁸ S. Charles Bolton, *Fugitives from Injustice: Freedom-Seeking Slaves in Arkansas, 1800-1860* (Omaha, NE: National Park Service, 2006), 37-43; Woods, *Rebellion and Realignment*, 13; Consultation with Daniel Littlefield, September 16, 2022.

⁹ Erwin Funk, “Analysis of Benton County Census Report for 1850,” *Benton County Pioneer* 3, no. 3 (March 1958), 13-14.

were accompanied by William's father, who died in 1829. When William sold his land in Illinois and bought the place at Pea Ridge, it was his fourth farm though possibly the first one purchased without his father's help. He was then about forty-eight years old, and his family was soon to expand with the addition of sons- and daughters-in-law and numerous grandchildren. He already had one son-in-law, Samuel Burks, who was married to his oldest daughter Julia, and who accompanied the Ruddick family on its move from Illinois. Sometime after William started his farm on Pea Ridge, he and Samuel Burks built a commodious log dwelling to serve as headquarters for the clan. The two-story building with large fireplaces and chimneys at each end was to become the Elkhorn Tavern made famous by the Battle of Pea Ridge.¹⁰

William and Elizabeth Ruddick were part of a mass migration of "Southern plainfolk" across the Appalachians and to places beyond. Arkansas historian S. Charles Bolton traces the origin of the Southern plainfolk migration to Arkansas back to an earlier migration of peoples from Scotland, England, and Ulster to the American colonies in the mid-eighteenth century. These immigrants, finding the tidewater areas of Virginia and North Carolina increasingly crowded in the decades before the American Revolution, moved inland to inhabit the piedmont and highland parts of the southern colonies. In that hilly and wooded environment they began to form a distinctive backwoods society composed of small farmers and artisans. During the American Revolution many of these backcountry folk moved farther west into Kentucky and Tennessee. These were the stock from which William and Elizabeth Ruddick came.¹¹

Historian John Solomon Otto, examining the settlement pattern of the Ozark region, found that the people who settled the Ozarks established their farms after the pattern of mountain farms in the southern Appalachians. Otto argues that the defining characteristic of the Southern plainfolk migration was the people's adaptation to a forest environment, and more specifically the environment of the southern pine woods, which extended from the piedmont westward across the southern Appalachians and the Gulf Plain as far as east Texas. The Southern yeoman farmer exploited this environment by a combination of herding and farming, with methods peculiarly adapted to low population density and a high degree of self-reliance. The pattern included well-wooded lands such as the Ozarks where hardwoods rather than pine typified the forest cover.¹²

¹⁰ Brenda Taylor, "William Reddick (Ruddick) Family," *Backtrucker* 9, no. 4 (October 1980), 3; Benton County Heritage Committee, *History of Benton County, Arkansas* (Dallas, TX: Curtis Media Corporation, 1991), 747; Goodspeed Publishing Co., *Reprint Benton County Section of Goodspeed's*, 8; Ella Vaught, "A history of the building that has been known for more than one hundred years as Elkhorn Tavern," *Benton County Pioneer* 4, no. 4 (May 1959), 3-4.

¹¹ Bolton, *Arkansas 1800-1860*, 1-2.

¹² John Solomon Otto, "The Migration of the Southern Plain Folk: An Interdisciplinary Synthesis," *The Journal of Southern History* 51, no. 2 (May 1985), 183-200.

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When settlers such as the Ruddick family arrived in the country, they commenced to farm by clearing a patch in the forest. This was done by girdling the trees – notching the bark all the way around the base of the trunk to stop the flow of sap and kill the tree – and then felling and burning the trees when they were dead. The settlers called a new patch a “deadening,” and as soon as they began to clear it they would plant it with rows of corn. It would take many more years to root out all the stumps in the patch; in the meantime, the rows of corn would be sown around the many standing trunks. In fact, the standing dead trees were useful to the farmer as long as they let in sunlight because they could be chopped down for firewood later. Ten to twenty acres in cultivation at a time were about what a family needed for its subsistence. After getting a few good corn crops from the soil, it was necessary to clear “new ground” and let the other “rest” for a period of years. So, the laborious effort of clearing the land went on even as the settler family turned most of its efforts to growing and harvesting crops. A big, grown family such as the Ruddick family benefitted from having many strong hands to help with clearing, putting in crops, and all the other work attendant to life on the farm. Indeed, the Southern plainfolk tended to produce many children as that was one of the cultural adaptations that made them successful settlers.¹³

Early settlers such as the Ruddick family brought numerous livestock with them, which were turned loose to forage in the lightly populated surrounding area. Crops were fenced to keep livestock out; livestock were allowed free range. A farmer did not need to feed his cattle or hogs in summer or winter but only had to give them salt and a modicum of care. Horses and milk cows required a little more investment. As the area grew more settled, cattle were branded so they could be reclaimed when they strayed a long way from the farm. Cattle were known to wander as far as the White River and even to cross the White River in low water. The cattle and hogs provided the settlers with plenty of meat, lard, and hides for subsistence.¹⁴

Early settlers availed themselves of wild meat, too. There was an abundance of wild game in the forest. Two famous hunters of the early years, Sylvanus and Josiah Blackburn, claimed that after one winter snowfall they tracked and killed forty deer.¹⁵ Bears were still plentiful in the 1830s and 40s, and many Ozark dwellers enjoyed telling stories about their bear-hunting exploits. Sometimes orphaned bear cubs would be brought back to the farm and kept for a while as semi-domesticated pets.¹⁶ (This common practice persisted into Civil War times. There was a “pet” bear kept at the Elkhorn

¹³ J. S. Otto and N. E. Anderson, “Slash-and-Burn Cultivation in the Highlands South: A Problem in Comparative Agricultural History,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 24, no. 1 (1982), 133-35.

¹⁴ William Monks, *Southern Missouri and Northern Arkansas: Being an Account of the Early Settlements, the Civil War, the Ku-Klux and Times of Peace* (West Plains, MO: West Plains Journal Co., 1907), 11; Benton County Heritage Committee, *History of Benton County, Arkansas*, 52.

¹⁵ Alvin Seamster, “Early Settlers,” *Benton County Pioneer* 20, no. 4 (Fall 1975), 103.

¹⁶ “Old Settlers’ Letters” published in *Mountain Wave* (Marshall, Arkansas), various issues, 1915.

Tavern at the time of the battle. After the battle, this bear joined the retreating Confederate army and hung around the soldiers' camp for about three nights running, taking handouts, liberally imbibing the men's whiskey, and somehow hitching a ride in one of the baggage wagons to the next camp day after day. When the bear wore out his welcome, the soldiers got the bear roaring drunk one last time and chained him to a tree by the road so he could no longer follow.)¹⁷

While the men had their hunting stories, the women took pride in their many household skills and handicrafts. Polly Ruddick, William and Elizabeth's daughter-in-law, was a talented and prolific producer of bed coverlets. The colorful woven objects represented days and days of effort of pulling, shearing, combing, carding, and dyeing flax and wool and spinning the material into fabric and yarn on the spinning wheel, before the homespun was placed on the loom for weaving.¹⁸ A descendant of another pioneer woman of Pea Ridge described his ancestor's labors this way: "A woman was supposed to take a hand in the field, cook three squares a day, do a weekly wash on a rub board and a tub, throw in a lot of quilting, weaving, and spinning, and have a baby every year."¹⁹

The early settlers on Pea Ridge were subsistence farmers, but that does not mean they were totally independent and isolated from one another. Even if they were nearly self-sufficient and skilled at living under isolated conditions, they prized community as much as they did their individualism. Neighbors came together for barn raisings, corn shuckings, hog killings, and log rollings. In clearing land, settlers downed trees, removed limbs, and then invited the neighbors over to help them roll the logs into big piles to be burned. Asking for a neighbor's help was called "swapping work." Pea Ridge farmers shared food with others in need and bartered their farm implements and plow horses. Just a handful of farmers in the region grew substantial cash crops and transported their produce out of the area to a commercial market. Most farmers were content with subsisting, producing nearly everything they needed and just a little surplus to raise cash for such town items as shoes, ammunition, kettles, and china. It was said that a man of large family could live for a year on a store account of \$16 to \$20.²⁰

The people lived in log cabins made out of oak logs. Almost everything in these structures came from materials procured on site and made by hand. The logs were hand hewn and held in place by notches in the ends; rafters were held in place by wooden pins.

¹⁷ "That Elkhorn Tavern Bear," *Washington Post*, October 8, 1902, reprinted in Glenn Jones, "That Elkhorn Tavern Bear," *Benton County Pioneer* 54, no. 1 (First Quarter 2009), 5.

¹⁸ Monte Harris, "The Story of the Old Pea Ridge Coverlets," no date, copy at Pea Ridge NMP, history files.

¹⁹ Clarence A. Harris, "The James and Hannah Scott Story," *Benton County Pioneer* 17, no. 1 (Winter 1972), 21.

²⁰ Rafferty, *The Ozarks*, 60; Mabel Manes Mottaz, "Hog Killin' Time in the Ozarks," *Ozarks Mountaineer* 15, no. 2 (March 1967), 12; *Mountain Wave* (Marshall, Arkansas), April 15, 1915.

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Cracks between logs were daubed with mud or red clay mortar, and the log walls were then covered with clapboards hand split from white or red oak. Doors were hung on wooden hinges and secured with wooden latches. If the Ruddicks' original cabin was typical of other log cabins in the area, it had a fireplace and chimney in the north wall and doors in the east and west walls. If the house had windows at all, they might have been covered with greased paper as a handy material until the family could acquire glass window panes.²¹

The typical home's simple furnishings consisted of a table and chairs at one end of the cabin and two or three beds at the other. Perhaps a trundle bed was tucked underneath one of the beds and was pulled out at night to sleep the smaller children. Lighting at night was supplied by the glow of the fire, grease lamps, and candles.²²

Another early settler of Pea Ridge was Lewis Pratt. He came from Illinois in the early 1830s and acquired 360 acres. His property was located a half-mile down the road from Ruddick's place. Lewis Pratt married Malinda Burks and they had seven children, whom they raised in a large log house. A granddaughter recalled that they all slept in one room furnished with two fourposter beds with trundle beds tucked under each.²³

One early settler in the vicinity of Pea Ridge was Jacob Roller. From Hawkins County, Tennessee, he arrived about 1830 and settled on the prairie northeast of Garfield, which became known as Roller's Ridge. Jacob Roller was married three times and had twenty-four children.²⁴ Others who arrived about the same time included John B. Dickson and George P. Wallace, who settled in the present site of Bentonville; James Jackson and his father-in-law Samuel Williams, who settled just west of there; Ezekiel Dickson, who settled a little farther west where Hiwasse now stands; and David McKissick, who settled south of there at present-day Spavinaw. Still farther west, Martin Mays settled at the present site of Maysville, and Adam Batie settled nearby on what became Batie Prairie. Two brothers, Isaac and Levi Borne, settled on War Eagle Creek above the place where War Eagle Mills would be built. They arrived from Illinois in 1832 and each raised three acres of corn in their first year. Two years later, the white settlement on War Eagle Creek contained about a dozen families.²⁵

²¹ Beth Herrington, *Tomahawk Tales* (Tahlequah, OK: East Central Baptist Press, 1981), 3-4; Wesley Dozier interview by Works Progress Administration, February 24, 1939, WPA No. 150, University of Arkansas Special Collections, Fayetteville, Arkansas.

²² Herrington, *Tomahawk Tales*, 4.

²³ Lottie Mistie, "Pratt Cemetery and the Pratt Family as told by Martha Pratt Voltz," *Benton County Pioneer* 3, no. 5 (July 1958), 13.

²⁴ Goodspeed Publishing Co., *Reprint Benton County Section of Goodspeed's*, 8; Benton County Heritage Committee, *History of Benton County, Arkansas*, 3.

²⁵ Goodspeed Publishing Co., *Reprint Benton County Section of Goodspeed's*, 8; Alvin Seamster, "Early Settlers," *Benton County Pioneer* 20, no. 4 (Fall 1975), 103.

Enoch Trott of North Carolina settled on the south side of Little Sugar Creek (just south of the federal trenches area in the present national military park). It is believed that he established his tavern or “stand” along the State Road in 1840. But the year is uncertain and contradicted somewhat by the census of 1850 where it was recorded that his youngest of six children was born in Missouri in 1844.²⁶

Formation of Benton County

In 1830, Arkansas Territory had a population of about 25,000 whites and 5,000 blacks. Six years later, when Arkansas gained statehood, it had a non-Indian or white and black population of about 55,000. Benton County was established on September 30, 1836 by an act of the new state’s General Assembly. Located in the extreme northwest corner of the state and covering 876 square miles, it was created from a portion of Washington County. The county was bounded by the state of Missouri on the north, Carroll and Madison counties on the east, Washington County on the south, and the Indian Territory on the west. The county was named for Senator Thomas Hart Benton of Missouri for his support of the Arkansas statehood act.²⁷

The home of George P. Wallace, the first county judge, served as a temporary county seat until a courthouse could be erected. Besides Wallace, the first county officials were John B. Dickson, circuit clerk; Gideon G. Pace, sheriff; Henry C. Hastings, treasurer; Henry Ford, coroner; and A. McKissick, surveyor. In 1837, Robert Cowan, Robert Weaver, and Thomas Swaggerty were elected county commissioners and charged with selecting the county seat. They selected a site near the center of the county and named it Bentonville. A small log building was constructed and served as the county courthouse for two or three years until a two-story brick structure was erected at the same location. Circuit Judge Joseph N. Hogan held a term of court in the log building commencing on May 7, 1838.²⁸

Post offices were organized. The dispersed population on Pea Ridge was officially named Sugar Creek, and Samuel Burks was selected to be its first postmaster in 1837. William Ruddick replaced his son-in-law as postmaster in 1840, and the building that would later become Elkhorn Tavern served as the community’s next post office.²⁹

²⁶ Funk, “Analysis of Benton County Census Report for 1850,” 14. Other instances have been found where the census recorded the children’s birthplace as Arkansas and it was clearly in error, so the contradictory evidence from the census is not compelling.

²⁷ Benton County Heritage Committee, *History of Benton County, Arkansas*, 4-5.

²⁸ Arkansas Historical Records Survey, Works Progress Administration, *Inventory of the County Archives of Arkansas*, No. 4 Benton County (Little Rock: Arkansas Historical Records Survey, 1941), 5-6.

²⁹ Barbara Jean (Dawe) Gailey, “The Cox Family of Elkhorn Tavern,” *Benton County Pioneer* 42, no. 3 (July-September 1997), 55.

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Growth of Settlement in the 1840s

The U.S. General Land Office surveyed most of Benton County in the early 1840s. By 1844, numerous early settlers in the Pea Ridge vicinity began converting their squatters' rights into real property, purchasing their land claim from the U.S. government. Several residents of Pea Ridge obtained land patents that were dated August 1, 1844. Perhaps the common date reflected the opening of a land office in Fayetteville. Among the recipients were William Ruddick and Lewis Pratt whose lands flanked the State Road. Others whose lands were within the future battlefield site included John B. Dickson, George W. Ford, James Boles, and Evan S. Morgan. All purchased their lands under terms of the Act of April 24, 1820, which allowed for sale of U.S. public domain at a minimum price of \$1.25 per acre.³⁰

Evan S. Morgan was another representative of the Southern plainfolk who swept into the Pea Ridge area and the Ozark region in this period. According to family tradition, the first in this line of Morgans in America was one Colonel Morgan Morgan, a young officer of the Welsh-English army who arrived in the American colonies about 1712 or 1713. Morgan Morgan joined the early westward movement into the backcountry. His son David Morgan, for whom Morgantown, West Virginia was named, became a famous frontiersman and Indian fighter. David's descendants moved farther westward through Indiana and Illinois, and sometime between 1832 and 1834 Evan S. Morgan and his wife Elizabeth moved to Pea Ridge. They followed a relative, Samuel Burks, and settled on a little wooded hill above a sparkling spring – a place that would be the site of thick fighting on March 7, 1862, now known as Morgan's Woods.³¹

James and Hannah Scott settled on Pea Ridge about 1845. James was born in 1801, Hannah in 1806. Originating in Tennessee, this westering family moved to Illinois and then Missouri before settling in Arkansas. They had eight children, all of whom accompanied the parents to Arkansas. By the time of the Battle of Pea Ridge, the Scott children were all in their twenties and thirties. The family patriarch died about 1854. Soon after his death, the widow Hannah began purchasing and patenting the family's extensive land holdings. The first two tracts were located north of Elkhorn Mountain, and eventually Hannah Scott's property covered about 1,800 acres and extended northward nearly to the Arkansas-Missouri state line. The oldest daughter Mahala and her husband William Reed took up land that straddled the state line. They built their house on the very line with half the house in each state. Their abode was said to be a typical log house of the era, with a fireplace at one end, a puncheon floor, and a door that opened by pulling a

³⁰ The patents are viewable and searchable by location or name on the website U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, General Land Office Records at <https://glorerecords.blm.gov/>.

³¹ Virgil A. Lovelace, “A Kid's Eye View of Living on a Farm in Northwest Arkansas,” typescript, 1969, Pea Ridge NMP, history files; Benton County Heritage Committee, *History of Benton County, Arkansas*, 551.

latch string. Although the Scott family resided outside the area of the national military park, they would be in the action during events in March 1862.³²

In the early 1840s, there may have been around twenty to thirty white settler families living on Pea Ridge. The U.S. census of 1840 enumerated sixty-nine families in the whole Sugar Creek Township. At that time, Benton County was divided into just five townships, with the Sugar Creek Township taking in all of Pea Ridge plus the prairieland to the south as far as Washington County. If the average family size at that time numbered six people, then the whole township had a population of 414, or a little under one fifth of the county's total population of 2,228. Over the course of the decade, Benton County grew by 66.5 percent. In 1850, it had a population of 3,710. Over the same period the population of the entire state grew by 115 percent, from 97,574 in 1840 to 209,897 ten years later. In 1840, Arkansas had the highest birthrate of any state in the nation. Men outnumbered women in Arkansas by three to two. By the end of the decade these skewed conditions began to moderate: in Sugar Creek Township the average family size had dropped to less than six and the male to female ratio had leveled out at nearly one to one.³³

More Settlement in the 1850s

In the last decade before the Civil War the pace of white settlement quickened in the state of Arkansas, particularly in the Ozark region of northwest Arkansas. The population of the whole state grew from 209,897 in 1850 to 435,450 in 1860, an increase of 107 percent. Meanwhile, the population of Benton County grew from 3,710 in 1850 to 9,306 at the end of the decade, an increase of 150 percent. The settlers who came to northwest Arkansas in the 1850s were still predominantly Southern plainfolk but they came in greater numbers than before and they established farms in a more settled country. A few brought slaves with them, an indication that they had greater wealth than the average Ozark hill farmer. Some prominent Pea Ridge families at the time of the Civil War were recent arrivals who came only at the end of the decade.

There were about 175 families or households inhabiting the Pea Ridge area in 1860. The U.S. census of 1860 provides a fairly close tally of the whole population, because the census data were recorded by township, and Benton County in 1860 was subdivided into sixteen townships with the Sugar Creek and Mount Vernon townships approximately spanning the Pea Ridge area.³⁴

³² Harris, "The James and Hannah Scott Story," 18-20.

³³ Whyne et al., *Arkansas*, 139-40; 1840 U.S. Census, Benton County, Arkansas, population schedule, Sugar Creek Township; 1850 U.S. Census, Benton County, Arkansas, population schedule, Sugar Creek Township.

³⁴ Township lines in 1860 are only known in a general sense. The original five townships in Benton County in 1843 were shown on a map, which survives, but the boundaries of the sixteen townships in 1860 were

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The Mount Vernon Township, which took in the lands of Pea Ridge from the west edge of the battlefield site westward, had 60 heads of household listed in the 1860 census. Nearly two-thirds of these heads of household were born in Tennessee; a fourth were born in North Carolina. As with the early settlers, the population in the 1850s was young and fertile. Young couples with children predominated and families averaged more than six members. There was just one single male head of household and two single female heads in the population in 1860, one of the females being a forty-five year old widow with three children. Most heads of households were below age forty, twelve were below age thirty. Only six people in this population were sixty or older.³⁵

The Sugar Creek Township, which encompassed most of the battlefield site including the north side of Pea Ridge to the state line, registered 115 households in the 1860 census. Half of all heads of households (fifty-seven) were born in Tennessee, and nineteen were born in North Carolina. There was one foreign-born resident in this township. He was John Webb, age thirty-eight, born in Nova Scotia. With the exception of four heads of households born in Illinois and one born in Massachusetts, all the others in the township hailed from Southern states. As in the Mount Vernon Township the population was young; almost a fourth of heads of households were under the age of thirty, and only eight people in the population were over the age of sixty.³⁶

Several young heads of households were second generation settlers of Pea Ridge, a sign of how the community was maturing beyond its frontier days. For example, there was Jonathan Pratt, the son of Lewis Pratt, who lived with his wife Betsy and three small children next to his father's place. A few sprawling families such as the Fords and Fosters had become spread across multiple homesteads. Many of the early settler families had become united by second-generation marriages. For example, William Ruddick's son Samuel married Polly Ford.³⁷

As the white population increased in the 1850s, so too did the small population of enslaved blacks. There were just seven enslaved persons in Sugar Creek Township in the 1840 census. As Sugar Creek Township then covered a fifth of the county, it is not known if any of these individuals lived in the Pea Ridge area. Twenty years later there

lost to history when county records were destroyed during the Civil War. There were twenty-one townships defined by a court order in 1883, with names and boundaries re-established more or less along pre-war lines. There were thirty-four townships depicted on a map of the county in 1930. The proliferation of townships from 1883 to 1930 mostly developed in the western part of the county. For this report, the pre-Civil War boundaries of the Sugar Creek and Mount Vernon townships have been deduced from the 1843 and 1930 maps. For more on the formation of townships, see Goodspeed Publishing Co., *Reprint Benton County Section of Goodspeed's*, 37-40.

³⁵ 1860 U.S. Census, Benton County, Arkansas, population schedule, Mount Vernon Township.

³⁶ 1860 U.S. Census, Benton County, Arkansas, population schedule, Sugar Creek Township.

³⁷ *Ibid.* Samuel and Polly Ford resided at Pea Ridge when the battle occurred but inexplicably they are not found in the 1860 U.S. Census. Their marriage is recorded in Taylor, “William Reddick (Ruddick) Family,” 3, and in Monte Harris, “The Story of the Old Pea Ridge Coverlets,” no date, copy at Pea Ridge NMP, history files.

were forty enslaved blacks in Sugar Creek Township, all living in the Pea Ridge vicinity. Another nineteen blacks were counted as slaves in neighboring Mount Vernon Township, and ninety-two were living in Osage Township, which included Bentonville. The black experience in Benton County before, during, and after the Civil War is a theme of this study, so the next chapter will take a closer look at the enslaved black population.³⁸

Slaveholding whites were relatively few in number on Pea Ridge. Out of a total of 175 households in Sugar Creek and Mount Vernon townships enumerated by the 1860 census, just nineteen held slaves. One in nine heads of household in the white population in the Pea Ridge area was a slaveholder compared with one in five across the whole state. Moreover, the slaveholders who lived in the Pea Ridge community were not large slaveholders. The usual definition of a large slaveholding – considered sizeable enough to put a slaveholder in the planter class – was twenty slaves. Across the state, 12 percent of slaveholders in 1860 had twenty or more slaves. At Pea Ridge the largest slaveholding was nine slaves. At the other end of the spectrum of slaveholdings, many Southern yeoman farmers and townspeople in the 1850s owned just one slave. Across the state, 51 percent of slaveholders owned one slave. At Pea Ridge, eight of the nineteen slaveholders owned one slave.³⁹

The Emergence of Pea Ridge as a Place Name

Pea Ridge refers to an area bounded by Big Sugar Creek on the north and Little Sugar Creek on the south. The low ridge lying between the two drainages came to be called Pea Ridge by the local settler population. The subtle topographical feature is about eight miles wide and twenty-five miles long. Starting just east of the battlefield site, it runs due west about nine miles to the town of Pea Ridge and then sweeps gently to the north, crossing into the state of Missouri. Within the battlefield site, the more distinct topographical feature known as Elkhorn Mountain represents a rocky high point along the spine of Pea Ridge.

The name Pea Ridge for this broad, barely visible landform emerged around the 1840s. More than a half century ago, local historian Alvin Seamster provided two versions as to how the name came about. One version – the more accepted one today – is that the early settlers were impressed by the lush growth of wild pea vines that they found in the area so they named the plateau between the two drainages Pea Vine Ridge, which got shortened to Pea Ridge. The second version is that some early settlers came to the area from a place somewhere east of the Mississippi River that was called Pea Ridge.

³⁸ U.S. Census, 1860, Benton County, Arkansas, slave schedule, Sugar Creek, Mount Vernon, and Osage townships.

³⁹ Wayne et al., *Arkansas*, 162; 1860 U.S. Census, Benton County, Arkansas, slave schedule, Mount Vernon and Sugar Creek townships.

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Finding that the area reminded them of home, they gave it the name Pea Ridge. The historian Seamster offered a couple of candidate namesakes, a Pea Ridge in southwestern Tennessee and a Pea Ridge Prairie in Missouri, but as the identity of the settlers has been lost neither place could be verified as the source. In any case, the first version of how Pea Ridge was named is the one that remains popular today.⁴⁰

In time, the place name was applied to the Civil War battlefield and the town of Pea Ridge. While the battlefield took the name of Pea Ridge immediately after the battle, the town name developed more slowly. The post office at Sugar Creek was discontinued in 1841, after which residents of Pea Ridge received mail at the post office in Bentonville. Meanwhile, a cluster of farms grew at a location on the prairie about five miles to the west of Ruddick’s place. The families who were settled in this area in 1850 included the last names Foster, Hardy, Hammock, Harris, Harston, Miser, Lassiter, Morrison, Pickens, Price, Walker, Webb, and Wood. A post office was established there in 1850 and was officially named Pea Ridge. The first Pea Ridge postmaster was Robert H. Wallace. The next postmaster, William Martin, held the job from 1852 until the Civil War. The Pea Ridge post office served the wider population that was spread out across Pea Ridge, while the farm community that clustered around the post office location gradually grew into a town. Local historian Elsa Vaught stated that the town of Pea Ridge was founded in 1853, but it is unclear what that meant precisely. It seems that as late as the Civil War, Pea Ridge still referred to the whole rural district rather than the town.⁴¹

The Emergence of Elkhorn Tavern as Place Name

The name Elkhorn Tavern was given to the stage stop formerly known as Ruddick’s place. This name change happened fairly abruptly in the late 1850s. In October 1858, Jesse Cox purchased the establishment and 313 acres from the current owner Samuel Burks, who had acquired the property following the death of his father-in-law, William Ruddick. Shortly after the Cox family took over the premises, someone shot a large elk and Jesse mounted the antlers on the ridge pole and named the place Elkhorn

⁴⁰ Alvin Seamster, “How the Plateau of Pea Ridge Got its Name,” in *100th Anniversary Battle of Pea Ridge* (1962, reprint; Bentonville, AR: Benton County Historical Society, 1992), 4. Note that four places by the name of Pea Ridge are found in Alabama, and there are two in North Carolina and one each in West Virginia and Florida.

⁴¹ George H. Phillips, *Handling the Mail in Benton County, Arkansas, 1836-1976* (Bentonville: Benton County Historical Society, 1979), 4-8; “Establishment of Pea Ridge Post Office” *Rogers (Ark.) Daily News*, July 18, 1950, copy at Rogers Museum, Pea Ridge College vertical file; Elsa Vaught, “Documentary History of the Pea Ridge Masonic College,” *Benton County Pioneer* 62, no. 2 (2nd Quarter 2017), 7. The Vaught article is a reprint of an article first published in *Benton County Pioneer* 9, no. 4 (October 1964).

Tavern. As the place was a well-known stage stop, inn, and tavern, as well as a voting place and former post office, the new name soon gained familiarity.⁴²

The History of Elkhorn Tavern to 1861

Traditionally, William Ruddick built the structure with his son-in-law Samuel Burks around 1833.⁴³ The large, two-story log house was intended to serve primarily as a family residence for the large Ruddick family. However, Ruddick may have anticipated that he would accommodate travelers since his place was located on a trail, which became officially the Springfield to Fayetteville Road or State Road shortly after the building was completed. Soon the large house became a center of community activity. It functioned as a tavern, an inn, and a trading post. During the Cherokee removal, it was known as Ruddick's place and was used as a stage stop. For two years, 1840 and 1841, it was a post office. In 1842, it was used as a meeting house by Benton County's first Baptist Society.⁴⁴

In January 1852, William Ruddick made a will for the division of his property among his seven adult children. He bequeathed all his household and kitchen furniture to his son Benjamin, and divided the balance of his property equally among the other six. He died three months later in April 1852. The terms of the will suggest that Benjamin and his wife Nancy expected to live in the house after William's death. Be that as it may, Samuel Burks, William's son-in-law and the house's co-builder, became its new owner. It is not known if Burks and his wife Julia lived in the house. Burks deeded the house and the land to Jesse and Polly Cox on October 9, 1858.⁴⁵

Jesse and Polly Cox were born in Kentucky, Jesse about 1802 and Polly about 1803.⁴⁶ They met in Bartholomew County, Indiana, and were married in 1825. They had thirteen children, eleven surviving to adulthood. In the late 1840s, Jesse and Polly and

⁴² There are a few versions of this story. One has it that Jesse Cox was given the antlers and he mounted them on the ridge pole. Another states that the hunter was a neighbor, one Mr. Casedy, and that he gave Jesse Cox a skull with antlers. A third story is that "the elk was killed by a carpenter on his way to work on the building one morning. The elk was killed about a fourth of a mile away, and the carpenter took the horns and put them on the roof of the building. They decided the building should be called Elkhorn Tavern, and so it was." The stories are from Ernest Cox, Barbara Gaily, and Maxine Miracle Wasson, respectively.

⁴³ John W. Bond, "The History of Elkhorn Tavern," 1962, typescript at Pea Ridge NMP, history files. An obituary for Samuel Burks, Jr. in 1915 gave the year of construction as 1834. See clipping, Rogers Museum, vertical files. A great granddaughter of Jesse and Polly Cox stated that the building was erected in 1833 or 1834. See Gailey, "The Cox Family of Elkhorn Tavern," 55.

⁴⁴ Bond, "The History of Elkhorn Tavern," 2.

⁴⁵ Will Book A, Benton County, Arkansas, Box 1 of Estate Records, copied by Gail Scott, copy at Pea Ridge NMP, history files; Bond, "The History of Elkhorn Tavern," 2.

⁴⁶ These ages correspond with ages given in the 1860 census and with the date on Polly Cox's gravestone. See Ernest Y. Cox, "The Cox Family," typescript at Pea Ridge NMP, history files (hereafter cited as Cox, "The Cox Family.") A great-granddaughter, however, wrote that Jesse was probably born in 1798 and Polly in 1808. See Gailey, "The Cox Family of Elkhorn Tavern," 54.

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their family moved west probably to Andrew County, Missouri, where Polly gave birth to their last child in 1848 according to a U.S. census. Jesse and Polly Cox prospered, acquiring land, horses, and cattle. At some point they acquired slaves. Some years later, perhaps in 1854 when the Kansas-Nebraska Act was passed, they moved across the Missouri River into Kansas Territory. It seems fairly likely that they were settled in Kansas Territory by Christmas Day in 1856, because on that day their son James Parker Cox was married in Doniphan County, Kansas.⁴⁷

According to Cox family historians Ernest Y. Cox and Barbara Jean (Dawe) Gailey, fourth-generation descendants of the pioneering couple, Jesse made two scouting trips to Arkansas in search of a new home. Family tradition holds that Jesse was interested in purchasing and operating a tavern or inn on one of the trails taking gold seekers to California. Gailey speculates that Jesse knew or suspected that the Springfield to Fayetteville Road would shortly become part of the main stage route from St. Louis to San Francisco. But it was not only business opportunity that led him to investigate the stage stop known as Ruddick’s place. The Cox family and the Ruddick family were already connected. Jesse Cox’s parents, Polly Cox’s parents, and William Ruddick’s parents were all early settlers of Bartholomew County, Indiana. Polly Cox’s mother, Lydia, was a Ruddick, which made Polly and William related to some degree. So, it seems that a combination of factors led to the change of ownership in 1858.⁴⁸

Jesse Cox had financial resources and invested heavily in his new property. The initial purchase was made for \$3,600. He added a stable and blacksmith shop to turn the place into a regular stop for the Overland Stage Coach of the Butterfield Mail. He planted an orchard. According to one source that is not wholly reliable, the expanding operation also featured bee hives, a boot shop, a tanning yard, barrel making, and wool growing, and it was said that Jesse Cox kept horses as replacements for the overworked horses that pulled the stagecoaches. To support all the activity, there may have been several outbuildings and multiple indoor and outdoor kitchens.⁴⁹ A lot of these improvements were constructed and operated through the labor of the five enslaved persons on the premises. Jesse and Polly Cox, who were by now in their fifties, also had the benefit of labor provided by several grown sons and daughters-in-law. Joseph Cox, their third son, lived with the parents in the big house while three other Cox sons, George, Frank, and James, were set up in their own homes on adjoining property.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Cox, “The Cox Family,” 1-3; Gailey, “The Cox Family of Elkhorn,” 54.

⁴⁸ Cox, “The Cox Family,” 1; Gailey, “The Cox Family of Elkhorn Tavern,” 55.

⁴⁹ Bond, “The History of Elkhorn Tavern,” 3; Gailey, “The Cox Family of Elkhorn Tavern,” 57; Maxine Miracle Wasson, “Cox Family and the Elkhorn Tavern,” no date, typescript, at Pea Ridge NMP, history file. This choppy typescript is largely a compilation of quotes from an interview with Lottie Dokes, great-granddaughter of Jesse Cox, conducted on March 9, 1962. (Hereafter cited as Wasson, “Cox Family and the Elkhorn Tavern.”)

⁵⁰ Billie Jines, “Elkhorn Tavern Residents were Teenagers when Battle erupted,” reprint of story in *Northwest Arkansas Morning News*, 1985, in *Pea Ridge, the Community...as seen through the writing of*

Jesse Cox also improved the Elkhorn Tavern structure itself, which was by then a quarter-century old. He bought sawn lumber from the sawmill on War Eagle Creek and covered the four walls with weatherboards siding. He added an exterior stairway to the second floor of the tavern so that church people could come and go for worship without disrupting the doings on the ground floor.⁵¹

As a great granddaughter described the place in 1861, “Elkhorn Tavern reached its heyday...before the War Between the States. The biggest impetus to its importance was the start of the Butterfield Stagecoach Line.”⁵²

The Emergence of Leetown as a Place Name

John W. Lee settled on Pea Ridge sometime in the 1840s or 1850. By the time of the battle, the area around where he settled was known as Leetown. A creek running through his once extensive landholdings was called Lee Creek. Not much is definitely known about this early settler. As Leetown practically disappeared during the Civil War, the size and complexion of this hamlet in 1861 is not entirely clear either. Since the establishment of Pea Ridge National Military Park, several archeological investigations have been conducted at the site. As stated in the park’s cultural landscape report, “Today, archeologists agree on the general location of Leetown Hamlet. However, the exact location of the town and number and arrangement of associated buildings, structures and roads are unknown.”⁵³

According to local historian Lois Snelling, who researched Leetown for an article in the *Arkansas Gazette* in 1961, John W. Lee came to Arkansas in the 1840s and in 1850 was given a tract of land by his father-in-law, who had patented it the year before.⁵⁴ This information in Snelling’s account is corroborated by a patent issued to Lee’s father-in-law, Abednego Shelton, dated September 1, 1849, for two quarter sections in sections 33 and 34 at the west edge of the present park.⁵⁵ Furthermore, NPS historian Edwin Bearss

Billie Jines (Pea Ridge, AR: Bob Jines Family Publications, 1997), 66; Elsa Vaught, “Notes on the Jesse C. Cox family with a partial genealogy of his four sons who lived in Benton County, Arkansas,” no date, typescript, at Pea Ridge NMP, history files. Note: this typescript is based on the recollections of Malinda Frances (Cox) Scott, a grand-daughter of Jesse and Polly Cox. Malinda was born in 1865 and was 94 at the time she was interviewed by Elsa Vaught, circa 1959.

⁵¹ Bond, “The History of Elkhorn Tavern,” 3-4; Wasson, “Cox Family and the Elkhorn Tavern.”

⁵² Gailey, “The Cox Family of Elkhorn Tavern,” 56. More history of the Elkhorn Tavern is found in John W. Bond, “Elkhorn Tavern History,” in *The Battle of Pea Ridge 1862* (Rogers, AR: Pea Ridge National Military Park Centennial Committee, 1963), 22-32.

⁵³ Pea Ridge National Military Park, “Cultural Landscape Report and Environmental Assessment,” (Public Review Draft), May 16, 2014, pp. 3-89.

⁵⁴ Lois Snelling, “Leetown – Destroyed by the Battle of Pea Ridge,” *Benton County Pioneer* 7, no. 3 (March 1962), 14. See also Lois Snelling, “Leetown,” *Arkansas Gazette*, July 9, 1961.

⁵⁵ U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, General Land Office Records at <https://gloreCORDS.blm.gov/>.

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documented the transaction between Shelton and Lee in 1850 in his research of Benton County land records. Bearss’ report goes on to list numerous land sales made by John W. Lee or his family to others in the 1850s, including lands embracing the Leetown site, but the record of how Lee acquired the property is incomplete.⁵⁶

According to Snelling, John W. Lee built a two-story house of five or six rooms as a home for his large family, and he operated a store, a blacksmith shop, and a tannery on the creek. Snelling also wrote that the Lee family sold a half-acre of land for a Masonic Lodge that was built in 1857, and that a church and school existed in Leetown as well. Unfortunately, Snelling did not cite her source for this information, and archeological investigations were unable to identify individual buildings other than the probable site of the Masonic Lodge and one residence.⁵⁷

Currently the best source on John W. Lee is the genealogical research compiled by Janice Mauldin Castleman that she posted on Rootsweb in 2008. According to this source, Lee was born in Kentucky in 1810. Lee does not appear in any U.S. census for Benton County. Castleman found him in the 1850 census in Greene County, Missouri, in the 1860 census in Bosque County, Texas, and in the 1870 and 1880 censuses at two other locations in Texas. He died sometime after 1887.⁵⁸

Lee married Nancy Shelton in 1831 and they had eight children, several of whom remained in Benton County when their father moved to Texas. In 1845, Lee married Martha Shelton, Nancy’s older sister. What became of Nancy is not known. Martha was the stepmother of Lee’s children when the family moved to Pea Ridge about 1850.⁵⁹

In her carefully documented account, genealogist and descendant Castleman finds that Lee started an affair with Hannah Freeman, a widow, around 1856 or 1857 and soon left for Texas with her, where they married and Lee had one more child with her. Martha sued for divorce in 1859, claiming that her husband abandoned her “to openly live in adultery.” While the divorce was pending, her father Abednego Shelton died and his estate entered probate. Martha wanted the court to grant her all rights of an unmarried woman to dispose of the family property. The difficult circumstances help explain why the Lee family made several land sales in the late 1850s and John W. Lee was not on any of the deeds of sale; the names of his son George S. Lee and ex-wife Martha generally appear on them instead.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ Edwin C. Bearss, “Leetown, Elkhorn Tavern Grounds, Federal Earthworks, and Tanyard as of March, 1862,” typescript, 1965, Pea Ridge NMP, history files, p. 80.

⁵⁷ Pea Ridge National Military Park, “Cultural Landscape Report and Environmental Assessment,” (Public Review Draft), May 16, 2014, pp. 3-89.

⁵⁸ Janice Mauldin Castleman, “Notes: John Wesley Lee and Family,” updated August 11, 2008, at <https://freepages.rootsweb.com/~janicekmc/genealogy/generate.htm>.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

What did Leetown look like in 1861? The best contemporary description of Leetown comes from a history of an Illinois regiment that fought in the Battle of Pea Ridge. The regimental history was published in 1876. The authors described the scene in 1862 as closely as they could recall: Elkhorn Mountain, the Ford Road running along the base of the mountain in a westward direction to Bentonville, and the Leetown Road stemming off and running in a southward direction between cornfields “to Lee Town, a hamlet of a dozen houses crowning the ridge, near the western extremity of the corn fields.”⁶¹ An army surgeon, D. S. McGugin, wrote that Leetown consisted of twelve modest single-story frame houses and log cabins.⁶² Additional details about Leetown came from local historian and longtime resident Alvin Seamster when he was interviewed by NPS historians in 1964. Seamster stated that all the dwellings were two story or one-and-a-half story. All were original log construction, some having been sided with sawn weatherboard siding at a later time. Another old timer who was interviewed in 1964, John Shepherd, said that three houses in Leetown still remained standing in the 1890s when he was a boy. The Standwix Mayfield house was a two-story dogtrot structure. There was a barn and a granary associated with it. The Will Mayfield house also had a barn and a granary plus a cistern. The third house was a log cabin that burned sometime before 1900.⁶³

Other New Residents in the 1850s

Of the many families who settled on Pea Ridge in the 1850s, six will be highlighted here as representatives of the second wave of settlers. These families are also introduced here because of their unique experiences in the Battle of Pea Ridge, the Civil War, and the postwar period, all of which will come in later chapters. The family surnames introduced here that will recur in later chapters are Rice, Patton, Patterson, Kindley, Lambeth, and Sikes.

One of the wealthiest new settlers on Pea Ridge in 1860 was Charles W. Rice. He was born on a mountain farm in McMinn County, Tennessee in 1813. Charles’s father died before he was ten, but his mother held the young family together and the boy, as the oldest son, grew up quickly to manage the farm and livestock. At the age of nineteen, Charles married Eliza Haley, the daughter of one of the wealthiest families in Tennessee, and settled on a large farm and built a large brick residence. Charles and Eliza had five

⁶¹ Lyman G. Bennett and William M. Haigh, *History of the Thirty-Sixth Regiment Illinois Volunteers during the War of the Rebellion* (Aurora, IL: Knickerbocker & Hodder, 1876), 142-43.

⁶² Pea Ridge National Military Park, “Cultural Landscape Report and Environmental Assessment,” (Public Review Draft), May 16, 2014, pp. 3-89.

⁶³ Edwin C. Bearss, “Leetown, Elkhorn Tavern Grounds, Federal Earthworks, and Tanyard as of March, 1862,” typescript, 1965, Pea Ridge NMP, history files, p. 86-88. See also Pea Ridge National Military Park, “Cultural Landscape Report and Environmental Assessment,” (Public Review Draft), May 16, 2014, pp. 3-109 to 3-111.

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children and prospered as Charles raised cattle, driving them to markets in Georgia, Alabama, and South Carolina. Eliza died in 1843, and Charles married Julia C. Cobb in 1844. They had ten children while still residing in Tennessee and four more children after moving to Arkansas in 1860. Charles and Julia’s firstborn, William Leland Rice, would become a Confederate soldier and would die in the war. The large Rice family would be prominent in Benton County after the Civil War, with many of the Rice children becoming doctors, teachers, lawyers, preachers, and farmers.⁶⁴

In 1857, when the Rice family was still in Tennessee, Charles’s daughter Martha by his first wife married Stanbury H. Mayfield, and in the following year the young couple went west and settled on Pea Ridge, buying land from George S. and Martha Lee. Charles then decided to move west with his large family as well. In 1860, he bought 120 acres adjoining his son-in-law’s property. The area was known as Leetown after the original settler John W. Lee, but it was not really a town so much as a hamlet or farm cluster. Charles also bought two forty-acre parcels about seven miles to the south. It is not definitely known on which parcel Charles located his home for his large family, and it is worth noting that archeological investigations of the Leetown site have not found evidence of a large house ever being there, but Charles Rice’s 120-acre parcel extended down Winton Spring Branch outside of the national military park area so the house site may have been outside the area covered by the archeological investigations.⁶⁵ Other evidence points to the likelihood that Charles Rice did locate his family home on this parcel rather than on one of his 40-acre parcels to the south. Charles Rice was recorded in the 1860 census in Sugar Creek Township, and a son, Timothy Sullivan Rice, who was six years old at the time of the battle, would later recount that the battle occurred “right on their front doorstep.” Moreover, one might presume that Charles Rice would locate his home close to the Mayfield place rather than seven miles away from it.⁶⁶

Both the Mayfield and Rice families were relatively wealthy newcomers with sizeable slaveholdings. Rice owned eight slaves and Mayfield owned four. Rice’s slaveholding comprised two women ages sixty-five and fifty-five, two young men and one young woman, and three children. Mayfield held four people in bondage: two male and two female, all between the ages of ten and twenty-one. The slave schedule in the

⁶⁴ Ruth Varnell Peak, “The Rice Family,” *Backtracker* 29, no. 4 (November 2000), 3-4; “Charles Rice settled early,” newspaper clipping at Shiloh Museum of Ozark History, family history vertical files.

⁶⁵ The park’s cultural landscape report states that the “Radium Rice House” served as park headquarters from 1960 to 1963. It was probably removed around the time the visitor center opened in 1965 and its location is not known. See Pea Ridge National Military Park, “Cultural Landscape Report and Environmental Assessment,” (Public Review Draft), May 16, 2014, p. 3-68 and the photograph on p. 3-70.)

⁶⁶ Victoria A. Jones, “The Archaeology of Leetown Hamlet: Households and Consumer Behavior in the Arkansas Ozarks,” Master’s Thesis, University of Arkansas Fayetteville, 2019, 12; “The Mayfields – Robert & Sarah,” <https://freepages.rootsweb.com/~mayfield/genealogy/GlennWMayfield/p187.htm>; U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, General Land Office Records at <https://glorerecords.blm.gov/>; U.S. Census, 1860, Benton County, Arkansas, population schedule, Sugar Creek Township; Alvin Seamster, “Early Settlers,” *Benton County Pioneer* 20, no. 4 (Fall 1975), 105.

1860 census recorded that there were three slave houses connected with the Rice slaveholding and one connected with the Mayfield slaveholding. It is worth noting that none of the descriptions of Leetown by contemporary observers or longtime residents who remembered what the place looked like in the 1890s mentioned slave houses.⁶⁷

William Frasier Patton was another recent arrival in 1860. Twenty years younger than Charles Rice, the two had similar stories. William was born in 1833 in Knox County, Tennessee, and like Charles, he lost his father when he was nine years old, thrusting him into the role of oldest male in the household when he was still a youngster. In 1852, at age nineteen, William moved with his widowed mother and four younger siblings to McMinn County, where they befriended the Rice family. In the fall of 1860, William Patton and his family traveled to Pea Ridge to visit the Rice family. They were on their way to Texas with several Morgan horses to sell, but upon hearing that horses were dying of a disease in the Indian Territory they suspended their journey and extended their stay with the Rice family. With the coming of the war, they never completed their journey. William Patton, then twenty-eight years old, would serve with distinction in the Confederate army while the family would buy a farm and remain at Pea Ridge through the war and beyond.⁶⁸

Often several families came to Pea Ridge from the same county in the east. They followed one another in a kind of chain migration. McMinn County, Tennessee sent yet another family to Pea Ridge in the mid 1850s: the Patterson family. William Patterson, the family patriarch, was born in North Carolina in 1771, the son of an Anglo-Irish immigrant of the same name. William Patterson married Elizabeth Gibson in 1808 and they settled near Nashville, Tennessee where William engaged in raising tobacco and prospered. They had four sons and one daughter. In 1853, William and Elizabeth moved with their youngest son John H. Patterson and his wife and children to Pea Ridge. The parents were elderly and William lived just one more year and was buried in Arkansas. Elizabeth died in 1869 and was buried in the same family plot in the Patterson cemetery. The other three sons, Amzi, Felix, and Horace, all migrated to Pea Ridge as well, and all were their eventually buried in Arkansas.⁶⁹

The original Patterson party went west in three wagons and a two-horse hack, all pulled by oxen. The family brought several slaves with them from Tennessee. There was an older couple in the group that the Patterson family remembered as Old Tony and Aunt Sil. Their last names are not known. John and his wife Mary made a return visit to

⁶⁷ U.S. Census, 1860, Benton County, Arkansas, slave schedule, Sugar Creek Township.

⁶⁸ "Records of a Confederate Officer – from the Day Books, Scrap Books and Receipts of Captain William Frasier Patton," *Benton County Pioneer* 3, no. 1 (November 1957), 13; Alvin Seamster, "History Given by William Frazer Patton on his Trip to Arkansas Own Handwriting," *Benton County Pioneer* 11, no. 1 (January 1966), 95; untitled one-page typescript about William F. Patton at Rogers Museum, Civil War vertical file.

⁶⁹ Benton County Heritage Committee, *History of Benton County, Arkansas*, 690-91.

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Tennessee, leaving their children in the care of this trusted older couple for three months while they were away.⁷⁰

The Kindley and Lambeth families came in one party from North Carolina. The central couple that united this extended family was Cyrus Kindley, born in 1817, and Cynthia Ann Lambeth, born in 1825. They had four children. When they moved to Arkansas in 1851, they were accompanied by their two widower fathers, William Kindley and Amos Lambeth. Also in the clan were Cynthia Ann’s four siblings and three half-siblings. One more person in this party was a black man by the name of Kinsey who had been given to Cynthia Ann by her father. Cyrus and Cynthia Ann Kindley, the Kindley children, the senior William Kindley and the slave Kinsey all settled at a place about three miles northeast of Bentonville. Amos Lambeth and his many other grown children settled on a farm a few miles southwest of Bentonville.⁷¹

Cyrus Kindley purchased an existing farmstead called the Henning place. The farm house was a double-pen structure with a generous front porch and an open-air kitchen between the log pens. Their home stood on a hill near the main alternate road to the Springfield-to-Fayetteville Road, a thoroughfare known as the Bentonville Detour. Their wide porch overlooked the road where it dipped down and forded Little Sugar Creek. Cyrus and Cynthia Ann would stand on the porch listening for the stagecoach as it came down the hill from the south or up the hill from the north. The stagecoach made a regular stop there and Cynthia Ann served meals to the stagecoach passengers.⁷²

Although the Kindley home was about six miles from the present military park, it would be engulfed in the events of March 6 leading up to the Battle of Pea Ridge. In 1861, the Kindleys had three small children, the youngest born in September 1860. Cynthia Ann would give birth to their last two children during the Civil War. Except for a two-year absence during the war, Cyrus Kindley would remain on this place until his death in 1885. Cynthia Ann would live on the Kindley farm until her death in 1900. Cyrus, Cynthia Ann, and two daughters were all buried in a family cemetery behind the house. Today, the small Kindley Cemetery may be found alongside Rocky Ridge Trail about one hundred feet from the intersection with Route 72.

One last settler of note was James Wade Sikes. At the age of twenty-four, Sikes came with his father and brother from Unionville, Tennessee to scout for a new home in northwest Arkansas. James Wade Sikes chose to remain in Arkansas while his father and brother decided to return (though his brother, Benjamin F. Sikes, would later join him in Benton County after the war). James Wade Sikes taught school in Bentonville in the fall and winter of 1853-54 and then moved to Pea Ridge, where he married Almira J. Lee, a

⁷⁰ Benton County Heritage Committee, *History of Benton County, Arkansas*, 690-91.

⁷¹ Maxine Holloway, “Family History of Kindley, Lambeth, and Oakley,” *Backtracker* 31, no. 4 (November 2002), 3-4. Copy obtained at Rogers Museum, Lambeth vertical file.

⁷² *Ibid.*

daughter of John W. Lee, on Christmas Day of 1854, and did more school teaching in the Pea Ridge community. Sikes bought forty acres in 1857 and another eighty acres in 1860. He was listed as a farmer in the census of 1860, living with his wife Almira who was twenty-two and a daughter Arizona, who was one year old. The land was located on the east side of Round Mountain, in the heart of what is now the national military park.⁷³

The Cultural Landscape in 1861

By 1861, Pea Ridge was a well-settled area. Most of the land area was taken up in private ownership. Farms of 40 to 160 acres or more apiece were spaced close together. Farms typically featured a log house, a barn and other outbuildings, rail fences, and a patchwork of clearings and wooded areas, the clearings being a mix of plowed fields currently under cultivation, old fields that were “resting,” and “new ground” or “deadenings” where the clearing was still in progress.

A network of dirt roads spanned Pea Ridge. One major road (the State Road) crossed Pea Ridge east of Elkhorn Mountain. Minor roads crisscrossed the gently rolling terrain to the south of Elkhorn Mountain and west of the State Road. These minor roads included Ford Road, which ran straight west along the base of Elkhorn Mountain toward Bentonville; Leetown Road, running north and south to the west of a hill known as Round Top; and Huntsville Road, which came from the east and intersected the State Road at Elkhorn Tavern. The locations of the minor roads are well-known today and are depicted on a foldout map in the park’s cultural landscape report.⁷⁴

Benton County and northwest Arkansas were still in some ways part of the western frontier in 1861. The region lay just beyond the reach of the modern transportation and communication networks of that day, railroad and telegraph. No railroads yet entered the Arkansas Ozarks, and just one railroad line entered the state, the Memphis and Little Rock Railroad, and it was not yet complete or in service when the war began. A telegraph line was strung along the projected route of this railroad in 1860, the first telegraph line in the state. Another telegraph line was completed a few months later from Little Rock to Pine Bluff.⁷⁵ In northwest Arkansas, a telegraph line would be built along the State Road from Springfield to Fayetteville early in the war, giving the State Road a new name, the Telegraph Road.

⁷³ James M. Sikes, “James Wade Sikes (1828-1929),” 2008, Rogers Museum, Sikes vertical file; Benton County Heritage Committee, *History of Benton County, Arkansas*, 774; U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, General Land Office Records at <https://glorerecords.blm.gov>.

⁷⁴ Pea Ridge National Military Park, “Cultural Landscape Report and Environmental Assessment,” (Public Review Draft), May 16, 2014, pp. 3-31.

⁷⁵ Edward C. Newton, “Arkansas Telegraph History,” *Arkansas Gazette*, November 20, 1919; Michael B. Dougan, “Life in Confederate Arkansas,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (Spring 1972), 20-21.

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In other ways, Benton County and northwest Arkansas had grown beyond their frontier days by 1861. There were towns such as nearby Bentonville. Sawmills had sprung up in Benton County to supply a growing market for sawn lumber. There were tanning yards and fruit orchards and other signs of a diversifying economy. There were a few rural schools and churches and cemeteries, all signs of a developing community.

Towns

The town of Bentonville had a population of forty in 1840. Originally named Osage, it became Bentonville when it was chosen for the county seat. Twenty years later Bentonville had a population of about 500, qualifying it as northwest Arkansas's second city after Fayetteville with a population of 972. The townspeople of Bentonville in 1860 included lawyers, doctors, ministers, merchants, cabinet makers, and even one self-described “lyricist and editor,” a man by the name of John A. Arrington, who, in July 1861, at the age of twenty-four, would organize a company of volunteers for the 2nd Arkansas Mounted Rifles. One of Bentonville's largest businesses in 1860 was a tobacco manufactory. It processed a half million pounds of locally grown tobacco each year.⁷⁶

Maysville, reputed to be Benton County's oldest town, may have rivaled Bentonville in population until the 1850s. Other settlements in Benton County in 1860 were scarcely more than stage stops or hamlets on a level with Elkhorn Tavern and Leetown. A case in point, Enoch Trott's place got a post office in 1857 and was given the name Trott's Mill. By this time Trott's stand had taken the form of a general store serving the neighborhood as well as travelers on the Springfield to Fayetteville Road. All the buildings in this hamlet would be burned during the Battle of Pea Ridge. The settlement would eventually come back as the town of Brightwater.⁷⁷

Local Industry

One of the earliest industries in Benton County was the tanning industry. Tanning produced leather and rawhide, which were basic materials in high demand. Tanneries were as important to the frontier economy as gristmills and blacksmiths. Wild animals provided some of the hides for tanning while cattle provided the greater quantity. There were numerous tanneries in Benton County by 1861, both large and small, some turning

⁷⁶ Dennis Chapman, “Trail of Tears: Gateway to Maysville,” (pamphlet), 1976, Rogers Museum, Trail of Tears vertical file; U.S. Census, Benton County, Arkansas, population schedule, Osage Township; Arkansas Edward G. Gerdes Civil War Home Page, at <http://www.couchgenweb.com/civilwar/>.

⁷⁷ Benton County Heritage Committee, *History of Benton County, Arkansas*, 36.

out products on a commercial scale and others serving as a part of a farm's subsistence operations or perhaps as a small commercial sideline.⁷⁸

Local historian Alvin Seamster identified several tanneries. He noted the one at Cross Hollows within the present day park. Others were located on Flint Creek, at Spavinaw, on McKissick Creek, and in Bentonville. There was another one on Olin Jackson Creek that produced shoes and saddlery for the local population and for the military during the war. There was a tannery between Centerton and Hiwasse operated by one Mr. Jameson. Local historian Lois Snelling wrote that John W. Lee had a tannery next to the creek that bears his name.⁷⁹

All tanneries were located by a stream because they needed water. There would be a small dam built for impounding water and diverting it into the tanning vats. Vats were typically about four feet deep by four feet wide by eight feet long. Tannic acid was added to the water. Tannic acid was obtained from the bark of red oak trees. The bark was stripped from the tree when the sap was running, then stacked in a shed to dry, and then fed into a bark mill where it was ground to a powder for later use. At the tannery one vat would be dedicated to stripping the hair from the hides. Before being placed in the vat, the hides were sprinkled with lime, and when they had soaked in the vat for the proper length of time they were removed and laid out and the hair was scraped off. Next the hides were sprinkled with the bark powder and submerged in a regular tanning vat where they might remain for eight months, with water being fed into the vat all the while. Final steps in the tanning process included dyeing the leather and working bear grease into the leather to soften it.⁸⁰

It is believed that the tanyard north of Elkhorn Tavern within the battlefield area was developed in the late 1830s or early 1840s by either William Ruddick or Samuel Burks. It seems that Samuel Burks owned and operated the tanyard at the time of the battle. Besides the vats, there was a small associated building. It was likely a small log structure in which people could curry the hides after taking them out of the tanning solution. The building was used as a hospital by the Confederates and was mentioned in after battle reports. This small tannery disappeared in the decades following the Civil War (as did many other tanneries when the market for leather dissipated). Archeology has identified the likely location of the vats, which sat in a row by the stream. A person

⁷⁸ Alvin Seamster, "Tanneries in Benton County," no date, typescript, copy at Pea Ridge NMP, history files; Edwin C. Bearss, "Leetown, Elkhorn Tavern Grounds, Federal Earthworks, and Tanyard as of March, 1862," typescript, 1965, Pea Ridge NMP, history files, p. 12.

⁷⁹ Alvin Seamster, "Tanneries in Benton County," no date, typescript, copy at Pea Ridge NMP, history files; Snelling, "Leetown – Destroyed by the Battle of Pea Ridge," 14.

⁸⁰ Alvin Seamster, "Tanneries in Benton County," no date, typescript, copy at Pea Ridge NMP, history files.

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named Bart Green later built a house on the site. The Bart Green residence was removed when the park was established, but the stone foundation still remains.⁸¹

Mills of various sorts – gristmills, sawmills, wool mills – emerged in the 1850s. Like tanning, milling began on a small scale as a component of subsistence farming and gradually grew into a more substantial operation aimed at serving a wider community or a commercial market. Sylvanus Blackburn, an early settler of Benton County who started a community on War Eagle Creek in the southeast corner of the county in the early 1830s, provides an example of how a farmer became a miller by growing his mill operation. At first, the Blackburn family raised corn for its own subsistence, milling the corn using a primitive stump and pedestal type of mill. The mill consisted of a tree stump that was hollowed out with fire, and a log that was suspended vertically over the stump. One or two persons would grasp the log and lower it, pounding or grinding the corn into meal. In 1838, Blackburn built a dam and watermill and gristmill on War Eagle River and began grinding other farmers’ grain for them. He also had a sawmill, a carpenter shop, and a blacksmith shop, all serving the local community. In 1848, he built a larger, more efficient gristmill at the same location to serve a wider area and a larger population. The place was called War Eagle Mills.⁸²

Peter Van Winkle started commercial sawmilling on the White River in 1850 or 1851. His first mill used oxen to drive the machinery. In 1858, Van Winkle built a second, larger sawmill at a new location about four miles to the east called Van Winkle Hollow. His second mill was steam-powered, and the big saw logs were brought to the mill on heavy wagons drawn by six-horse teams. By 1860, Van Winkle’s mill was the largest sawmill operation in the Ozark region with thirty workers.⁸³

The mills on the White River in the southeast corner of Benton County served the farming community on Pea Ridge. Farmers took their grain to the War Eagle Mill and bought weatherboard siding and floorboards and other lumber products at the Van Winkle Mill. The population in the western part of Benton County, meanwhile, patronized the Elk Mills in Missouri and the Hilterbrandt Mills in Indian Territory. Other early mills in Benton County included the Hico and Bloomfield mills.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Edwin C. Bearss, “Leetown, Elkhorn Tavern Grounds, Federal Earthworks, and Tanyard as of March, 1862,” typescript, 1965, Pea Ridge NMP, history files, p. 11; Pea Ridge National Military Park, “Cultural Landscape Report and Environmental Assessment,” (Public Review Draft, May 16, 2014), p. 3-153; Carlson-Drexler, et al., “*The Battle Raged...With Terrible Fury*”, 8.

⁸² Dorothy Mitchell and Vera E. Key, “The Blackburn Family: Pioneer Settlers of War Eagle,” *Ozark Mountaineer* 15, no. 9 (October 1967), 15; Blanche H. Elliott, “War Eagle Water Mills Go Back to 1838,” *Benton County Pioneer* 4, no. 6 (September 1959), 9.

⁸³ Blanche H. Elliott, “Story of a Sawmill King,” typescript, copy at Pea Ridge NMP, history files; Thomas Rothrock, “Peter Manelis Van Winkle,” *Benton County Pioneer* 17, no. 4 (Fall 1972), 91-92; Alicia Beth Valentino, “The Dynamics of Industry as seen from Van Winkle’s Mill, Arkansas,” Dissertation, University of Arkansas, 2006, 23.

⁸⁴ Goodspeed Publishing Co., *Reprint Benton County Section of Goodspeed’s*, 20.

Schools

Before the Civil War, Southern states generally treated education as a private rather than a state responsibility. Under the state constitution of 1836, there was a law passed to use lands set aside by the government as school lands to be managed by the state for revenues for a free school fund, but very little materialized from this initiative. Governor James Conway called for state education funding, but the legislature chose instead to follow the Southern pattern of chartering private academies. Educating a child at an academy was an expensive prospect, generally affordable for people in the planter class but much harder to manage for the yeoman farmers who made up most of the population in northwest Arkansas. Typically the legislature chartered an academy for boys followed by a second academy in the same vicinity for girls. The schools were for whites only. The academies were run by a board of private citizens, which controlled school funds, recruited and dismissed teachers, and oversaw student admissions. The academies depended on student tuition and private endowments for their continued funding, so they catered primarily to the planter class. Generally the charters called for the academies to admit economically disadvantaged students (with tuition waivers) to the extent that the school's private endowments would allow. By 1861, there were 94 academies throughout Arkansas, but they were clustered in those parts of the state where wealth was concentrated. Fayetteville was an early leader in education in the state, with not one but two female academies by 1840. But Fayetteville was a two-day trip from Pea Ridge. There was no academy in the Pea Ridge vicinity until the Shelton Academy opened its doors about 1851. The Mount Vernon Academy opened nearby in 1853. The Shelton Academy folded after seven years while the Mount Vernon Academy seems to have survived until the Civil War.⁸⁵

As academies were beyond the means of most yeoman farmers, Pea Ridge families in the 1840s had no practical option other than to start their own subscription school. As the subscription schools were not supported by public taxes, but instead were paid for by private subscription, they were extremely modest both in their architecture and quality of education. These one-room schoolhouses were often built in a single day. Round logs were brought to a site and built into walls. The walls were chinked and daubed with mud, and a hole might be cut in one wall for a window. Sometimes there

⁸⁵ Josiah H. Shinn, *History of Education in Arkansas*, U.S. Bureau of Education Circular of Information No. 1 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1900), 19-21; Clara B. Kennan, "The Birth of Public Schools," in *Arkansas: Colony and State*, edited by Leland Duvall (Little Rock: Rose Publishing Company, 1973), 105-08; Stephen B. Weeks, *History of Public School Education in Arkansas*, U.S. Bureau of Education Bulletin No. 27 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1912), 16-18; Elsa Vaught, "Documentary History of the Pea Ridge Masonic College," *Benton County Pioneer* 62, no. 2 (2nd Quarter, 2017), 7; Alvin Seamster, "Early Schools in Benton County," *Benton County Pioneer* 20, no. 4 (Fall 1975), 101; Goodspeed Publishing Co., *Reprint Benton County Section of Goodspeed's*, 110; Emily Penton, "Typical Women's Schools in Arkansas Before the War of 1861-65," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 4, no. 4 (Winter 1945), 325-26.

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was no window and the only natural light was what came through the doorway with the door propped open. If a little more care was taken in the building design, then the schoolhouse might have a puncheon floor instead of a dirt floor, hewn logs instead of round logs, and perhaps a stick and clay chimney and stone fireplace. Inside seating for the children was made of split logs, the flat side being hewed smooth with an ax or broad-ax.⁸⁶

The typical school term of a subscription school ran for three months in the fall. Teachers generally were not well-educated nor were they very competent. They were employed by the families paying the subscription and were often selected through favoritism.⁸⁷

In 1841, forty-nine residents of Bentonville pitched together on a subscription school, pledged \$490 in cash, materials, and labor, and built the school in a day. This was probably the same schoolhouse where J. Wade Sikes taught in the fall and winter of 1853-54. He was paid a salary of \$15 per month and boarded with the students' families.⁸⁸

Since subscription schools were not public schools and left no public record, they are hard to trace in the historical record. It is possible some subscription schools came and went on Pea Ridge in this era which have been lost to history. Local historians Billie Jines and Dorothy Ellis Ross made exhaustive searches of past schools in Benton County, but their inventories mainly turned up records of public schools in a later period, not subscription schools of pre-Civil War times. Jines found a record of an Elkhorn School – probably a one-room schoolhouse – that was thought to have been established in or around 1877 for children in the Elkhorn Tavern neighborhood. Ross collected oral history in the 1950s from members of the Cox family as well as Bart Green, who was born in 1895, who thought there “may have been a subscription school before 1877.” One of Ross's sources, Frances Cox Scott, had schoolyard memories of her own that dated back to the early 1870s if not earlier. It is easy to imagine that an earlier subscription school might have come and gone in the area while leaving hardly a trace in the public memory.⁸⁹

Martha Pratt Voltz, a granddaughter of Lewis Pratt, who was born in 1878, related what she knew of the area in Civil War times to a local historian in 1958. She affirmed

⁸⁶ Monks, *Southern Missouri and Northern Arkansas*, 12; Walter F. Lackey, *History of Newton County, Arkansas* (Point Lookout, MO: S of O Press, 1950), 247; Earl Berry, ed., *History of Marion County* (N.p.: Marion County Historical Association, 1977), 412.

⁸⁷ Monks, *Southern Missouri and Northern Arkansas*, 12.

⁸⁸ “Bentonville,” in ,” in *100th Anniversary Battle of Pea Ridge* (1962, reprint; Bentonville, AR: Bentonville County Historical Society, 1992), 41.

⁸⁹ Dorothy Ellis Ross, “Liberty Formerly Elkhorn School #14,” *Garfield and her Ten Schools and some Adjoining Schools*, compiled and edited by Dorothy Ellis Ross, Elaine Osborn, Amilia Osbon, Bob Ross, Cathy Ross, and Alice Carter (Garfield, AR: n.p., 2000), 9.

that there was a school in the vicinity of Elkhorn in the 1870s. She thought it was called Central School, and that a school, church, and community hall – presumably all one building – were built in 1868 on land donated by Isaiah Kuns. However, the article that was based on the interview with Voltz also stated that “Mrs. Voltz was 12 years old when the school was built,” which would make its year of construction about 1890.⁹⁰

Traditionally, the first subscription school on Pea Ridge got its start as an offshoot of the Benton County Baptist Society that was formed in the early 1840s at Elkhorn Tavern. Local historian Alvin Seamster stated that the parishioners who met in the upstairs of the Elkhorn Tavern formed the Twelve Corners Community, so-named for the Twelve Corners Community in Tennessee from which many of the parishioners came. In 1851, Seamster stated, this group outgrew the space in the Elkhorn Tavern and built a log church on land donated by John and Margaret Buttry. The site was on the Bentonville Detour, a road linking the Springfield to Fayetteville Road with Bentonville, at a location just north and west of Elkhorn Mountain. According to Seamster, the church group later built a school at the same location. The school sat immediately east of the church. A tornado in 1954 demolished the Twelve Corners Schoolhouse but the Twelve Corners Church survived unscathed.⁹¹

Churches

Church buildings, like schools, slowly began to appear on the landscape when the area became more populous and thickly dotted with log homes in the decade before the Civil War. Church buildings, too, were built with donated labor and materials and perhaps a cash kitty raised through subscription. Prior to putting up a building, the parishioners improvised. An organized “church” could be as rustic as an upstairs room in a tavern or a regular gathering place in the woods – the latter going under the description of a “brush arbor.” In the warmer months of the year, the brush arbor made a good makeshift house of worship. Pea Ridge settlers would pick a shady spot, perhaps cooled by a spring, where they would construct their spiritual meeting place from the woody materials at hand. The brush arbor structure consisted of a skeleton frame of sturdy vertical poles and cross poles, covered by a lattice of cut saplings, which was then covered by smaller pieces of leafy brush. The last layer could be readily cleaned off and replaced from time to time. The brush arbor thus made a nice shelter from the sweltering sun.⁹²

⁹⁰ Mistie, “Pratt Cemetery and the Pratt Family as told by Martha Pratt Voltz,” 14.

⁹¹ Billie Jines, *Benton County Schools That Were, Vol. 3* (Pea Ridge, AR: Billie Jines, 1994), 5.

⁹² Samuel J. Touchstone, “The Brush Arbor,” *North Louisiana Historical Association Journal* 14, no. 4 (Fall 1983), 193-95; Daniel J. Pezzoni, “Brush Arbors in the American South,” *Pioneer America Society Transactions* 20 (1997), 25-34.

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Church organizations in the eastern states worried that religion on the frontier suffered under such primitive conditions. Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists sent missionaries to the frontier, each with varying degrees of success. Although the Presbyterians strongly supported missionary activity on the frontier they were most interested in Christianizing native peoples. Their insistence on an educated clergy limited their appeal among white frontier communities. The Baptist church, by contrast, encouraged preachers to step forward from the ranks of the frontier settlers themselves and serve their congregations without pay. As a result, the Baptist church spread rapidly on the Southern Appalachian frontier and in the Ozarks. Methodism took yet another road. Like the Presbyterians, Methodists aimed for an educated clergy, but they developed a system of organization that was specially geared for winning converts on the frontier. The Methodists employed circuit riders who traveled by horse around the backcountry holding Methodist “classes” and recruiting new members of the church. The circuit rider returned to each congregation at a regular interval while making his circuit, preaching on whatever day of the week it might be, and a successful circuit rider might have twenty to thirty local units under his supervision. The circuit riders formed a brotherhood, many performing years of hard service as they moved up in the church organization. Supported by the strong centralized organization of the church, circuit riding Methodist preachers could be thrown into regions where other preachers were unable to scratch out a living. Moreover, Methodism’s democratic doctrine enjoyed a powerful appeal in the frontier setting. Methodism’s teachings that each human being was equal in the eyes of God and fully capable of obtaining his or her salvation through conversion resonated on the frontier where people were rich in independence and poor in material wealth.⁹³

The revivalist movement known as the Second Great Awakening found an effective forum in the camp meeting, where fire-and-brimstone preachers could whip large gatherings of believers into a frenzy of repentance and conversion. The first camp meeting in America was held at Cane Ridge in Kentucky in 1801, and the phenomenon quickly spread throughout the southern Appalachians. Although the wave of religious fervor largely spent itself by 1805, the camp meeting lived on as a religious institution in the southern highlands, and it followed the settlement frontier to the Arkansas Ozarks in the 1830s. Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian missionaries and circuit riders all made use of camp meetings in Arkansas to recruit converts and revive church membership.⁹⁴

The Reverend Walter Thornberry was an early advocate in Benton County for the camp meeting form of revivalism. In 1839, Thornberry organized a Methodist society at his home on Osage Creek near today’s Elm Springs. Thornberry’s two sons, Walter and

⁹³ Alice Felt Tyler, *Freedom’s Ferment: Phases of American Social History to 1860* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1944), 33-34.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 35.

Martin, became Methodist preachers, and helped organize other Methodist churches around Benton County. Thornberry drew large numbers to his camp meetings in the 1840s and 1850s, such that the camp tradition survived in the area well past Thornberry's lifetime, shifting to a nearby location in Washington County in the post-Civil War era that became known as the Thornberry Camp Grounds.⁹⁵

The first meeting of Methodists on Pea Ridge took place at a camp meeting on the George Washington Miser farm about 1840. Miser's farm was located about one and a half miles west of the present park. The Miser family came from Tennessee, and George was counted in the 1840 census. By 1860 there were several Miser households in the neighborhood. George died in 1861. His role in the church is not known. One source states that a church building was erected on the camp meeting site in the years before the Civil War and it was destroyed during the war.⁹⁶

In 1855, Methodist congregants built Buttram Chapel on land adjacent to the Miser property. This church building, which did survive the Civil War but was removed sometime in the next century, stood at the east edge of the extant Buttram Chapel Cemetery on Leetown Road about a mile and a half west of the park.⁹⁷ According to research by local church historian Maxine Lee, the Buttram Chapel meeting place was shared with a group of Baptists in the period after the Civil War, who eventually scraped together the money to build the first Baptist Church of Pea Ridge about 1872.⁹⁸

A few miles to the east, other Pea Ridge settlers formed the before-mentioned Baptist church at the Elkhorn Tavern many years earlier. In 1842, Baptist elders Charles B. Whitley and J. F. Mitchell, visiting from Carroll County, organized a Baptist church among the settlers who lived in the vicinity of the Elkhorn Tavern. This group met in a second-floor room in the Elkhorn Tavern from 1842 to 1851, when the group outgrew the meeting room and built a log church on land donated by church members John and Margaret Buttry. Since its beginning, this Baptist congregation adopted the name Twelve Corners Baptist Church after a church society in Tennessee that many had known. The group replicated the twelve corners church design in their new building. The church had a large main room and two smaller rooms protruding on the front and back, one serving as a front entry and the other as storage space for stove wood. The three rooms gave it

⁹⁵ Goodspeed Publishing Co., *Reprint Benton County Section of Goodspeed's*, 130; Thomas Rothrock, "Thornberry Camp Grounds and Wager Mills," *Backtracker* 18, no. 1 (Winter 1973), 24-27.

⁹⁶ "Methodist Church at Pea Ridge Outgrowth of Hileman's Chapel," *Rogers (AR) Daily News*, July 1, 1950; U.S. Census, 1840, Benton County, Arkansas, population schedule, Sugar Creek Township; U.S. Census, 1860, Benton County, Arkansas, population schedule, Sugar Creek Township; Patrick McCoy and Sharolyn McCoy, *Elkhorn Tavern 1860: The Pine Ridge Community* (Miami, OK: Three Sons Publishing, Inc., 2005), 69, 72, 74.

⁹⁷ "Methodist Church at Pea Ridge Outgrowth of Hileman's Chapel," *Rogers (AR) Daily News*, July 1, 1950.

⁹⁸ E. Alan Long, "Pea Ridge church shared meeting place with others," *Northwest Arkansas Morning News*, May 25, 1986.

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twelve corners, supposed to be reminiscent of the twelve apostles. Later, the log church was covered with native stone. It is still standing.⁹⁹

South of Elkhorn Tavern there was still another group of Baptists living on Pea Ridge or just south of it. Jasper Joseph Dunagin was a farmer and Baptist preacher from Georgia who settled in the area in the 1840s. Dunagin’s land lay just to the south of the ravine carved by Little Sugar Creek. He organized a Baptist church congregation among the settlers along Little Sugar Creek in 1848. It is not known where the congregation met, but it may be presumed that it had a brush arbor somewhere in the vicinity, perhaps on Dunagin’s farm. Dunagin was involved in organizing the Mt. Zion Baptist Association, which included eleven Baptist churches in northwest Arkansas in 1851, including two in Benton County, two in Carroll County, six in Washington County, and one in Missouri. At that time, the Sugar Creek Baptist church had forty-nine members.¹⁰⁰

Dunagin hosted the annual meeting of the Mt. Zion Baptist Association at the Sugar Creek Baptist Church in 1853. Dunagin continued his involvement with the Mt. Zion Baptist Association through 1861. Ironically, Dunagin’s farm would be the place where Union and Confederate forces first clashed in the Pea Ridge campaign. On February 17, 1862, a skirmish took place in Dunagin’s field that would prove to be an opening salvo ahead of the large battle that would occur in the vicinity two weeks later.¹⁰¹

The Presbyterian church was possibly the first to appear in the Pea Ridge area but the record is vague. Pea Ridge settlers organized a Presbyterian congregation possibly as early as the 1830s. Its minister, the Rev. Peter Carnahan, was remembered as leading services and officiating at weddings for decades prior to 1861. It is believed that a Presbyterian church stood in or near the town of Pea Ridge for some years before the Civil War. This church building together with the congregation’s records were lost during the war so the dates and location of the church building were lost to history. In 1867, this church group was reborn. The restored congregation, which was known as the Mount Vernon Presbyterian Church, was led by the Rev. Samuel H. Buchanan; however, the group did not erect a new church building until 1884.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Erwin Funk, “Twelve Corners Church was a Pioneer,” *Benton County Pioneer* 12, no. 1 (January 1967), 3-5; Leah Whitehead, “Historic Marker Dedication by Benton County Historic Preservation Commission,” *Benton County Pioneer* 63, no. 3 (3rd Quarter 2017), 7.

¹⁰⁰ Maggie Smith, *Great is the Company: The History of Benton County Southern Baptist Association* (Siloam Springs, AR: The Simon Sager Press, 1982), 4. A copy of this publication was obtained at Pea Ridge NMP, history files, in the file headed “Foster Family.” Dunagin’s name appears in the U.S. Census, 1850, Benton County, Arkansas, Sugar Creek Township but he was missed by the 1860 census. He married Susan Cavness in 1847 and they had eight children. See “Rev. Jasper Joseph Dunagin,” at <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/55577611/jasper-joseph-dunagin>.

¹⁰¹ Smith, *Great is the Company*, 5-6; William L. Shea and Earl J. Hess, *Pea Ridge: Civil War Campaign in the West* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 42-43.

¹⁰² “Mount Vernon Presbyterian Church Lost Records in War,” newspaper clipping in Rogers Museum, Pea Ridge Churches vertical file.

Cemeteries

Cemeteries were another new feature of the cultural landscape before 1861. Some early families in the area buried their deceased on their own land, starting family cemeteries that sometimes grew to include more than the family. Once church buildings appeared on the land, cemeteries formed in the churchyards as well. Sometimes, as in the case of the Buttram Chapel Cemetery, the cemetery outlived the church, as it was swept up in the rural cemetery movement that began in the eastern United States in the early nineteenth century and reached Arkansas about the time of the Civil War. Indeed, the rural cemetery movement would fuse with the creation of national cemeteries as rural residents sometimes working hand in hand with roving armies struggled to cope with mass burials in the aftermath of great battles.

A small cemetery developed at Leetown. An archeological investigation in 1965 found several unmarked headstones and identified sixteen graves. Only one grave was marked with a name: Robert Braden, born February 14, 1864, died February 5, 1866. Tradition holds that another grave is that of a freedman named Ike. The story is told that during the war, when Ike was enslaved, his master fled to safer territory and took Ike with him. Sometime after Ike was emancipated, he became ill and knew he was going to die and asked that he be buried at Leetown, his onetime home. Ike's full name and owner are not known. John W. Lee of Leetown sold an enslaved black person to Jefferson Ford on February 6, 1857. The age and sex of the person was not recorded. Among the enslaved persons owned by Leetown residents S. H. Mayfield and Charles W. Rice there were a few adult men. As Rice fled to Fayetteville during the war, his slave who was thirty years old in 1860 may be the most likely one later remembered as a freedman named Ike but the evidence is far from conclusive.¹⁰³

The Ford cemetery, near the Elkhorn Tavern, is the only other cemetery in the park. Surrounded by a split rail fence, it contains thirty-four graves identified with individuals belonging to six families plus some additional unmarked graves. Most of the graves date from the first half of the twentieth century. There is another (older) Ford cemetery located outside the park, three miles south of Garfield.¹⁰⁴

The Twelve Corners Cemetery is located beside the Twelve Corners Church just outside the northwest corner of the park. This cemetery was started in the 1850s and contains the graves of many Pea Ridge pioneers. Another notable cemetery is the Pratt Cemetery, located outside the park, which began as a family plot but soon accommodated

¹⁰³ Christopher J. Huggard, *Pea Ridge National Military Park: An Administrative History*, 1997, p. 94, at <http://npshistory.com/publications/peri/adhi.pdf>; Snelling, "Leetown – Destroyed by the Battle of Pea Ridge," 15; U.S. Census, Benton County, Arkansas, slave schedule, Sugar Creek Township. John W. Lee's sale of a person to Jefferson Ford is recorded in Benton County Deed Books, Book D, p. 133.

¹⁰⁴ "Ford Cemetery," in *Cemeteries of Benton County, Arkansas, Vol. 1* (Spring 1974), 50. Copy obtained at the Shiloh Museum of Ozark History.

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other families’ deceased as well. For a time this cemetery was “forgotten and overgrown,” the gravestones entirely hidden by briars. In 1920, the brush was cleared away and the cemetery grounds were planted in grass and maintained thereafter. Still another notable cemetery is the Patterson Cemetery located west of the park, containing the graves of many Pea Ridge settlers.¹⁰⁵

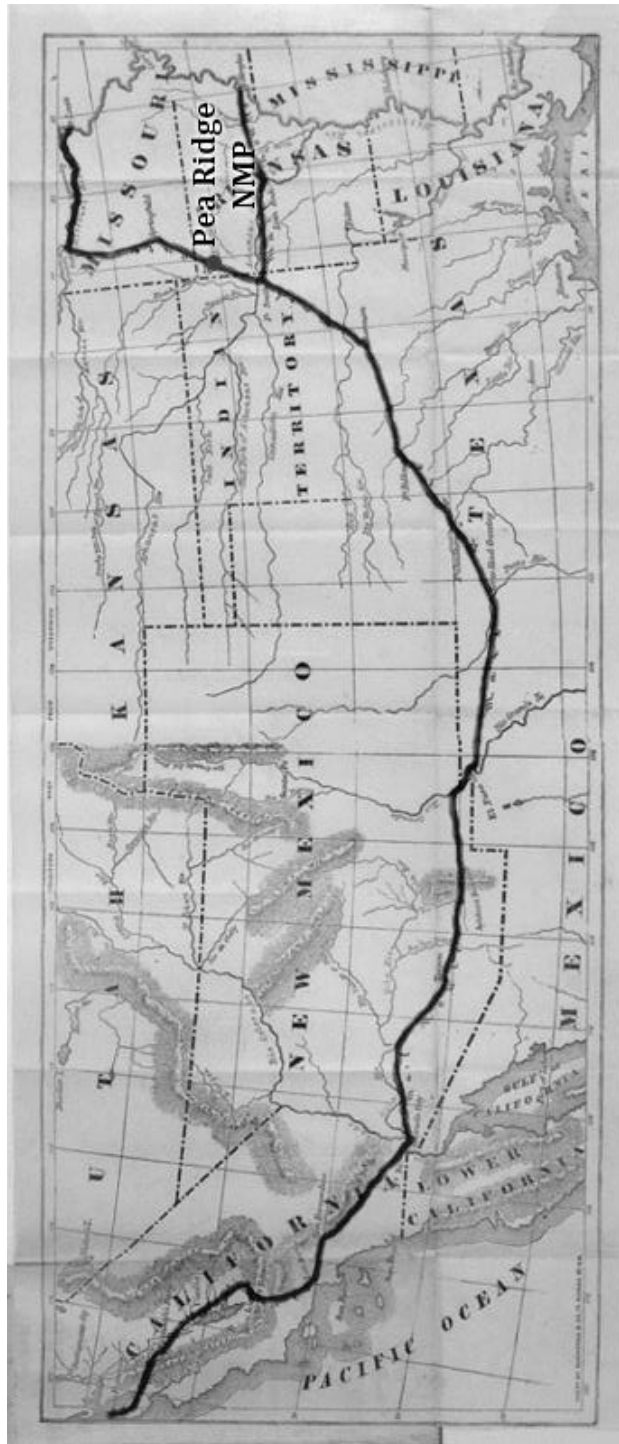
The Butterfield Stage Road

One other feature in the built landscape of Pea Ridge changed on the eve of the Civil War. For reasons to do with nation building more than the organic growth of the frontier community, the Springfield to Fayetteville Road became an early interstate road known as the Butterfield Road. In 1857, the U.S. government requested bids for a contract to deliver the U.S. mail from St. Louis to San Francisco by an overland stage route. As the growing division between North and South stymied efforts to promote construction of the nation’s first transcontinental railroad, the overland mail system would be a stopgap measure to bind the nation together east and west. John Butterfield, a successful freighter in the state of New York, took up the challenge. In preparation of his bid, he sent out agents who spent a year surveying existing roads that could make up segments of the nearly 3,000-mile route. As the route took shape and he got the government contract in hand (with one year to put the operation in motion), Butterfield purchased land for stations, mapped out river crossings, and acquired the immense stable of horses and mules that would be required. His Overland Mail Company hired over 1,000 men who were trained to serve as conductors, superintendents, drivers, station masters, veterinarians, blacksmiths, and wranglers. When his company went into operation in September 1858, it had over 250 stagecoaches, special mail wagons, freight wagons, and water tank wagons.¹⁰⁶

The Butterfield Overland Mail Route went from St. Louis to Springfield, Missouri, then through the Arkansas Ozarks to Fort Smith, then through the Indian Territory and across Texas and the New Mexico Territory (later the states of New Mexico and Arizona) to Los Angeles, California and then northward to San Francisco (Map 4). The Arkansas Ozarks were a challenging part of the whole route; indeed, a special agent to the postmaster-general found that the section from Springfield to Fort Smith was the

¹⁰⁵ “Twelve Corners Cemetery,” in *Cemeteries of Benton County, Arkansas, Vol. 1* (Spring 1974), 1-5; “Patterson Cemetery,” in *Cemeteries of Benton County, Arkansas, Vol. 4* (Spring 1975), 85-86; Mistie, “Pratt Cemetery and Pratt Family,” 13-15. Copies obtained at the Shiloh Museum of Ozark History.

¹⁰⁶ Roscoe P. Conkling and Margaret R. Conkling, *The Butterfield Overland Mail, 1857-1869, Vol. 1* (Glendale, CA: Arthur H. Clark Co., 1947), 30-35; Phillip W. Steele, “*The Butterfield Run*” *Through the Ozarks: A History of John Butterfield’s Overland Mail Co. and its route through the Missouri, Arkansas and Oklahoma Ozarks*, 4th ed. (Springdale, AR: Heritage Publishing, 1992), n.p.; Velda Brotherton, “Tracing the Butterfield Overland Mail Route through the Ozarks,” *The Ozarks Mountaineer* (August 2004), 5.



Map 4. Butterfield Stage Route.

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hardest to travel of any. In southern Benton County the route went through Mudtown, which earned that name as a description of the road’s rough condition there. (The tiny community at Mudtown later moved west one mile to be on the railroad line and became the town of Lowell.) Further south, the section between Fayetteville and Fort Smith snaked over the Boston Mountains and was possibly the most treacherous part of the entire route according to historian Phillip W. Steele.¹⁰⁷

While the stagecoaches made a brief mail stop at the Elkhorn Tavern it was not a designated station but rather a popular rest stop owing to the meals and liquor served by the establishment. At least one Cox family descendant would later maintain that Jesse Cox supplied an exchange of horses for the Butterfield stage but if he did it was only an irregular service. The Elkhorn Tavern fell between two regular stations: one at the place of John H. Harbin one mile south of Washburn, Missouri, and the next at the tavern run by Dennis Callahan, located near the present town of Rogers, Arkansas. From there, the route went through Cross Hollows and Mudtown to Fitzgerald’s Station, located in the present town of Springdale, and then on southward into Washington County.¹⁰⁸

The location of Callahan’s Station was lost to history for many decades and was rediscovered by local historian Monte Harris. Dennis Callahan settled in 1840 on land along the existing State Road from Springfield to Fayetteville. He soon built a house, a small store, and a livery business. For years, Callahan served a local stagecoach business owned by the Pollock family of Fayetteville. In 1858, the Butterfield Overland Mail Co. purchased the local stagecoach company and selected Callahan’s place for one of its regular stations. Callahan’s Station was already an inn by then; under the new management it was expanded so that it could provide repairs and maintenance for the Butterfield stagecoaches and dinner and overnight lodging for the passengers. Years later, the location of the former Callahan’s Station was obscured when the property was redeveloped into the Electric Springs Hotel and resort around the time the railroad was built. Later, the resort went out of business and its large property holding was subdivided into town lots in the east part of Rogers. Harris found that the long gone Electric Springs Hotel was originally Callahan’s Station.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ “Butterfield Overland Mail,” in *The Handbook of Texas Online*, copy obtained at Rogers Museum, Butterfield Trail vertical file; Steele, “*The Butterfield Run*,” n.p. According to one account, “Mudtown” was a nickname for the settlement first known as Bloomington. The nickname came about when a driver for the Butterfield Overland Mail came out of Alex Nail’s Tavern and Dram Shop and found his stagecoach had sunk deep into the mud while he and his passengers were refreshing themselves. Mudtown residents blamed the road condition on the heavy lumber wagons that carried loads between Van Winkle’s sawmill and Fayetteville. See Rex Looney, “Name earned in stagecoach days,” *Rogers (Ark.) Daily News*, August 23, 1978, copy obtained at Rogers Museum, Mudtown vertical file.

¹⁰⁸ Lois Snelling, “The Old Wire Road, Benton County’s Favorite Highway,” *Benton County Pioneer* 5, no. 2 (January 1960), 23; Steele, “*The Butterfield Run*,” n.p.; Conkling and Conkling, *The Butterfield Overland Mail, 1857-1869, Vol. 1*, 195-96.

¹⁰⁹ Tonya McKlever, “Historian discovers true location of Callahan Station,” newspaper clipping, no date, Rogers Museum, Butterfield Trail vertical file.

Fitzgerald's Station was similarly expanded when it was incorporated into the Butterfield Overland Mail Route. A Butterfield construction crew built additional infrastructure including a stone barn and stables. One stone building has survived, and the property was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2003.¹¹⁰

John Fitzgerald settled in the early 1830s, selecting the place for the good spring water in the vicinity. Fitzgerald's daughter Jane married William Ruddick's son John in 1836, and they established themselves on a farm on Pea Ridge. Fitzgerald's son John, Jr. succeeded his father as station master. Another son James acquired large landholdings that would later become Springdale's business district.¹¹¹

The Butterfield Overland Mail Co. operated successfully from 1858 until the Civil War. Its first run in September 1858 completed the journey from St. Louis to San Francisco in twenty-five days, which was the exact number of days allowed by the government contract. The speed and regularity of the service represented a feat of overland transportation for the day and the fact that the operation continued until it was disrupted by the war constituted a considerable business achievement. Apart from overnight stops, stagecoaches paused at each station for a brief ten minutes, allowing just enough time for a mail delivery and pickup and perhaps a hasty change of horses. The coach conductor sounded a horn on the approach to alert the stationmaster to get the horses and mail ready. A different series of blasts of the horn communicated different needs; for example, one pattern could signal the need to feed the horses and another could signal that guests would be staying overnight. The goal was to travel 120 miles per day while making a quick stage stop about every two hours. The Butterfield Overland Mail Co. stressed the need for efficiency and speed in its employee handbook, which contained nineteen rules. Butterfield once told a reporter that if each driver in his relay system fell behind schedule by fifteen minutes it would add up to a loss of twenty-five hours over the whole journey, putting the mail delivery one day beyond the government's twenty-five day limit.¹¹²

The southern route of the Butterfield Overland Mail Co. ceased operations at the start of the Civil War after just two and a half years of service. The last run was completed in April 1861. When the war came, secessionists in the Southern states seized much of the company's stock and equipment. Congress passed a law directing the

¹¹⁰ Steele, "The Butterfield Run," n.p.; Linda S. Caillouet, "Stagecoach stables listed among 7 endangered sites," *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*, May 19, 2000, and Rachel Webb, "Historic register adds Fitzgerald Station," *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*, June 10, 2003, copies obtained at Rogers Museum, Butterfield Stageline vertical file.

¹¹¹ Conkling and Conkling, *The Butterfield Overland Mail, 1857-1869, Vol. 1*, 201; Dorothy Fitzgerald Henry, "Fitzgerald," *Backtracker* 7, no. 4 (Fall 1978), 3-4.

¹¹² Steele, "The Butterfield Run," n.p.; Tonya McKlever, "Historian discovers true location of Callahan Station," newspaper clipping, no date, Rogers Museum, Butterfield Trail vertical file; Amy Schlesing, "When the mail came by stagecoach," *The Morning News* (Springdale, AR), March 22, 1999, copy obtained at Rogers Museum, Elkhorn Tavern vertical file.

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company to abandon the southern route and use a central route instead. Soon the physical assets of the company were transferred to a new company with orders to operate between St. Joseph, Missouri and Sacramento, California.¹¹³

¹¹³ Steele, “*The Butterfield Run*,” n.p. See also F. P. Rose, “Butterfield Overland Mail Co.,” in *The Battle of Pea Ridge 1862* (Rogers, AR: Pea Ridge National Military Park Centennial Committee, 1963), 38-57.

Chapter Three

Slavery, Secession, and the Shadow of War

Slavery in Arkansas and Benton County

Slavery existed as a legal institution in Arkansas when the area was under the control of both France and Spain and it continued undisturbed when the United States acquired the Louisiana Territory in 1803. It was affirmed by Congress in 1819 when Arkansas became a territory, and reaffirmed by the Missouri Compromise one year later, which held that slavery would be allowed in the proposed state of Missouri and prohibited in the rest of the Louisiana Purchase north of latitude 36° 30', Missouri's southern border. In 1836, Arkansas entered the Union as a slave state, paired with the new state of Michigan, a free state, thereby maintaining the balance of power between free and slave states in the U.S. Senate. Due to the geographic position of Arkansas south of the Missouri Compromise line, together with the growing importance of sectionalism in American politics, Arkansas emerged as part of the Slave South.

As Arkansas developed from a frontier territory into a more populous state, the institution of slavery took a firm hold in one half of the state and not in the other. Arkansas is divided geologically into upland and lowland provinces by a line running on a diagonal from the northeast to the southwest. The southeastern half of the state is characterized by flat or gently rolling lowlands while the northwestern half of the state is taken up by the southern portion of the Ozark plateau. The lowland half of Arkansas was well suited to the development of cotton plantations, but the more rugged Ozark region was not. The Ozark hill country drew a population of white settlers who were interested in making small, independent farms rather than cotton plantations. As a result, Arkansas developed during the three decades before the Civil War into a state with two distinct agricultural economies, one deeply intertwined with slavery and the other tied to slavery only peripherally. In *Arkansas: A Narrative History*, currently the leading state history, the authors say: "This geologic division would have profound implications for social, economic, and political development in Arkansas."¹

Perhaps a majority of people in northwest Arkansas in 1860 were skeptical about slavery. At least, they were skeptical about the grip that slavery held on the state's politics and institutions. The yeoman farmers in northwest Arkansas distrusted the wealthy planters in the rest of the state, who exercised increasing power over state elections and policymaking. A quarter century earlier, in the state constitutional convention of 1836, delegates from the northwestern part of the territory were lukewarm

¹ Whyne et al., *Arkansas*, 4.

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to articles in the constitution that protected the institution of slavery. They were particularly insistent that enslaved persons should not be counted in determining representation in the state legislature. When they lost on these points to the planter class, the northwestern delegates came to oppose the movement for statehood but they were defeated on that score, too.²

In spite of the widespread skepticism around slavery in the upland portion of the state, slavery took hold in the northwestern counties because Arkansas was a slave state where the institution was undergirded by state law. Even if a large majority of settlers in the northwestern counties did not own slaves, and even if a majority did not support the institution, the relatively small number of slaveholders who lived in northwest Arkansas were protected and supported in their investment in slave property. The laws put the power of the state behind the system of control of people in bondage, while the booming cotton plantation economy in the rest of the state and beyond ensured a strong, steady growth in the price of slaves and the market value of slaveholdings.

Just as slavery in northwest Arkansas was tied to slavery's protected position and prospects in the rest of the state, so too was the thriving condition of slavery in Arkansas tied to the growth of the cotton industry across the South. In the early decades of the nineteenth century the center of cotton production moved steadily westward from the Atlantic seaboard to the fertile regions of Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. When Arkansas achieved statehood there were already large cotton plantations established in the territory in the lower Arkansas Valley and the Mississippi Valley. Production of cotton in Arkansas increased from 6 million pounds in 1840 to 26 million pounds in 1850. While the state's cotton crop was small compared to those of neighboring Mississippi and Louisiana, the rate of expansion was impressive. During the same period the number of slaves in Arkansas grew by 136 percent – the fastest growth rate found in any state. The slave population in Arkansas grew from 19,935 in 1840 to 111,115 in 1860. Enslaved persons represented about 20 percent of the total population in Arkansas in 1840 and about 25 percent two decades later. By 1860, one in every five white persons in Arkansas was a slaveowner or a member of a slave-owning family.³

Meanwhile, enslaved persons were found only in relatively small numbers in the northwestern counties, especially in those counties lying farthest north and west. In 1860, Benton County had just 385 enslaved persons according to the U.S. census. One of fifty-one counties in the state, it had a third of 1 percent of the total slave population, or one sixth of its proportional share. The slave population in Benton County was concentrated in the center of the county around Bentonville. There were 92 enslaved persons in Osage Township where Bentonville was located, and another 52 in Anderson Township

² Clyde W. Cathey, “Slavery in Arkansas,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 3 (Spring 1944), 66-68.

³ Thomas A. DeBlack, *With Fire and Sword: Arkansas, 1861-1874* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2003), 1-2.

adjoining Osage Township on the southwest. Other relative concentrations of slaves were found in Sugar Creek Township, which encompassed Pea Ridge, where there were 40 enslaved persons, and in Flint Township in the southwest part of the county where there were 39. The number of white slaveholders in Benton County was similarly small: fewer than one hundred in a countywide population of around 9,000 white people. Whereas one in five white Arkansans belonged to a slave-owning household, it was less than one-third that many in Benton County.⁴

And yet, the relatively small numbers of enslaved and enslavers in northwest Arkansas did not mean that the institution of slavery barely hung on there. To the contrary, in the last decade before the Civil War slavery in Benton County and all of northwest Arkansas grew. An increasing number of new settlers coming into Benton County in the 1850s brought slaves with them. These slaveholders were part of a second wave of settlers who were generally somewhat wealthier than the first wave of settlers. While the first wave of settlers cleared the land and made improvements and asserted squatters' rights according to the preemption laws, which gave them a first right of purchase of the land ahead of any other comers, many were not able to raise the money necessary to complete the land purchase so they eventually sold their improvements, gave up their right of preemption, and moved on. Sometimes the original settlers sold out to their neighbors; other times they sold out to second-wave settlers who bought the improvements and then secured title to the land with a further outlay of cash to the U.S. government. Meanwhile, if the second-wave settlers had slaves, they might build larger homes, clear more ground for cultivation, and produce crops that went beyond household need, advancing the region's economy from a subsistence form of farming toward a commercial form.⁵

Slave Labor in Benton County

The Elkhorn Tavern property on Pea Ridge provides one illustration of how slavery came to exist in Benton County and how it helped the slaveholder to thrive and transform the region's frontier economy. As described in the previous chapter, William Ruddick settled on Pea Ridge about 1830 and built the tavern a few years later with the help of his son-in-law Samuel Burke. After Ruddick died, Burke acquired the property. In 1858, Jesse Cox bought the property from Burke. Jesse Cox may be described as one of those second-wave settlers who had financial resources as well as slave labor, and who bought land and improvements from a first-wave settler and immediately expanded the operation with the help of slave labor. Cox family historians agree that Jesse Cox and his

⁴ U.S. Census, 1860, Benton County, slave schedule.

⁵ Diane Mutti Burke, *On Slavery's Border: Missouri's Small-Slaveholding Households, 1815-1865* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 32.

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family used the labor of at least five enslaved persons to build up the operation. Two “strong men” worked in the stables; one “older” man did all the woodcutting, carried the water from the spring, and tended the fires in the tavern’s multiple fireplaces; and two women worked in the kitchens and looked after the many children – slave children as well as some of Jesse and Polly Cox’s grandchildren. These five adult slaves are thought to have helped with other operations around the farm and tavern as well, such as beekeeping, blacksmithing, tanning, boot making, and barrel making.⁶

Probably Cox obtained some of his slave labor for running the Elkhorn Tavern establishment from neighbors who hired out their slaves to him. Hiring out a slave’s labor was a common practice. The 1860 U.S. census does not list five adults in Jesse Cox’s slaveholding. Rather, it lists one adult and four children. There was one adult female who was age twenty-seven, and one child who was eleven, and the other three children were five and under. So, Jesse Cox had to obtain most of his slave labor from other enslaved persons in the neighborhood. The 1860 census lists a twenty-one year old woman owned by Cox’s neighbor Lewis Pratt, one twenty-two year old man owned by G. W. Ford, one twenty-five year old man owned by T. H. Roughton, and one forty year old man – likely the “older” man remembered by Cox family historians – owned by Jesse’s son William. Probably these four individuals together with the one adult female belonging to Jesse Cox were the five members of the enslaved workforce who were identified.⁷

A further detail on Cox’s slave labor is recorded by the descendant Ernest Y. Cox, who wrote that the two enslaved women who worked at the tavern were the wives of the two younger enslaved men. (Cox family histories also maintain that these two couples resumed their residency at this place after the Civil War.) In the Arkansas Ozarks, where most enslaved persons were part of a small slaveholding on a farm, marriages between slaves in different slaveholdings were common. Outside of the very large plantations, slaveowners generally looked with favor on such marriages because it allowed slave families to be formed. When enslaved men and women were allowed to marry they were happier, healthier, more productive, and less apt to rebel or flee. Equally important from the enslaver’s point of view, when a slave woman bore children the children became the property of the slaveowner and added to the slaveowner’s wealth in slave property. Generally, such marriages were facilitated by mutual agreement of the two slaveowners with the husband being granted a regular opportunity to visit the wife. Large plantation owners were less inclined to support such marriages because they saw them as an unnecessary complication and a drain on the male bondsman’s productivity. They referred to a male bondsman’s choosing a marriage partner beyond the plantation as marrying “abroad.” As a result, all such marriages between slaves of different owners

⁶ Elsa Vaught, “Notes on the Jesse C. Cox family with a partial genealogy of his four sons who lived in Benton County, Arkansas,” typescript, no date, at Pea Ridge NMP, history files; Cox, “The Cox Family.”

⁷ U.S. Census, 1860, Benton County, Arkansas, slave schedule, Sugar Creek Township.

were called “abroad marriages.” In a place such as Pea Ridge where all slaveholdings were small, abroad marriages were the norm.⁸

Another example of the effects of slave labor in Benton County is found in the sawmill enterprise of Peter Van Winkle. As noted in the previous chapter, Van Winkle developed his sawmill in the 1850s, expanding the operation significantly when he built a second mill at a new location, Van Winkle Hollow, in 1858. Van Winkle was not recorded in the 1850 census as owning slaves and no data is available as to when he acquired slaves. By 1860, he owned thirteen black people. They ranged in age from six to thirty-one. As eleven was the customary age at which a slave child was expected to commence full-time work, nine of these people were of an age to work full-time. Among the nine, there were five men in or nearly in their twenties and one thirteen-year-old boy, all of whom likely worked in the sawmill.⁹

The Van Winkle Mill employed thirty workers in 1860. Researchers have deduced from the fragmentary historical and archeological record that the workforce must have been an integrated workforce of slave and free labor. Probably Van Winkle augmented his own slave force by hiring slave labor from surrounding farms in the same way that Jesse Cox did. Free laborers would have likely worked at the sawmill only seasonally, being engaged in farm work for long portions of the year. At least one enslaved worker at the Van Winkle Mill, a black man named Aaron who took Van Winkle’s last name after slavery, became a highly skilled worker and key member of the operation. Perhaps other enslaved workers did as well. Enslaved workers were in fact used in many gristmills and sawmills across the slave states before the Civil War.¹⁰

The enslaved persons who were engaged in the Van Winkle Mill operation made Peter Van Winkle wealthy while supplying lumber for the growing population in northwest Arkansas. The sawmill had the largest workforce of any in the region. By 1860, the mill owner had lumber contracts covering a wide area. His personal wealth was assessed in county tax records at nearly \$43,000 – about \$1.64 million in today’s dollars. Between a fourth and a fifth of his wealth was counted in his slaveholding. He also owned 1,370 acres of highly valuable timber land. He lived in a plantation-style home in Van Winkle Hollow. As historians Christopher J. Huggard and Jerry Harris Moore conclude, “Peter Van Winkle was well on his way to becoming the timber king of the Arkansas Ozarks. Without Aaron and the other slaves, however, he could not have generated the vast wealth that gave him that unique status.”¹¹

⁸ Cox, “The Cox Family,” 4; Mutti Burke, *On Slavery’s Border*, 198-201.

⁹ Valentino, “The Dynamics of Industry as seen from Van Winkle’s Mill, Arkansas,” 21-22.

¹⁰ Christopher J. Huggard and Jerry Harris Moore, “Rock Van Winkle: Black Builder of Northwest Arkansas,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 80, no. 1 (Spring 2021), 9-12; Valentino, “The Dynamics of Industry as seen from Van Winkle’s Mill, Arkansas,” 21-24.

¹¹ Huggard and Moore, “Rock Van Winkle,” 13-14.

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Slave labor was not just helpful on the farm or in the mill, it helped to build up the fortunes of enslavers who were townspeople, too. Such was the case with George and Elizabeth Jefferson and their ten children who lived in Bentonville. This family moved from Tennessee to Missouri to Arkansas in the years 1836-37. Yeoman farmers, they initially settled on land in Washington County near what would soon become Fayetteville. Then, in 1840, they relocated to Benton County to a large, productive farm about two miles east of Bentonville. George Jefferson was recorded in the U.S. census of that year as the head of household and the owner of four black people. In 1841, George Jefferson opened a hotel in the rising town of Bentonville. In the next year, he opened a cabinet shop in town. With two town businesses and a farm to run, the necessity for more labor may well be imagined.¹²

Soon after relocating to Benton County, George and Elizabeth began to build up a considerable slaveholding. When George Jefferson died in 1846, he bequeathed one enslaved person to each of his four daughters. Besides those four slaves, Elizabeth retained six more slaves in her possession in 1850. In the 1860 census, Elizabeth owned seven people: one woman who was forty eight, another woman who was thirty-six, one man who was twenty, one girl and two boys in their teens, and one infant. Still another five enslaved persons are said to have belonged to a son of George and Elizabeth whose name was Samuel. Since Samuel was still a young man in 1860 and was away in the Confederate army from 1861 until the end of slavery, it would appear that the five slaves that he owned came into his possession from the parents' slaveholding. In December 1860, the widowed Elizabeth married a prominent Bentonville attorney, Dysart Woods. The couple signed a prenuptial agreement, perhaps so that Elizabeth could retain ownership of her remaining slaves as a legacy for her other children.¹³

The Jeffersons' slaveholding may serve as an example of what it meant to the yeoman farmer to have a relatively large slaveholding of five to nine enslaved people. Historian Stephanie McCurry, in her study of yeoman farmer slaveholders, points out that one of the key distinctions between yeoman farmer slaveholders and planters was that the role of the latter was chiefly managerial. Planters did not work in the fields themselves; yeoman farmers did. Even when a farmer had several slaves, he still had to do manual labor on the farm. The slaveholding helped them prosper, but it did not fundamentally take them out of their role as a “self-working farmer.” McCurry explains:

¹² Russell Baker, “The Jefferson Family, Benton County, Arkansas 1802-1911,” *Arkansas Family Historian* 45, no. 3 (September 2007), 153-54; Goodspeed Publishing Co., *History of Benton, Washington, Carroll, Madison, Crawford, Franklin, and Sebastian Counties, Arkansas* (Chicago: Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1889), 853.

¹³ U.S. Census, Benton County, Arkansas, slave schedule, Osage Township; Baker, “The Jefferson Family,” 154-55.

The issue is not simply the number of slaves household heads owned but more precisely the amount of labor the owners thereby acquired in addition to that of family members. Surprising as it might seem, farmers could well have owned as many as nine slaves and still have found themselves dependent on family members even for field labor. The reason lies in the striking pattern in the age and sex of the slaves small slaveholders typically owned. There were considerably more women slaves than men in the households of small slaveholders, and, no doubt as a consequence, there were almost as many children and young adolescents as there were adults.¹⁴

The Slave Trade in Benton County

While slave labor was valuable in Benton County, the demand for slave labor was far greater in Arkansas's southern and eastern counties where cotton plantations employed scores or even hundreds of field hands to produce the cotton crops. The high demand for slave labor on the cotton plantations drove up the price of slaves everywhere. In southern Missouri, the value of an adult male slave rose from around \$500 before 1830 to around \$700 in 1847, to upward of \$1,000 in the 1850s. In Arkansas, the value of a slave, averaged across all ages and both sexes, was about \$455 in the 1840s, and rose to about \$627 in the 1850s. Slave values rose even more steeply in the last few years before the Civil War. In Chicot County, Arkansas in 1860, a slave was worth \$100 at birth and was worth \$500 or more by the time the child was five or six years old. In the slave market in New Orleans in 1860, a prime field hand would sell for as much as \$1,800.¹⁵

The price inflation made slaves an excellent investment for the enslaver if the goal was to make money. Slaves accrued value as they grew from small children into older children of working age and then into young adults. The fact that the market put so much value on a newborn, infant, or toddler who would not become a productive worker for many more years showed that the whole slave economy was structured in a way that would bring the slaveholder a sizable financial return over the long term.

Slaveholders were well aware that a slaveholding might grow in value through natural increase. The market price of female slaves rose considerably when they reached an age to reproduce. Many slaveowners sought female slaves who would likely bear children, since by law an enslaved woman's newborn child became the property of the

¹⁴ Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York: University of Oxford Press, 1995), 48-49.

¹⁵ Mutti Burke, *On Slavery's Border*, 121; Orville W. Taylor, *Negro Slavery in Arkansas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1958), 78, 81; Steven Deyle, *Carry Me Back: The Domestic Slave Trade in American Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 56.

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slaveowner. In this way the slaveholder could expand the slaveholding cheaply without buying another slave. Some slaveholders figured that natural increase could increase the profitability of the slaveholding by 5 to 6 percent. Thomas Jefferson considered “a woman who brings a child every two years as more profitable than the best man of the farm.” Many slaveholders protested the notion that they might be “slave breeders,” while others, like Jefferson, were more sanguine about it.¹⁶

While the market value of slaves rose fairly steadily over time, the price for slaves always varied a lot from place to place. Since the demand for slave labor was most intense in the Deep South, that was where the prices were consistently the highest. The best prices to be found anywhere in the American South were in New Orleans, the largest of all slave markets in the United States. From the auction block in New Orleans, enslaved persons were taken to cotton and rice plantations in Louisiana, Texas, Mississippi, and Arkansas. Owing to the constant labor demand in the Deep South, there was a relentless forced movement of slaves from the Upper South to the Deep South where the slaves could be sold for maximum profit. When an enslaved person was taken south or “sold down the river,” the sudden uprooting, forced migration, and sale to a new owner was a horrific life-changing experience. This happened to an estimated one million enslaved persons across the Upper South between 1790 and 1860. Perhaps another two million were traded locally. The enslaved population in Benton County was not immune. How many of the enslaved people in Benton County were pulled into the vortex of the domestic slave trade is not known, but they all lived with that threat over their heads.¹⁷

The origins of the domestic slave trade predated Arkansas statehood. The domestic slave trade took off when the U.S. Congress banned the African slave trade in 1818. As soon as the supply of slaves from Africa was cut off, it meant two things: first, American slavery would be perpetuated through natural reproduction; and second, there would be a constant draft of enslaved persons from the Upper South to the Deep South to meet the voracious slave labor needs of the South’s Cotton Kingdom. If slavery in the Upper South ever had a chance of fading away because it was obsolescent and uneconomical, that ended when the Deep South started purchasing the Upper South’s excess slave population. As one Mississippi planter remarked, Virginians no longer kept slaves to make crops. Rather, “they kept them to breed and raise young ones.”¹⁸

Slave traders moved slaves over long distances both by land and water. The overland slave drive was more common. Before the Civil War the slave “coffle” became a common sight on all major southern roads and waterways. The coffle was a line of slaves handcuffed and chained together by a long chain sometimes fastened at the neck.

¹⁶ Deborah Gray White. *Ar’n’t I a Woman?: Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1985), 98; Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 4, 28; Taylor, *Negro Slavery in Arkansas*, 71.

¹⁷ Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 4, 56; Taylor, *Negro Slavery in Arkansas*, 62.

¹⁸ Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 27-28, 41, 44, 49.

Often only the men were chained up while the enslaved women and children walked or rode in a wagon. Generally numbering thirty or forty individuals, the coffle was driven along by white drivers with whips in hand and pistols on their hips. When slave coffles went by land, they might be driven twenty-five miles per day. A trek from Virginia to New Orleans might take seven to eight weeks.¹⁹

The slave trade was less organized in Arkansas than it was east of the Mississippi River. There were few slave auction businesses in the state, and no permanent slave markets such as the one in New Orleans. However, small slave auctions were held at rural stands in northwest Arkansas, and slave drives were made from the hill country to slave markets in New Orleans or Memphis. One Ozarker of Newton County, Missouri recalled that slave traders came through the country every spring offering to buy slaves and take them south to sell to planters. Meanwhile, in the lowland counties of southeastern Arkansas there was a steady traffic of slaves with their handlers going to and from the New Orleans market by steamboat on the Arkansas and White rivers.²⁰

The defenders of slavery tried to play down the domestic slave trade as much as they could. The Southern defense of slavery rested on the claim that enslaved blacks were generally treated humanely by their masters. Putting forth a racist view of blacks as inferior human beings, the defenders of slavery insisted that enslaved blacks actually benefited from the master's generous paternalism, living better than they would if they were free. Under the master's paternalism, blacks were well cared for and received the whites' tutelage in religion and family life. All the violence and cruelty in the domestic slave trade contradicted the Southern claim that slavery was a benign institution. The slave coffle and the auction block treated blacks in the most bestial of ways, while the buying and selling of human chattel clearly ripped apart slave families.

In places like the Ozarks where slaves and slaveholders were not numerous, public opinion frowned on the slave trade and gently leaned on slaveowners to refrain from splitting up slave families. Nevertheless, the non-slaveholders who made up the majority of the population were powerless to keep the slave traders away or to dictate how slaveholders might dispose of their property, so they blandly turned a blind eye to these things. They accepted the ideology around Southern slavery that implied that the domestic slave trade was far less prolific and impactful than it actually was. Slavery's defenders insisted that slaveowners did all in their power to keep slave families together and they only separated family members when it was a matter of grave financial necessity. Slavery's defenders pretended that the buying and selling of slaves occurred only at the margins of Southern society. They misleadingly suggested that the forced movement of slaves from market to market was conducted entirely by a lowly class of

¹⁹ Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 4, 146-47.

²⁰ Brooks Blevins, *A History of the Ozarks, Vol. 2, The Conflicted Ozarks* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2019), 19; Taylor, *Negro Slavery in Arkansas*, 61-62.

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avaricious slave traders, never by the well-meaning slaveowners themselves. The vilification of slave traders masked the obvious fact that the slave master had to be involved in buying and selling people at both ends of the trade to make it work, and indeed, that slaveowners were often themselves the very ones driving their slaves to market. Furthermore, the effort to minimize the domestic slave trade deflected attention away from the enormous local trade in slaves in which enslaved people were traded between neighbors or conveyed as a dowry or an inheritance between white family members. Even when the transaction was local in nature, it nonetheless resulted more often than not in forcibly separating the enslaved person from family or community.²¹

In one known case of slave driving in Benton County, an enslaver named James Anderson attempted to drive his slave to Fort Smith to sell “down the river.” In this case, it was said that the slaveowner was motivated to sell the slave because he feared the man, but as Anderson had recently inherited the slave from his father he may have simply wanted the cash. The enslaved man, who had a wife and perhaps some children in Fayetteville, was desperate to avoid being separated from his family. When this bondsman and Anderson reached Crawford County, the bondsman was able to gain his freedom temporarily by bashing his master’s head with a rock and then slitting his throat “from ear to ear” and hiding the corpse out of sight of the road. But when he returned to Fayetteville alone with Anderson’s belongings, whites apprehended him and allegedly wrung a murder confession out of him. Reportedly, the unnamed bondsman was shot to death while trying to escape.²²

Most sales of enslaved persons went undocumented or else the documentation was lost to history. When a record of sale survived, the dry documentation seldom gave much indication of how the enslaved person may have suffered from the compulsory transfer from one household to another. Take the example of a Benton County woman named Lear. In 1853, her owner John W. Phagen sold her to William McDaniel for \$275 and the transaction was recorded in the Benton County courthouse. All that was stated about Lear was that she was “about forty-five years of age” and that she was “sound of mind.” In the 1850 census Phagen was recorded as owning two slaves, a woman about fifty and a boy about ten. Was this woman Lear? Probably. Was the boy her son? Maybe. The sale in 1853 may have separated Lear from her son against her will, but the available evidence only allows conjecture on this point.²³

In 1838, a Benton County black girl named Elvina passed from the estate of William Forsyth to a surviving family member, Barnett Forsyth, who then sold the girl to

²¹ Deyle, *Carry Me Back*, 4-9.

²² Kelly Houston Jones, “‘A Rough, Saucy Set of Hands to Manage’: Slave Resistance in Arkansas,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 71, no. 1 (Spring 2012), 18-19; Huggard and Moore, “Rock Van Winkle,” 9.

²³ “Benton County Deed from Slave Woman,” *Benton County Pioneer* 7, no. 4 (May 1962), 14. The court house document is also reproduced in *Benton County Pioneer* 3, no. 2 (January 1958), 25.

Gideon G. Pace, Benton County's first sheriff. Pace paid Barnett Forsyth \$700 for the girl, which suggests that Elvina was old enough to work and perhaps old enough to bear children.²⁴ No other record of Elvina has been found. It is not known if she was separated from family by this sale or what kind of slave community she joined when she came into Pace's ownership. A family history states that Barnett Forsyth moved to Pea Ridge from Tennessee in 1837, leading a wagon train made up of his family, kinfolk, and neighbors. The account also states that Barnett Forsyth, while still in Tennessee, sold five slaves to his son-in-law.²⁵ Was Elvina already separated from her family by that earlier sale in Tennessee? Was she hopelessly separated from her family by hundreds of miles when the Forsyth family brought her west?

Not all sales of black people were made against their own wishes. Sometimes the enslaved person desired a change of owners. Sometimes the person wanted to join another slaveholding to be united with another slave. Historians Huggard and Moore infer that a romantic interest may have been behind the sale of a young woman by the name of Jane from her first owner, John W. Rich to her second owner, Peter Van Winkle. The sale occurred shortly before the Civil War. Jane, who was about twenty years old in 1860, married Peter Van Winkle's trusted slave Aaron afterwards. As Huggard and Moore point out, Aaron may have met Jane on her Pea Ridge farm by way of his itinerant work assignments. It is possible that Aaron exercised some influence over his master in accomplishing the transfer of Jane from Rich's farm on Pea Ridge to Van Winkle's place several miles to the south.²⁶

Slave Controls and Resistance

Arkansas adopted a comprehensive slave code in 1837. The state's slave code derived from earlier slave codes of French and Spanish Louisiana as well as from slave codes of other Southern states. The law defined slavery as a form of personal property, but it recognized that slaves were a unique form of property that required certain controls and protections. An enslaved person's protections under the law were minimal, however. For instance, for all the rhetoric about keeping slave families together, Arkansas had no legal restriction to prevent the separation of family members by sale, not even the separation of mothers from infant children.²⁷

Most of the laws that made up the slave code pertained to controls. Slaves were restricted in how they could congregate or organize. They could not bear arms. They could not testify in court against a white person. They needed a pass signed by the master

²⁴ "Records, Benton Co., AR," *Backtracker* 11, no. 3 (August 1982), n.p.

²⁵ "Dean-Hey Heritage," <http://www.mochamoment.com/dean-hey/williamforsythfamily.html>.

²⁶ Huggard and Moore, "Rock Van Winkle," 18.

²⁷ Chris N. Branam, "Slave Codes," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*, at <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/slave-codes-5054/>; Taylor, *Negro Slavery in Arkansas*, 67.

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to go anywhere outside of the master’s property. Any white person could challenge a black person on a public right-of-way and demand to see the pass. As in other states, Arkansas put the force of the state behind these restrictions on a black person’s movements and associations, handing off law enforcement to a rough class of men who made up the state’s numerous local slave patrols. Patrols looked for signs of illegal activity whether it was unsanctioned gatherings, buying and selling of goods, or unauthorized travel. Patrols were empowered by the state to whip any slave they caught without a travel pass. Blacks dreaded harassment or arrest at the hands of the notorious “pattyrollers” or “pateroles.” One black man who was born in Arkansas in 1862 remembered what his parents said about them. “If you overstayed your time when your master had let you go out, he would notify the pateroles and they would hunt you up and turn you over to him.”²⁸

By law, each county was to organize and maintain a slave patrol. Ozark historian Brooks Blevins suggests that slave patrols were not present in some parts of the Ozarks because there were not enough slaves in the region to pose much threat of a slave revolt and therefore they were not supported at the county level. Slave patrols were probably active in Washington County around Fayetteville and perhaps in Benton County around Bentonville. Adeline Blakely of Fayetteville, interviewed in the 1930s about her childhood memories of slavery, responded to the interviewer, “Yes we were afraid of the slave patrols. All Negroes were. They said we would be whipped by the slave patrol if we were caught away from home without a pass from our master.” Controls such as the slave patrols aimed to subordinate blacks with terror and intimidation as well as with outright force.²⁹

While slave patrols served to prevent slave insurrection, they also helped to apprehend fugitive slaves or freedom seekers. But that task fell mainly to slave catchers who worked directly for the slaveowners. Slave catchers increased their effectiveness and became much more menacing after passage of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850. The federal law required whites to assist slave catchers even when the slave catchers were operating in the free states. After 1850, freedom seekers had to get themselves all the way to Canada in order to be beyond the reach of the Fugitive Slave law.

Arkansas historian S. Charles Bolton made a historical study of freedom seekers in Arkansas for the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom, a program of the National Park Service. Bolton found that freedom seekers who were attempting to reach the free states from Arkansas had declining success after 1850. Notably fewer

²⁸ Cathey, “Slavery in Arkansas,” 71; Federal Writers Project, *Slave Narratives, Vol. 2, Arkansas* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1941), Adeline Blakely, Solomon P. Pattillo, and Augustus Robinson interviews.

²⁹ Cathey, “Slavery in Arkansas,” 74; Blevins, *A History of the Ozarks*, 22; Federal Writers Project, *Slave Narratives, Vol. 2, Arkansas*, Adeline Blakely interview.

Arkansas women successfully made their way to freedom after 1850. This was in contrast with freedom seekers who started their journey in Kentucky, where there were more helping hands and the fugitive did not have as far to go. Freedom seekers who started from Arkansas were in most ways similar in profile to freedom seekers in eastern states. Most were young men in their twenties, though young women as well as older and younger people of both sexes did make up a portion of them. Most acted on their own but some went in small groups.³⁰

There are no known examples of enslaved persons living in Benton County making their way to freedom prior to the Civil War period. There is, however, the famous case of Nelson Hacket, a bondsman living in Fayetteville, who fled slavery and made his way to Canada in 1841. The case drew attention when Hacket was tracked by slave catchers and successfully extradited back to Arkansas based on a criminal charge that he had stolen his master's horse. Because of the international extradition, Hacket's story was well-documented. About thirty years old, handsome, well-dressed, and well-mannered in his servant's role as his master's valet and butler, Hacket carefully planned his escape and put his plan into action when his master was away on a trip to central Arkansas. First he purloined a fine beaver coat, a gold watch, and a saddle; then he stole his master's favorite racehorse and set out. He traveled quickly through the Ozarks without much difficulty. Leaving the hill country for the lowland counties to the east, he took to traveling at night and hiding out each day. As it was July, he subsisted on roots and berries. When he came to the Mississippi River, he found a sympathetic black ferryman and secured food, transportation across the river, and advice on the route northward. He avoided the main-traveled roads through Kentucky and found another ferryman to take him across the Ohio River to Illinois. The way was easier from there onward to Detroit and the last big river crossing into Canada. Unfortunately, Hacket did not know how closely he was being trailed by slave catchers, and they nabbed him shortly after he reached Canada.³¹

Hacket's journey illustrates what an arduous and dangerous journey it was for any enslaved person in Benton County who might try to make a run for Canada. There were other destinations besides Canada: flight to the Indian Territory, precarious refuge in the free state of Kansas, or the Arkansas wilderness – where a person could at least subsist for a brief time to gain a respite from the unrelenting forced labor on the farm. As Bolton and other historians of slavery have observed, most runaway slaves did not go far or hide out for long. Running away was an act of resistance, but it was not necessarily made with a design of permanently escaping to freedom. Often the runaway acted on impulse to avoid a whipping or to allow a heated temper to cool off. Sometimes it was to visit a

³⁰ Bolton, *Fugitives from Injustice*, 83-84.

³¹ Roman J. Zorn, "An Arkansas Fugitive Slave Incident and its International Repercussions," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 16, no. 2 (Summer 1957), 141-42.

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loved one on another farm. In one historian’s view, running away for a short period was a frequent occurrence – so frequent that it was part of the give and take that defined the master-slave relationship in many instances. “Slave owners seldom advertised or hired slave catchers for those runaways thought to be in the immediate area. Most owners came to accept these temporary absences as a part of the normal routine and generally punished such slaves mildly when they returned.”³²

If Arkansas’s remoteness made it a relatively difficult place from which to get all the way to Canada, for other freedom seekers its placement on the frontier made it a destination. Arkansas’s extensive wilderness in the 1850s – its swamplands in the low country as well as its woodlands in the hill country – provided plenty of area for freedom seekers to find cover. Studies of freedom seekers draw much of their evidence from the advertisements that slaveowners placed in newspapers to obtain help in the capture and return of their slaves. The ads posted rewards, indicated where the runaways started from, and often gave details as to the runaways’ dress, appearance, personality, and emotional circumstances around the time of their fleeing. The slaveowners’ choice of which newspapers to place the ads in is also a telling bit of evidence as it suggests the slaveowners’ suspicion as to the runaways’ likely destination. Bolton found in his study of freedom seekers in Arkansas that many ads were placed in the Arkansas newspapers by slaveowners in states east of the Mississippi River. The evidence from the ads points to the fact that the Arkansas wilderness seemed to provide a fairly promising outlet for freedom seekers from other states, leading Bolton to wonder if their rate of success in threading a course through Arkansas to freedom was higher than previously thought.³³

Arkansas’s remoteness created another circumstance for the black experience before the Civil War. The relatively young state had one of the smallest populations of free blacks of any Southern state. Probably just one free black lived in Benton County: a man named Tony whose semi-free situation will be detailed further on. Historian Billy D. Higgins has researched the lives and experiences of free blacks living in the White River valley. There was David Hall, a free black from Tennessee, who settled with his wife on the lower White River about seven miles below the Little North Fork. He obtained title to his land in 1848 and made a living by selling deer hides and whiskey to traders on the White River. Eventually, David Hall was patriarch to a large community of free black families living in the vicinity, including six families by the name of Hall. In the censuses of 1830, 1840, and 1850 these families were listed as “mulattos,” a term sometimes used to indicate free blacks. There was also Peter Caulder, born in South Carolina in 1795, the son of a free black farmer, who served in the army in the War of 1812 and afterwards re-enlisted and came to be stationed at Fort Smith. In the 1820s, he was sent to the White River country to observe the movements of Cherokees and to locate mineral deposits.

³² Bolton, *Fugitives from Injustice*, 83; Whyne et al., *Arkansas*, 168.

³³ Bolton, *Fugitives from Injustice*, 84-85.

After leaving the army, he moved to the Little North Fork area and married Eliza Hall, a member of the Hall clan.³⁴

Newton County historian Walter Lackey documented the presence of one free black family in Newton County before the Civil War. Sarah Pullman, born in Tennessee in 1804, came to the White River valley in 1828. She had six mulatto children, all born in Newton County's Osage Township, just west of today's Buffalo National River. Sarah Pullman was counted in the 1850 census but not in the 1860 census.³⁵

Free blacks lived precariously in antebellum Arkansas. The state legislature frequently considered bills to enslave free blacks or force them out of the state. In 1838, it enacted legislation restricting free blacks from entering the state, although the law was unenforceable. Calls to expel free blacks from the state gained force during the 1850s, and the legislature passed a law in 1859 that prohibited free blacks from remaining in the state after January 1, 1860. The census of 1860 enumerated only 144 free blacks in the entire state, while the population in Marion County, where the Hall clan resided, fell from 129 in 1850 to just eight people ten years later.³⁶

Slave Community in Benton County

The conditions of slave life varied widely. The slave code provided only minimal standards for the slaves' welfare, so it was mainly left to the enslavers and the enslaved to work out what was livable. While the slaveowner obviously wielded more power than the slave in determining the latter's living conditions, enslaved people used whatever means they could to shape their situation. Public opinion played a role as well. The result was that every situation was unique and generalizations can only go so far in describing slave life.

Antebellum white Southerners' characterization of slavery as a benign institution was resurrected by the historian U. B. Phillips in the early twentieth century and retained credibility in many quarters until it was finally debunked by Kenneth Stampp's *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-bellum South* in 1956. Stampp's work, however, focused on the slaveowners and did not give the slaves much agency. Since then, historical studies of slavery in the Old South have delved more deeply into the slaves' experience in shaping their world by exerting what power they had. Through their own

³⁴ Billy D. Higgins, "The Origins and Fate of the Marion County Free Black Community," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 54, no. 4 (Winter 1995), 427-43; Billy D. Higgins, "Caulder, Peter," in *Arkansas Biography: A Collection of Notable Lives*, edited by Nancy A. Williams (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2000), 57-58.

³⁵ Lackey, *History of Newton County, Arkansas*, 60-61.

³⁶ Ira Berlin, *Slaves Without Masters: The Free Negro in the Antebellum South* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), 136, 372-73; Dwight T. Pitcaithley, "Settlement of the Arkansas Ozarks: The Buffalo River Valley," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (Autumn 1978), 221.

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efforts they formed family and community and evolved black American culture. The diverse historical studies of slavery since the 1950s have also branched out from the traditional focus on the plantation to develop a better understanding of slave life in other economic settings and in specific regions.

Stampp’s work pointed to one of the major variables that shaped slave life: the size of the slaveholding. While Stampp emphasized the variety of forms that the master-slave relationship took, the size of the slaveholding was a critical influence. The experience of a field hand on a large cotton plantation tended to be very different from the experience of a solitary enslaved person living with a hill farmer, for example. The large slaveholder who hired overseers to manage his slave gangs tended to treat his slaves differently than the small slaveholder who owned maybe two people, worked alongside them in the field, and provided them with about the same quality of food, clothing, and medical care as he and his family enjoyed.³⁷

For data on Arkansas slaveholdings one can turn to the long-ago work of historian Robert B. Walz, who compiled figures on slaveholdings by county from the 1850 census (Table 1). From Walz’s table, one finds that among nearly 6,000 slaveholders in

Table 1. Slaves in Benton County by Slaveholding, 1850 (Source: Walz)

	Size of Slaveholdings						
	1	2	3	4	5-9	10-14	Total
Number of Slaveholders	15	12	7	4	8	6	52
Number of Slaves	15	24	21	16	53	72	201

Arkansas in 1850, nearly one in four owned just one slave. Towards the other end of the spectrum, a mere one in twenty slaveholders owned twenty or more slaves. At the extreme end of the spectrum, just nineteen slaveholders in Arkansas owned from 100 to 249 slaves. Meanwhile, many more enslaved people experienced slavery on a plantation than on a small farm. Barely more than half of the slave population in Arkansas belonged to slaveholdings of less than twenty people, while only about one in thirty enslaved people lived alone with a white family.³⁸

³⁷ Kenneth M. Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution: Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South* (New York: Vantage Books, 1956).

³⁸ Walz, “Arkansas Slaveholdings and Slaveholders in 1850,” 47.

The slaveholdings in Benton County were not typical of the whole state. The average size slaveholding for the whole state in 1850 was eight people; in Benton County it was half that number. One in five black people in Benton County lived in slaveholdings of just one or two individuals. Not one slaveholding in Benton County was at the threshold number of twenty people to qualify the slaveholder as a member of the planter class.

Arkansas historian Carl H. Moneyhon examined a statistical sample of the state's large and small slaveholdings to determine what effect the size of the holding had on slaves' abilities to hold their families together. Where a family structure was present, about 60 percent of families had two parents and about 40 percent had one parent. As the size of the slaveholding decreased, the percentage of two-parent families went down. Farmers with small slaveholdings were less inclined to support keeping families together; that is, they were more inclined to split up families if it was in their self-interest to do so. When a slaveowner with a small slaveholding got hard up for cash, he might find it necessary to sell one or two slaves to cover expenses even if it meant breaking up a family. Still, Moneyhon suggested that many small slaveholders went to some lengths to avoid family separations, and the urge to hold slave families together was stronger than earlier credited.³⁹

The difficulties of sustaining entire slave families on the small farm notwithstanding, most historians of slavery still agree with Kenneth Stampp that the slave who lived with a hill farmer was usually better off materially than the slave who belonged to a planter. The farmer was likely to keep his slave clothed in about the same manner as his own humble attire, and feed and shelter his slave as he fed and sheltered his own family. Because of the intimacy of working and living conditions on the family farm, the farmer was more apt to work his slave no harder than he worked himself. By contrast, the field hand on a plantation had to work "from day clean to first dark" under the watchful eye of an overseer who was paid to get the most possible labor out of the slave gang. Plantation slaves lived in separate slave quarters and received substandard food and clothing – as evidenced in the advertising of two standards of groceries in Arkansas newspapers. The health care for enslaved people varied widely, but slave mortality rates were especially high in the pestilential Arkansas bottomlands. Of course, not all persons in large slaveholdings were field hands; some were house slaves or skilled artisans such as blacksmiths and carpenters. Sometimes enslaved people were hired out for their particular skills.⁴⁰

If the slave who lived with the hill farmer was often materially better off than the slave who belonged to a planter, the latter individual had the advantage of a large slave

³⁹ Carl H. Moneyhon, "The Slave Family in Arkansas," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 58, no. 1 (Spring 1999), 24-44; Mutti Burke, *On Slavery's Border*, 120.

⁴⁰ Cathey, "Slavery in Arkansas," 84-90; Stampp, *The Peculiar Institution*, 299.

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community. The plantation slave community provided the comforts of family and friends, a shared religion and folklore, and the rare holiday celebration.⁴¹ Slave life on a farm could be intolerably lonely, particularly when the slaveowner was insensitive to keeping slave families together as often happened. Ozark historian Brooks Blevins writes that the isolation for such people “may have served as a unique form of psychological abuse.” He cites a study of slavery in four counties in far southwestern Missouri where almost half of all slaveholders owned but one slave. “In fact,” Blevin writes, “far southwestern Missouri’s incidence of single-slave ownership was typical of the Ozark region. About a quarter of all slaveholders across the Ozark region had but a single slave.”⁴² So it was in Benton County where fifteen out of fifty-two slaveholders in 1850 owned a solitary person.

Historian Philip V. Scarpino made a study of slavery in Callaway County, Missouri, where slaveholdings were generally small as in Benton County, averaging 4.8 slaves per slaveholding in 1850. Although Callaway County differed from Benton County in important ways, being situated on the Mississippi River in another state, it was similar to Benton County in the small average size of slaveholdings. Scarpino examined slaveholder estate records as well as census records to form a picture of how masters treated their slaves and conceived of slavery. Scarpino drew two main conclusions: first, it appeared that enslavers regarded their slaves as both property and people; however, the property interest took priority and humane treatment of slaves was measured. Second, slaveholders were more self-aggrandizing than their non-slaveholder neighbors. Even as they toiled side by side on their farms with their slaves they made slavery work for them as a profitable system of forced labor.⁴³

Historian Diane Mutti Burke focused on enslaved people’s agency in making their own world in her groundbreaking study of small slaveholding households in Missouri. While her study was limited to Missouri, the conditions of slavery in northwest Arkansas paralleled conditions in Missouri in many ways. Mutti Burke illuminated aspects of slavery in the Ozark region that historians had not recognized previously. Mutti Burke showed that a “vibrant cross-farm slave community” developed in which slaves formed friendships, romantic attachments, and marriages with slaves on nearby farms through work frolics, church services, and other social gatherings. Mutti Burke estimates that 57 percent of marriages among the slave population in Missouri involved partners on separate farms. Slaves sought opportunities to seek marriage partners and to maintain

⁴¹ The seminal works on this topic are John W. Blassingame, *The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Ante-Bellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), and Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World The Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974).

⁴² Blevins, *A History of the Ozarks, Vol. 2, The Conflicted Ozarks*, 22.

⁴³ Philip V. Scarpino, “Slavery in Callaway County, Missouri: 1845-1855 Part II,” *Missouri Historical Review* 71 (April 1977), 274.

family bonds, and slaveholders generally facilitated those connections because they could not afford to keep their slaves in isolation.⁴⁴

Much of Mutti Burke's portrait of slavery in Missouri is suggestive of the probable outlines of the slave experience in Benton County. Enslaved people in Missouri usually lived in slave cabins nearby the owners' home. Sometimes married slaves and their children were given their own cabin, while single slaves might be housed together. Some slave cabins were well-built with hewn logs or clapboards. They might have had puncheon floors and glass or shuttered windows. Others were poorly constructed with no windows and only dirt floors. On the smallest holdings, enslaved people might have shared the house with the white owners.⁴⁵

Some Missouri slaves ate meals separately from the owners and some shared meals with them. Some cooked their own breakfasts and dinners in the slave quarters, using provisions supplied by the owners. Even if they got enough to eat, they had to live with a monotonous diet of basic ingredients and limited time and space for cooking.⁴⁶

Enslaved people in Missouri mostly wore homespun, often having two sets of clothes per season, and the case was no doubt similar in Benton County. The women spent a lot of time making clothes. Sometimes they had to wear the worn out clothing of their white owners. Often blacks went barefoot even in winter; if they had shoes they usually came through the slaveowner from a local merchant at no minor expense to the slaveowner.⁴⁷

On small holdings, enslavers and enslaved looked after one another in sickness and infirmity. (In the 1850 slave schedule for Benton County there were ten individuals, nearly one in twenty, who were sixty years of age or older, and in the 1860 schedule one "insane" person was listed.) Mutti Burke recorded instances where white women nursed black babies and vice versa. Intimate mutual care between the enslaved and the enslavers over many years contributed to the making of long-lasting emotional bonds in many cases. On the other hand, the closeness could be oppressive. Sometimes the prolonged intimacy led to sexual abuse of slave women by white men. If sexual relations between master and slave no doubt occurred along a continuum from rape to something close to a consensual relationship, the master-slave power relationship in all such liaisons was inescapable. When a slave woman became pregnant by her master she faced the dreary

⁴⁴ Mutti Burke, *On Slavery's Border*, 202, 233-34; Diane Mutti Burke, "Slave Neighbors: Missouri's Slave Communities, 1821-1865," paper presented at the 48th Missouri Valley History Conference, March 3-5, 2005, Omaha, Nebraska.

⁴⁵ Mutti Burke, *On Slavery's Border*, 154.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 151.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 152-53.

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prospect of incurring the wrath and enmity of her mistress, often with dire consequences for herself or the child.⁴⁸

For her close study of Missouri’s small-slaveholding households, Mutti Burke drew on two important bodies of evidence. One consisted of the Civil War veteran pension files of black Union soldiers who came out of slavery. The other was the large collection of interviews that were made and assembled by the Federal Writers Project under a grant from the Works Progress Administration (WPA) in the 1930s, known as the WPA slave narratives. As the interviews were made one full lifespan after the end of slavery, they concentrate on the subjects’ childhood experience of slavery or the distilled stories of slavery conditions that the subjects were told by their parents or grandparents many years earlier. Nevertheless, the WPA slave narratives are a treasured source of information on the African American experience with slavery and freedom. Historians use them guardedly, acknowledging that they are remembered accounts that were influenced by the survivors’ old age and generally hard circumstances in the 1930s.⁴⁹

Unfortunately, the experience of blacks in slavery in Benton County is poorly represented in the WPA slave narratives as there were almost no blacks living in Benton County in the 1930s and none were interviewed. All the interviews that were conducted with residents of Arkansas were compiled in *Slave Narratives, Vol. 2, Arkansas*, published in 1938. Ironically, the Arkansas collection was the most robust of any state with nearly 700 interviews completed, constituting about one third of the total, and yet only one of the nearly 700 interviews discussed Benton County. Mary Myhand, a resident of Clarksville, Arkansas, who was eighty-five years old when she was interviewed, grew up on the county line between Benton and Washington counties. Her memories were confined to the war years and after.⁵⁰

Absent much coverage by the WPA slave narratives, only a few fragments of information about individual blacks who lived in Benton County before the Civil War survive. Over the years, local historians have gleaned a few items from courthouse records, publishing them in the *Benton County Pioneer*. There is slightly more information available about Benton County blacks’ experiences during and right after the war, to be discussed later.

⁴⁸ Mutti Burke, *On Slavery’s Border*, 158, 187-89.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 13-16.

⁵⁰ Library of Congress, “The WPA and the Slave Narrative Collection,” at <https://www.loc.gov/collections/slave-narratives-from-the-federal-writers-project-1936-to-1938/articles-and-essays/introduction-to-the-wpa-slave-narratives/wpa-and-the-slave-narrative-collection/>; George E. Lankford, *Bearing Witness: Memories of Arkansas Slavery Narratives from the 1930s WPA Collections*, 2nd edition (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2006), 45-46. Note that the interviews are available online in searchable text. The search word “Benton” was used, turning up the Mary Myhand interview together with a handful of others that referred to the suburb of Benton outside of Little Rock.

The first known emancipated slave in Benton County was a man named Lewis. He was described in the courthouse record as six feet tall, of lighter complexion, and about forty-two years of age. He had at least three owners before he was emancipated in 1853. Their names were Thomas Chisam, Moses Fields, and John H. May. The courthouse record stated,

John H. May for and in consideration of the long faithful service of said Lewis, do hereby manumit, emancipate and set free from all his obligations and servitude as a slave as fully as if the said Lewis had been born free, and the said John H. May, for himself and his heirs and assigns will forever defend the right and title to the said Lewis as a slave against the claims of all persons whatsoever in as full a manner as the title from Moses Fields will warrant.⁵¹

After this mention, there is no further conclusive evidence of what became of Lewis. Did he stay in Benton County? Was he still in Arkansas after January 1, 1860, when free blacks were legally prohibited from being in the state?

Generally, Arkansas slaveholders were more reluctant to free their own slaves than slaveholders east of the Appalachians were. While Arkansas's free black population remained miniscule, manumissions in Virginia contributed to a substantial free black population where about ten percent of blacks lived outside of slavery. In Maryland about half of the black population was free, and in Delaware and the District of Columbia 90 percent of blacks were free. Arkansas slaveholders were similar to slaveholders in other western states like Missouri and Kentucky, where free blacks made up less than 1 percent of the black population. White slaveowners in the west resisted manumission in part because a free black's prospects were so bleak in these states. Laws in these states aimed at driving free blacks out or enslaving them. There was a law in Kentucky that required any slave who was manumitted to leave the state within one month of emancipation.⁵²

One other known case of an emancipation in Benton County before the Civil War involved Tony, a slave of William Patterson. The manumission was included in Patterson's will. The will read as follows:

I give and bequeath unto my beloved wife Elizabeth all my real and personal estate except my black man Tony it is my will that Tony be released from

⁵¹ "First Emancipated Slave in Benton County," *Benton County Pioneer* 7, no. 4 (May 1962), 14.

⁵² Christopher Phillips, *The Rivers Ran Backward: The Civil War and the Remaking of the American Middle Border* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 87.

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involuntary servitude and to remain free from claim of myself and heirs and to be under the care and protection of my four sons, to wit – Amzi, Felix, Horace, and John.

In 1860, Tony was living with William’s son John and daughter-in-law Mary. Tony was listed in the census as Tony Fred, age fifty-two, with a “B” by his name denoting that he was black. The Patterson family would later recall that “Old Tony” and “Aunt Sil” took care of John and Mary’s small children when the parents made a trip back to Tennessee. Tony and Sil were undoubtedly a married couple. Sil was almost certainly the woman listed in the 1860 slave schedule whose age was given as approximately forty-five. Besides Sil, the census page listed six younger persons in Patterson’s slaveholding who ranged in age from five to twenty-five. The census taker made a single tick mark indicating that there was one separate slave house on the property. Unfortunately, there is no further record to suggest the relationships among the eight black people on the Patterson farm.⁵³

After Tony Fred became a free man he elected to stay on the Patterson farm until he died, and he and Sil were eventually buried in the Patterson cemetery. What choice did Fred have when his wife, and perhaps his children as well, were still in bondage there?

Susie King’s story from Washington County provides one more trace of what slave life was like in Benton County. Susie King was born at Cane Hill in 1844. She lived with her mother, four older brothers, and one younger sister on a farm belonging to a white family named Rich. The Rich family consisted of a woman named Rebecca and her four sons and one daughter. Rebecca’s husband had died in a drowning accident, so Rebecca was in charge of the farm. Susie King remembered Rebecca fondly as “Ole Missy,” describing her as petite, light-haired, kind-hearted, and pretty. Though she was attentive to the farm and the household, Rebecca was often indisposed with a headache or toothache or some other malady. When Susie King recalled these details in an interview in the 1930s, her affection for her “Ole Missy” and the rest of the Rich family appeared to the interviewer to be genuine.⁵⁴

Sometime before the Civil War the Rich family moved from Cane Hill a few miles northward in Washington County to Rhea’s Mill. The Rich family was fairly prosperous. In 1849, Rebecca deeded forty acres to each of her four sons. The grown offspring all took up farms nearby, some at Cane Hill and some at Rhea’s Mill. In 1860, Rebecca claimed \$1,000 in real estate and \$3,000 in personal estate, the latter presumably based on her slaveholding. From the 1860 slave schedule, it appears that Rebecca’s sons

⁵³ U.S. Census, 1860, Arkansas, Benton County, population schedule, Sugar Creek Township; Benton County Heritage Committee, *History of Benton County, Arkansas*, 690-91.

⁵⁴ Federal Writers Project, *Slave Narratives, Vol. 2, Arkansas*, Susie King.

William and Absalom lived nearby their mother and each maintained one of Susie's siblings in their household, while Rebecca maintained Susie's mother and two others in her household. Rebecca's son James, meanwhile, had a slaveholding of six people, which perhaps included Susie's remaining three siblings. In Susie King's account, the Rich family and her own black family appeared to stay together though they now resided in multiple households. At least, she made no reference to her black family getting split up or sold off.⁵⁵

Before the Civil War, Susie's family lived in a big, log house. Susie remembered that they had lots of company including frequent visits from the preacher. Susie and her mother spent a lot of time in a room with a loom behind the kitchen. Susie loved to weave. Her mother dyed the yarn in a big kettle in the backyard. Often "Ole Missy" would take a turn sitting at the loom, making Susie stand aside. After a short spell she would hand the work back to Susie, teasing the slave girl in mock protest that the girl was taking the loom away from her.⁵⁶

Historians have questioned whether such fond portraits as the one Susie painted of her relationship to her mistress ought to be taken purely at face value. Were the subjects to some degree conditioned by the majority society to speak benignly of slave times? Were they exhibiting a common human tendency to look back on traumatic experiences in a positive light? The interviewers in the 1930s posed a standard set of questions to their interview subjects, such as, how were they or their parents treated by their one-time slaveowners? Reading one interview after another it becomes apparent that in some cases WPA interviewers only managed to elicit somewhat rote responses from their subjects that were conditioned by what blacks in the 1930s expected whites wanted to hear. Susie King's interview is a convincing one because it evinces a spontaneity and offers a sprinkling of details that sets it apart from the more rote interviews. Furthermore, King was interviewed by one of the more skilled WPA interviewers.⁵⁷

Susie King and other blacks who lived in northwest Arkansas in the 1840s and 1850s told stories about their experiences in the war. We will come to those in Chapter Six.

The Secession Crisis in Arkansas and Benton County

The Unionism that became manifest in northwest Arkansas during the Civil War had its roots in national and state politics prior to the war. As North and South grew

⁵⁵ Federal Writers Project, *Slave Narratives, Vol. 2, Arkansas*, Susie King.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Susie King's interviewer, Zillah Cross Peel (1874-1941), was a respected journalist, newspaper editor, and publisher of Bentonville whose papers are collected at the University of Arkansas Fayetteville. She also interviewed Adeline Blakely of Fayetteville.

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increasingly estranged over the slavery question in the decades leading to the Civil War, the white population in the highland counties of northwest Arkansas registered little interest in the issue. Most of the settlers in the region were born and bred Southerners and shared an innate sympathy for “Southern rights.” But few of them owned slaves and therefore they did not feel moved to defend slavery. The growth of slavery and large cotton plantations in the southern and lowland parts of the state only reinforced these farmers’ sense that planters were coalescing too much power in the state and that their own interests were not aligned with the planters’ interests.

The slavery question and other sectional differences gave rise to new national political parties in the 1850s, notably the Republican Party, which managed to unite Northern “free soil” farmers, abolitionists, and business interests. With broad appeal in the North and no support in the South, the Republican Party nominated Abraham Lincoln for president in 1860. The Democratic Party, meanwhile, splintered into Northern and Southern factions, with the Northern wing fielding Stephen Douglas as its candidate and the Southern wing choosing John C. Breckinridge. The Constitutional Union Party, composed mostly of former members of the defunct Whig Party, nominated John Bell. With the vote divided among four candidates, Lincoln was able to win a majority of the electoral votes and the presidency even though the Republican Party was anathema to Southern voters. Lincoln’s election provoked a secession crisis that ultimately led to war.

Given their indifference toward the slavery issue, one might expect that the people of Benton County would have voted for John Bell, the candidate of compromise. However, the vote in Benton County as in all the northwest Arkansas counties went solidly for John C. Breckinridge, the candidate of the Southern wing of the divided Democratic Party (while the planters and business owners in the lowland counties of Arkansas voted predominantly for Bell). As many of these same voters in northwest Arkansas would soon oppose secession and war, their vote is perplexing. Arkansas historian Michael B. Dougan explains the vote as a show of ignorance: there were few newspapers in the region, and therefore few newspaper readers, allowing an ill-informed electorate to vote against its own best interests.⁵⁸ Historian Thomas DeBlack puts it another way: “It may seem strange that the candidate most identified with slavery and states’ rights found such great support in northwest Arkansas, where slavery was least developed,” writes DeBlack. “But that part of the state had always been staunchly Democratic and the best explanation may be that those voters were more influenced by party loyalty than by the overheated rhetoric about slavery.”⁵⁹ Indeed, the pattern was repeated elsewhere across the South; non-slaveholding white Southerners turned out for the Democratic Party not because they were pro-slavery but because they saw the Democratic Party as the party of Andrew Jackson and the common man.

⁵⁸ Blevins, *A History of the Ozarks, Vol. 2, The Conflicted Ozarks*, 34.

⁵⁹ Thomas DeBlack, *With Fire and Sword: Arkansas*, 18.

The tumultuous election of 1860 was also pivotal at the state level. In the 1850s the Democratic Party dominated Arkansas politics to such a degree that leading state Democrats were known as the “Family” or “Dynasty.” But in 1860, two prominent Arkansas Democrats led an insurgency against the Dynasty and Arkansas voters responded. The first to open the breach was Congressman Thomas C. Hindman, a planter from Helena, Arkansas, whose gift for oratory soon won him a popular following. The second was Henry Rector, a planter from Saline County, who announced in May 1860 his candidacy for governor as an Independent Democrat. Rector defeated Senator Robert Ward Johnson in the governor’s race, ending the Dynasty’s control of Arkansas politics. Hindman and Rector were successful with Arkansas voters because they portrayed themselves as the true representatives of the party of Andrew Jackson and the common man, while contending that Johnson and the Dynasty were corrupt and narrowly represented the privileged. It was local, not national, issues that separated the gubernatorial candidates. While Johnson was the more vociferous pro-slavery of the two, Rector, too, insisted on the rights of Southerners to expand slavery into the territories and to secede from the Union if conditions demanded it. When the gubernatorial ballots were counted in August 1860, Rector carried the northwestern counties by similar slim margins to those registered in other parts of the state.⁶⁰

After the election of Abraham Lincoln, most Arkansans were probably inclined to agree with the former Whig Party leader, Albert Pike, who argued that the Republican Party’s triumph did not by itself signify a reason to secede from the Union. But Governor Rector, taking office on November 15, soon sounded a more alarmist note in his inaugural address, while Congressman Hindman and Senator Johnson speaking from their respective seats in Congress were even more combative. After South Carolina became the first Southern state to withdraw from the Union in December, those two former political foes closed ranks and issued a joint call for a state convention to consider secession. Petitions both for and against a secession convention flooded the state legislature, and on January 15, 1861 the state legislature passed a measure calling for voters to decide, in a special election on February 18, whether or not to call a convention and to elect delegates.⁶¹

The special election brought forward candidates who were either “secessionist” or “Unionist.” But the Unionist position was complicated. In the first place, most Unionist candidates appealed to voters to vote against calling the convention, but also to choose a Unionist delegate in the event that a majority of voters favored calling the convention; therefore, they practically had to define themselves as an obstructionist minority. Moreover, Unionists were of different shadings. Most were “conditional Unionists,” meaning that they would oppose secession up to a point, provided that Northern and

⁶⁰ DeBlack, *With Fire and Sword: Arkansas*, 10-15.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 18-20.

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Southern politicians could construct a satisfactory compromise. Much rarer were “unconditional Unionists,” or those who wanted to preserve the Union even if it would jeopardize the future of slavery.⁶²

Underscoring the complexity of the Unionist position, state citizens voted in favor of holding a secession convention by nearly two to one, but a majority of the delegates they elected to the convention were opposed to secession. Slaveholders were disproportionately well represented. Although only one in five eligible voters in Arkansas was a slaveholder, forty-seven out of seventy-seven of the men elected to the secession convention owned slaves, and seventeen of them had large holdings of twenty or more slaves. Predictably, the larger slaveholders leaned toward secession while the men of more modest means tended to oppose it. Delegates representing the less wealthy counties of northwest Arkansas were the most staunchly opposed to secession.⁶³

The people of Benton County elected Haley Jackson, a fifty-year-old farmer and slaveholder, and A. W. Dinsmore, a forty-year-old merchant and slaveholder, to be their delegates to the convention. Jackson was typical of the population: he came from North Carolina, was married with five children, and had sixty-five acres of cultivated fields on which he produced one-thousand bushels of corn. His farm was in Osage Township. Dinsmore was from Pennsylvania, was married with four children, owned 540 acres of unimproved land, and claimed \$28,900 in personal property, placing him in the top fourth of delegates based on personal wealth. He lived in Bentonville.⁶⁴

By the time the delegates met in Little Rock and opened the convention on March 4, the secession crisis had deepened. Between January 9 and February 1, six more Southern states joined South Carolina in pulling out of the Union. Each of those states, too, called a convention to decide on secession. The seven seceded states formed the Confederacy on February 8. About the same time, there was a tense standoff in Little Rock over control of the federal arsenal there. After a volunteer militia hastily assembled to confront the small federal garrison, Governor Rector persuaded the Union commander at the arsenal to surrender and lead his soldiers out of the state capital. Secessionists exploited these events to turn public opinion toward their side.⁶⁵

Unionists still held a majority in the convention but their position was fast eroding. After a week of debate, secessionists introduced a motion for the convention to pass an ordinance of secession that would go into effect only upon ratification by another

⁶² James M. Woods. *Rebellion and Realignment: Arkansas's Road to Secession* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1987), 151.

⁶³ Ralph Wooster, “The Arkansas Secession Convention,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 12, no. 2 (Summer 1954), 182-83.

⁶⁴ Wooster, “The Arkansas Secession Convention,” 178, 181-82; U.S. Census, 1860, Arkansas, Benton County, population schedule, Osage Township.

⁶⁵ Jack B. Scroggs, “Arkansas in the Secession Crisis,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 12, no. 3 (Autumn 1953), 199-205.

statewide ballot initiative. This tentative measure was rejected by a narrow majority of thirty-nine to thirty-five. After another two weeks of futile debate and finding itself deadlocked, the convention adjourned with a plan to reconvene following another statewide election on August 5 on the question of “cooperation” or “secession.”⁶⁶

In April, the political situation changed dramatically. First, South Carolina’s attempt to blockade Fort Sumter in Charleston harbor, and President Lincoln’s decision to reinforce it, seemed to confirm for many Southerners that the Southern states could not expect compromise from the new Republican administration in Washington. Then, when Confederate forces fired on Fort Sumter and Lincoln resolved to raise a Federal army to put down the “rebellion,” secessionists feeling intensified. The president’s call for troops, including 780 volunteers from the state of Arkansas, seemed to auger a strategy of coercion, not cooperation, for wavering Southern states. Governor Rector defied the president’s request for troops, and more, he seized federal arsenals at Fort Smith and Little Rock and allowed Confederate artillery to be placed in Helena to control the Mississippi. The Fort Sumter crisis changed the political equation. As Virginia became the first state in the Upper South to secede, and as the Confederacy began to form a government, it now seemed that Arkansas must either stay in the Union or join the Confederacy.⁶⁷

It fell to the president of the secession convention, David Walker of Fayetteville, to summon the delegates back into session. A strong Unionist before the Fort Sumter crisis, Walker remained doubtful toward the secessionist movement but could not ignore the shift in popular sentiment. He worried that without direction by the state convention, the eastern and southern portions of the state might secede independently. Therefore, he recalled the delegates to Little Rock on May 6. A vote was taken that day. Benton County’s two delegates and all but five of the rest voted in favor of secession. Four of the five dissenting votes were from other highland counties in northwest Arkansas including one from Washington County and two from Madison County. After the vote, Walker called upon the five dissenters to change their votes so that the wires might “carry the news to all the world that Arkansas stands as a unit against coercion.” Four of the five consented to change their vote; the fifth, Isaac Murphy, an Ozark mountain farmer from Madison County, steadfastly refused. “I have cast my vote after mature reflection, and have duly considered the consequences, and I cannot conscientiously change it,” he boldly stated. “I therefore vote no!”⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Scroggs, “Arkansas in the Secession Crisis,” 214-15.

⁶⁷ Woods, *Rebellion and Realignment*, 153-55; James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 282.

⁶⁸ Walker and Murphy quoted in Woods, *Rebellion and Realignment*, 159-60 Scroggs, “Arkansas in the Secession Crisis,” 223.

War and a Divided Community

Some indication of where the citizens of northwest Arkansas stood politically was found after Governor Rector issued a call for 10,000 enlistments in the early summer of 1861. “To Arms! To Arms!” the governor’s proclamation was headlined in the *Arkansas True Democrat*, with the full text printed on the first page and the newspaper distributed to post offices around the state. The governor’s proclamation named locations where mustering officers were to muster men into service for a period of twelve months. Recruits were to form into companies of sixty-four to ninety-six men, the companies to form into regiments of six to ten companies apiece. Recruits were directed to bring their own guns (rifles preferred over muskets) as well as a large hunting knife. The state would compensate recruits for each rifle brought to the mustering ground. As soon as companies formed, the men would elect their officers. Then the state would provide a wagon and team to haul the company’s equipment.⁶⁹

All parts of Arkansas did not respond to the call to arms in the same way. In many southeastern counties, Arkansans showed a burst of enthusiasm for the war. An impressive throng of young men rushed to sign up for what most expected to be a short conflict, a manly adventure, perhaps even a lark. In most of the northwestern counties the response to the call to arms was more muted. The first rush to enlist was not a perfect indication of a county’s support for the Confederate cause because it mainly involved the young men in the population, and there were many complicating factors in a young man’s situation such as an obligation to work on the farm. Many Benton County men who enlisted that summer deserted after just a few months – going home, perhaps, to help with the harvest. Depending on the men’s temperament, or perhaps their political views, many checked themselves at first and then signed up in the fall or the following spring. After the Confederacy passed a conscription law in the spring of 1862 the cycle of recruitment and desertion intensified, and by war’s end large numbers of draft dodgers and deserters from the Confederate army would sign up with the Union army instead. Nevertheless, the first wave of enlistments were all volunteers, and the voluntary enlistment usually indicated at least some measure of true affection for the Confederate cause, complicated though it might be.⁷⁰

Volunteers in the far northwestern counties mustered at a temporary camp near Bentonville in July. Over a span of two weeks enough men arrived to form six companies. Four small companies of infantry were formed from a total of 289 men. Another single company enrolled 109 men and was sent to join an infantry regiment that was being formed in Saline County near Little Rock. One more company of mounted rifles was formed that was made up of eighty-five men who brought their own horses.

⁶⁹ *Arkansas True Democrat*, July 25, 1861.

⁷⁰ Wayne et al., *Arkansas*, 190; Georgena Duncan, “Uncertain Loyalties: Dual Enlistment in the Third and Fourth Arkansas Cavalry, USV,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 72, no. 4 (Winter 2013), 305-32.

That made 483 men altogether in a tri-county area with around 5,000 men of military age. It was a strong showing but not an overwhelming one.⁷¹

The single, large company became part of the 11th Arkansas Infantry Regiment. The single mounted rifle company was attached to the 2nd Arkansas Mounted Rifles Regiment. The other four infantry companies were formed into the 3rd Arkansas Infantry Battalion (less than half the size of a regiment) and placed under the command of Lt. Col. Dandridge McRae, a lawyer from Searcy, Arkansas. With scant training, the battalion was quickly marched off to engage in the impending battle in southern Missouri (fought at Wilson's Creek on August 10, 1861). After the battle, the battalion returned to Arkansas for more training. Four more companies were added to the unit in October and November, including one more from Benton County, to make a regiment. Still understrength, it was designated the 21st Arkansas Infantry Regiment in December 1861. After two more companies were added to the regiment it became the 15th (Northwest) Arkansas Infantry Regiment. Other companies would be formed in Benton County as the war went on, but this regiment was the only one in the Confederate army recruited primarily in Benton County.⁷²

Several young men of the Pea Ridge community joined up at the first call and served in the Confederate army to the war's end. One of them was James Wade Sikes, the farmer and school teacher. At this time he was thirty-two years old, married, with a two-year-old daughter. On July 15, he rode his horse to the encampment just outside of Bentonville and signed up. He was enrolled in Company D of the 2nd Arkansas Mounted Rifles. He was elected first sergeant of his company. The captain of the company was the youthful and flamboyant John Arrington of Bentonville. The regimental commander was Colonel James M. McIntosh.⁷³

Two members of the Foster clan, James and Daniel enlisted on the same day, July 15, and were enrolled in the same infantry company. James was just seventeen years old, the oldest of seven children belonging to Wiley and Anna Foster. Daniel was a twenty-three-year-old farmer with a wife and one-month-old daughter. While James would survive the war, his older cousin would not. Daniel would die of smallpox in a military prison in Illinois in January 1865.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Arkansas Edward G. Gerdes Civil War Home Page, at <http://www.couchgenweb.com/civilwar/>. The four companies were Company A with sixty men, Company B with sixty-two men, Company C with seventy-eight men, and Company D with eighty-five men. It is inferred that the mustering ground near Bentonville drew mainly from Benton, Washington, and Madison counties. The nearest other mustering grounds in June and July 1861 were at Fort Smith and Yellville. Recruitment at Fayetteville followed in October. The three counties had a combined population in 1860 of around 30,000 people. In Sugar Creek Township, men of military age made up one sixth of the total population.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ James M. Sikes, "James Wade Sikes (1828-1929)," 2008, Rogers Museum, Sikes vertical file.

⁷⁴ McCoy and McCoy, *Elkhorn Tavern 1860*, 60-61.

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Thomas Roughton, a physician and slaveholder with a farm on Pea Ridge, enlisted with his nineteen-year-old son James on July 16. Though they enlisted together, their paths diverged in the war. The father was discharged in October 1861. Later, he was enlisted in a Confederate cavalry regiment but must have become disillusioned because in February 1864 he joined a Union cavalry regiment, the 2nd Kansas Cavalry and ended the war at Fort Gibson in the Indian Territory. His son, meanwhile, was captured and paroled at Vicksburg, Mississippi. After the war, the father lived in Bentonville and the son moved to Texas.⁷⁵

Each soldier’s spare service record is only a vague and imperfect indicator of his degree of patriotism or his ultimate allegiance to one side or the other in the conflict. A variety of circumstances could cause a soldier to desert one unit and sign up with another. Even when a soldier changed sides in the conflict, it was not necessarily done out of patriotic feeling. Still, the number of men of military age in the Pea Ridge community who volunteered in July 1861 was not large, and that seems significant. There were about one hundred men of military age living on Pea Ridge but only a handful went to the mustering ground when first called. Many would volunteer after a few months and many more would be conscripted in 1862 or later. Judging by the service records of the hundred or so men – especially the dates of their first enlistment – it would appear that most of them were either hesitant or strongly opposed to joining the Confederate cause.⁷⁶

Joseph Bailey, a patriotic Arkansas Confederate from neighboring Carroll County, would write in his memoir that at the very first muster call he set down his plow in the middle of a corn row and went off to fight. He claimed that other farm boys in his neighborhood did the same. If Bailey was speaking the literal truth, there is no evidence that the first muster call carried such an electrifying response at Pea Ridge.⁷⁷

Following the initial turnout in July, several more men from the Pea Ridge community mustered into Confederate service in October 1861. A larger contingent signed up for an “emergency” thirty-day service in February 1862. The latter contingent included David and Isaac Scott, ages twenty-two and nineteen; William Carden, age twenty-four; Robert D. Hays, age twenty-six; Thomas Caveness, age twenty-seven; George Lawson, age twenty-nine; William Evans, age thirty-four; Paschal Martin, age

⁷⁵ McCoy and McCoy, *Elkhorn Tavern 1860*, 33-34.

⁷⁶ There were 102 men recorded in the census of 1860 in the Sugar Creek Township who were between the ages of eighteen and forty-five. The author investigated the military records of the first fifty listed in the census by plugging each last name and first initial into the Arkansas Edward G. Gerdes Civil War website and examining the soldier’s service record. Due to misspellings and inconsistent reporting of first names and initials, as well as probable gaps in both the U.S. Census and the military service records, the results were imprecise. Broadly, however, the results convey a smaller turnout of recruits for the Pea Ridge community compared with Benton County as a whole.

⁷⁷ Joseph M. Bailey, *Confederate Guerrilla: The Civil War Memoir of Joseph M. Bailey*, ed. T. Lindsay Baker (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2007), 9. Bailey wrote that he had made some preliminary arrangements to enlist prior to this muster call, which came in October 1861.

forty-three; Paschal's sons William and James, ages seventeen and twenty; and two more from the Martin clan: Andrew Martin, age twenty-three; and Thomas J. Martin, age twenty-five. The Pea Ridge community gave up another sizeable batch of new recruits to the Confederate army in August 1862. Together with other men of Benton County they formed Company F in the 35th Arkansas Infantry Regiment. By then, however, conscription was in place and many young men signed up because they felt they had no choice. The veteran soldiers who volunteered in the first year of the war complained bitterly that the conscripts who entered the ranks after 1861 were an inferior class of soldier. Among them was George Glasscock, a servant who resided with the widow Jane Ruddick. Glasscock would be listed as a deserter one year after his enlistment.⁷⁸

First Blood at the Battle of Wilson's Creek

Any illusion that Arkansas secession would be accomplished without much shedding of blood of its citizens was shattered by the Battle of Wilson's Creek on August 10, 1861, which was fought a few miles south of Springfield, Missouri. Together with the Battle of Pea Ridge, these two bloody battles fought in the Trans-Mississippi West in the first year of the war demonstrated that Civil War battles would be hard-fought and terribly lethal. At Wilson's Creek, the combined forces of Price's Missouri State Guard and Brig. Gen. Benjamin McCulloch's Confederate army stopped the advance of the Federal army under Lyon's command. It was a confusing fight for the two inexperienced armies and the Northern commander was killed. Although the Southern forces were victorious, the casualties were about even on both sides and many Arkansans lost their lives. Indeed, Arkansas soldiers made up more than half the troops on the Southern side.⁷⁹

Most of the Arkansas troops that fought at Wilson's Creek had just a few weeks of training before going into battle. James Wade Sikes of Pea Ridge fought at Wilson's Creek after just twenty-six days of training with his unit. He served in the battle as an orderly sergeant, conveying orders from the regimental officer to the men in his company. Around two thirds of the Benton County men who signed up in July and were assigned to McRae's battalion were thrown into battle, and nine of them were killed or wounded. It does not appear that anyone from the Pea Ridge community was killed at

⁷⁸ McCoy and McCoy, *Elkhorn Tavern, 1860*, 32-33, 39-40, 47, 59, 63, 68; Philip Van Doren Stern, ed., *Soldier Life in the Union and Confederate Armies* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1961), 304; Arkansas Edward G. Gerdes Civil War Home Page, at <http://www.couchgenweb.com/civilwar/>.

⁷⁹ Dale Edwards, "Arkansas: Pea Ridge and State Division," *Journal of the West* 14, no. 1 (Spring 1975), 171-72.

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Wilson’s Creek, but in the days after the battle there were many anxious parents awaiting word about their sons.⁸⁰

Unionists and War Resisters in 1861

At the beginning of the secession crisis there was vigorous public debate about what Arkansas should do. Northwestern counties sent a number of petitions to the state capital calling for sober reflection in the matter. Anti-secessionists in Benton County and in other northern tier Arkansas counties pointed out that their lands would be the first to be invaded if the border state of Missouri stayed in the Union and North and South went to war. They warned that Benton County was even more exposed since it shared a border with the Indian Territory. (They pointed out that there was a north-south line of federal forts on the old Indian frontier to the west of Benton County, which was true, but the bigger threat to Benton County would come from the obvious line of march down the Fayetteville-to-Springfield Road.) One Unionist broadside that circulated around Benton County in February 1861 warned non-slaveholding farmers that they might be relegated to second-class citizens in the proposed Confederate States of America. Under the new regime, would the right to vote be limited to slaveholders? Still another petition, claiming that secessionists in the southeastern counties were trying to foist their extremist views on the rest of the state, proposed to move the state capital to Bentonville.⁸¹

As the secession crisis progressed, free speech on the issue began to come under strain. A few residents of Pea Ridge kept talking to their neighbors and voicing their political opinions while most of them grew quiet. One resident who stopped talking was John Buttry, a thirty-two year-old Tennessean, Baptist, non-slaveholding farmer, and family man with a wife and five small children. At first, Buttry urged his neighbors to resist secession. In the special election held on February 18, 1861, he voted against forming a secession convention and voted for the unconditional Unionist candidate who was not elected. Bold and outspoken during those early months of 1861, he was advised to clam up when the state swung toward secession around the time of the Fort Sumter crisis. He received a threat from some secessionists and had some property stolen which he took as an act of intimidation. He became “prudent and silent” to escape persecution.⁸²

Other Unionists who lived on Pea Ridge were guarded about speaking their mind from the very beginning of the secession crisis. Ivan Ford was a twenty-nine-year-old

⁸⁰ James M. Sikes, “James Wade Sikes (1828-1929),” 2008, Rogers Museum, Sikes vertical file; “Rev. J. Wade Sikes: Rogers’ First Mayor was Pea Ridge Veteran,” *Rogers (Ark.) Daily News*, May 25, 1963, Shiloh Museum of Ozark History, family history vertical files; National Park Service, “Order of Battle,” Wilson’s Creek National Battlefield, at <https://www.nps.gov/wicr/learn/historyculture/order-of-battle.htm>.

⁸¹ Howard, “Civil War Unionists and Their Legacy in the Arkansas Ozarks,” 40-41; Woods, *Rebellion and Realignment*, 126; Blevins, *A History of the Ozarks, Vol. 2, The Conflicted Ozarks*, 40-41.

⁸² *Records of the Commission of Claims (Southern Claims Commission), 1871-1880*, John Buttry claim 9278.

Tennessean and non-slaveholding farmer with 200 acres, about one quarter in cultivation. He and his wife and daughter shared the farm with his older brother John and family. Privately, Ivan thought the Confederacy was a bad idea and a losing proposition. As he would later testify under oath, he sympathized with the Union cause all along, thinking the Union “was good enough for him and it would carry the day.” But during the secession crisis he did not talk politics with anyone. He minded his own business as he put in that year’s crop. Even so, others knew him from past experience to be a Unionist.⁸³

The Unionist position became more difficult when the governor began girding the state for war in the summer of 1861. When Arkansas seceded, Unionists clung to the hope that Arkansas could stay neutral in the conflict. Events in Missouri soon indicated that neutrality was not possible for Arkansas. In the border state of Missouri, the political fight over secession dissolved into armed conflict. The stakes for North and South were high because Missouri had a large population and the city of St. Louis had valuable industry as well as a hold on Mississippi and Missouri River navigation and commerce. A hastily assembled federal force under the command of Brig. Gen. Nathaniel Lyon moved to secure the Missouri state capital, while Missouri secessionists consolidated their power in the Missouri State Guard under the command of the former governor, Maj. Gen. Sterling Price. By July and August of 1861, it was becoming evident that Confederate hopes in the Trans-Mississippi West would ride on wresting control of Missouri from the Union, and that Arkansas would be the critical base of operations for all Rebel military actions aimed at Missouri. By the same token, for the North to secure Missouri it would have to invade and occupy Arkansas. So, as the armed conflict in Missouri gave every sign of spreading into Arkansas, Arkansas Unionists’ calls for neutrality began to seem not only futile but perhaps treasonous.

In the fall of 1861, some Unionists in the northwestern counties of Arkansas formed secret societies aimed at resisting Confederate authority. The Unionists’ shadowy organizations went by various names: the Home Protection Society, the Home Guard, the Pro Bono Publico Society, the Peace Society. Although each group was autonomous, they seem to have shared a set of secret signs and oaths of allegiance. As historian Dwight T. Pitcaithley observes, while the aims of these groups were never made clear, they likely evinced defense rather than neutrality.⁸⁴ The constitution of one such peace organization declared that its sole purpose was for members “to combine together for the mutual protection of themselves and their families and their property.” A citizen of Fulton County who was under arrest when he testified before a military board about his group stated that “the object of the society was for keeping down mobs, and protecting our property from being destroyed.” Another prisoner from Fulton County said “this

⁸³ *Records of the Commission of Claims (Southern Claims Commission), 1871-1880*, Ivan S. and Jackson Ford claim 10188.

⁸⁴ Dwight Pitcaithley, *Let the River Be: A History of the Ozark’s Buffalo River* (Washington: National Park Service, 1987), 41.

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institution was to be a peace society, unconnected with Lincoln’s army.” One individual testified that he “would not fight [the] enemy” unless Arkansas was invaded.⁸⁵

The Peace Society and its affiliated groups spread by word of mouth. Members took an oath and learned secret signals in order to join. Fathers recruited their sons; neighbor recruited neighbor. Sometimes several people were sworn in at one gathering, which might occur in a member’s house or at a predetermined spot in the country. Meetings were kept small to avoid attracting attention. Oaths of allegiance and constitutions were put in writing and passed from cell to cell in spite of the danger involved in these transmittals. Some people claimed that the peace groups were brought down from the North, but there is no evidence to support this.⁸⁶

Confederate authorities first learned of the secret peace groups on November 17, 1861, when six men in Van Buren County were suspected of conspiring and confessed to the existence of a secret network. Almost simultaneously, a breach of another peace group’s secrecy occurred in Searcy County. By then the loose network of peace groups had cells in Carroll, Marion, Fulton, Izard, Searcy, and Van Buren counties. The cells may have extended into Madison, Benton, and Washington counties but even if they did not the Unionists in those counties felt the repercussions when Governor Rector learned of the conspiracy and decided that it had to be rooted out and crushed.

The dragnet started on November 17, 1861, when Confederate authorities arrested six men in Van Buren County who were suspected of holding a secret meeting. A couple days later, a vigilante mob gathered in Searcy County and arrested a suspected Unionist conspirator there. A sudden fear swept across the region whipped up by rumors that the Unionist conspirators were about to rise up and go on a killing spree. In some communities vigilante mobs formed; in other places county governments attempted to exert authority over these armed mobs by calling them “scouting parties” and directing them to go door to door and make inquiries but to proceed with restraint.

In Benton County, a vigilante mob of about fifty men formed. Some called it a militia or posse. So great was the fear in the community that men were cowed into joining the mob lest they bring suspicion on themselves by refusing. One such fellow was Cyrus Kindley whose farm was on Big Sugar Creek about four miles north of Bentonville. Men came to his house and directed him to “come out” and go with them or else he “would be tore up or killed.” He rode around the area with this posse for two days. Coming to each farmhouse, a party of five or six men would be sent up to the door to interview the proprietor. He gleaned from some of the men that they were on a

⁸⁵ Quoted in Ted R. Worley, “Documents Relating to the Arkansas Peace Society of 1861,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 17 (Spring 1958), 87, 98-101.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 99-101.

manhunt for a person in a straw hat, but the man was never found and the posse's real purpose remained vague to him.⁸⁷

John W. Foster was also summoned by the mob at this time. He was told to go to Bentonville to meet some citizens there. When he reached the assembly point, some two miles east of Bentonville, he found a mob gathered for the purpose of trying one "Mr. Miser." This was George Miser, age fifty-four, a farmer from Tennessee and father of eleven children. Foster's testimony (given to the Southern Claims Commission over a decade later) was not explicit about the nature of Miser's offense. But it obviously had to do with his loyalty to the Union. Ironically, about nine months following this event George Miser's oldest son John, who was twenty-four, would be conscripted into the Confederate army along with eighty-four other men of Benton County, and would be elected by the men as captain of the company, Company F in the 35th Arkansas Infantry Regiment. The mob who held George Miser for trial threatened to hang him or make him leave the county. When Foster was brought to the scene, he took a "decided stand in favor of letting Mr. Miser loose and allowing him to return to his house as other men." Other voices came to Miser's defense but the mob was about equally divided for and against releasing him. Finally he was released and allowed to return to his home.⁸⁸

The wave of fear in November 1861 soon spent itself and mob rule was averted, but not before mass arrests were conducted by the state government in the counties east of Benton County. On November 28, 1861, Governor Rector wrote to President Jefferson Davis about the "conspiracy" discovered in the northern part of the state. Rector believed the conspirators' intentions were to join the Federal army if it should enter Arkansas. The same day, the governor directed officials in Searcy and Izard counties to call out the militia and "proceed to arrest all the men in your county who profess friendship for the Lincoln government – or who harbor or support others arousing hostility to the Confederate States or the State of Arkansas." After making arrests the militia was to march these prisoners under guard to Little Rock where they would face charges of treason.

In Searcy County several companies of militia were called up and scores of suspected conspirators were taken prisoner. Another group of militia rounded up more suspects in Marion, Newton, and Carroll counties. In early December the prisoners were assembled at Burrowville, the county seat of Searcy County, shackled in pairs, and driven like a coffle of slaves to the state capital where they were joined by yet more prisoners brought from Fulton and Van Buren counties. In Little Rock, Governor Rector threatened

⁸⁷ *Records of the Commission of Claims (Southern Claims Commission), 1871-1880*, Cyrus Kindley claim 17241.

⁸⁸ *Records of the Commission of Claims (Southern Claims Commission), 1871-1880*, John W. Foster claim 13736.

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to see all of them hanged if they did not join the Confederate army. Most of them joined to save their necks and then deserted some months later.⁸⁹

Civilian Flight

After the Battle of Wilson’s Creek, Price led the Missouri State Guard northward to the Missouri River, where slavery and secessionist sentiment in Missouri were most concentrated, and defeated a Union garrison at Lexington. The Union’s Maj. Gen. John C. Frémont, placed in command of the Federal army, chased Price back to Springfield. McCulloch, meanwhile, fell back to northwest Arkansas while federal forces held up around Rolla. For a few months, the citizens of Benton County were given a reprieve from invasion. Then, in November, there was an important change of Federal command over the Department of the Missouri as the capable Brig. Gen. Henry W. Halleck replaced the ineffectual Maj. Gen. David Hunter. Halleck recognized that Price and his Missouri State Guard, remaining active in the western part of Missouri, still posed a threat to St. Louis and the whole state of Missouri. Halleck saw that the Federals must take the offensive in the Trans-Mississippi West to secure Missouri for the Union. In late December, Halleck appointed Brig. Gen. Samuel R. Curtis in command of the Federal troops in southwestern Missouri with orders to commence a winter campaign. When Curtis began his campaign in January 1862, Benton County citizens were soon awakened to the fact that their county would likely become a battleground.⁹⁰

At this early stage in the war, few residents were willing to leave their homes and become refugees for an indefinite period. But a trickle of civilians in northwest Arkansas did flee the impending clash of armies. Among them was Jesse Cox, the owner of the Elkhorn Tavern. While most residents of Pea Ridge would either evacuate their homes on the very eve of the battle or mostly hunker down through the intense fighting, Jesse Cox decided to be proactive. Days or weeks before the Battle of Pea Ridge he drove his cattle back to Troy, Kansas to get his herd to safety and out of reach of the armies’ foraging parties. Cox’s motivation, decision, and preemptive move prior to the battle were all investigated by Cox family descendants when the Cox family and the Elkhorn Tavern acquired historical interest thanks to their role in the Battle of Pea Ridge. The story of Jesse Cox’s flight, though it was reconstructed entirely from family memory, may be taken as basically accurate despite minor discrepancies in the several versions told.

Jesse Cox was not the first family member to become a refugee, according to descendant Ernest Y. Cox. At the outbreak of the war, Jesse’s son George, who was

⁸⁹ A. W. Bishop, *Loyalty on the Frontier: Sketches of Union Men of the South* (St. Louis, MO: A. P. Studley & Company, 1863), 128-29; DeBlack, *With Fire and Sword*, 30-31. Also see James J. Johnston, *Mountain Feds: Arkansas Unionists and the Peace Society* (Little Rock: Butler Center Books, 2018).

⁹⁰ Albert Castel, “A New View of the Battle of Pea Ridge,” *Missouri Historical Review* 62, no. 1 (January 1968), 136-37; Shea and Hess, *Pea Ridge*, 1-10.

about twenty-three years of age, escorted his wife Mahala (Lee) to Belton, Texas to stay with her mother “while George went off to fight with the Confederate Army along with his brothers.” No other family account disputes this point, while family tradition generally affirms that the three oldest sons of Jesse and Polly Cox (William, George, and Richard) all joined the Confederate army.⁹¹

It seems that Jesse Cox formulated his plan to drive his cattle to Kansas well before the battle took place. One account states it was in “late April or early March” (probably meaning to say late *February* or early March 1862). Descendant Barbara Jean (Dawe) Gailey recorded that troop movements along the Fayetteville-to-Springfield road past the tavern convinced him that a battle was looming, but that may have been mere speculation on her part. “Consequently,” Gailey wrote, “Jesse took his cattle, some horses, and all but five of his slaves, and trailed them nearly 250 miles to Kansas – out of harm’s way.”

Gailey’s and other family accounts maintain that there were more than five slaves, whereas the slave schedule in the U.S. census of 1860 recorded that Jesse Cox owned five slaves who were mostly small children, and it seems that he ran the Elkhorn Tavern operation with a mix of his own slaves’ labor and hired-out slaves’ labor. It is not clear that any slaves went with him on the cattle drive. According to another family source, “It was family tradition that both Jesse and Polly Cox left on that cattle drive. Their slaves accompanied them, and it is thought that the slaves later returned to this area.” But another family source contradicts that statement by saying, “Jesse Cox moved his cattle to property in Kansas that he still owned. His family and five slaves remained in Arkansas.” Meanwhile, Gailey went on to state in her account, “How many of his sons, if any, may have helped him make this long trek is unknown – but he could not have done it alone.”⁹²

If the details in the story are conflicting, the main outlines of the story are not disputed. Jesse Cox wanted to secure his moveable property in Kansas before the war

⁹¹ Cox, “The Cox Family.” Gailey was skeptical that the Cox sons served in the army. The present author’s searches on the names in the Arkansas Edward G. Gerdes Civil War website revealed several Coxes with the same first names or initials but no definite matches for the Coxes of Pea Ridge. (None enlisted in Benton County, and none recorded an age that matched the ages of Jesse Cox’s sons.) An entry for one William B. Cox (Company H, 34th Arkansas Infantry Regiment) is incorrect in one way or another as it states he was “killed at Elk Horn” yet did not enlist until August 1862. Most Cox family sources agree that there were four sons (the youngest Joseph being not yet of military age). However, one descendant stated that Jesse had five sons: James, George, Joseph, Mose, and Frank. (James G. Cox to Jim Sumner, June 14, 1972, Pea Ridge NMP, historical files.) A check on one Moses Cox who was in Company I of the 33rd Arkansas Infantry Regiment proved to be another Moses Cox of Montgomery County who was counted there in both the 1860 and 1870 U.S. census.

⁹² Gailey, “The Cox Family of Elkhorn Tavern,” 57; Jines, “Elkhorn Tavern Residents were Teenagers when Battle erupted,” 67; “Notes on the Jesse C. Cox Family,” typescript abstracted from Elsa Vaught, “Notes on the Jesse C. Cox family with a partial genealogy of his four sons who lived in Benton County, Arkansas,” at Pea Ridge NMP, history files.

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came to Benton County. Since that was his motivation, he may have taken some or all of his small slaveholding along with his cattle herd. Since there were no men in the slaveholding, it would appear likely that one or more of his grown sons went with him.

Family tradition holds that Jesse Cox intended to return for his wife and younger family members but ran out of time before the war engulfed his Arkansas home. Military records of the Federal occupation of Elkhorn Tavern after the Battle of Pea Ridge carry details indicating that Polly Cox remained present at Elkhorn Tavern while Jesse Cox remained absent. It appears that Jesse Cox did not return to the Elkhorn Tavern until many months later, or perhaps not until the war was over.

Chapter Four

In the Maelstrom, March 1862

An Epic Battle

In February 1862 the war came to Benton County. On March 7 and 8, the war landed with a fury on Pea Ridge. The Battle of Pea Ridge was the largest battle of the Civil War fought in the Trans-Mississippi West. A Southern army of about 16,000 men engaged a Northern army of about 10,500 men. Much bigger battles were fought in the east – fourteen with more than 100,000 men engaged – but west of the Mississippi Pea Ridge was by far the largest and certainly the most consequential of battles. Also, Pea Ridge was one of the largest battles fought to that point in the war; only Manassas (Bull Run) and Fort Donelson were larger.

The Battle of Pea Ridge was a remarkable engagement in many ways. It was fought across a landscape of partially cleared forest and scattered farmsteads practically on America's western frontier. It was one of few major Civil War battles in which the pro-Confederate forces outnumbered the Federal army, and it was the only major engagement in which American Indian troops took part. On the first day, Pea Ridge was really two battles fought side by side, one around the Elkhorn Tavern and the other fought about a mile and a half to the west. After night movements, the battlefield on the second day was concentrated around the Elkhorn Tavern. The two-day battle was a contest of epic maneuver, with the Southern army attempting to make a grand encirclement to annihilate the Northern army, and the Northern army managing to completely turn itself around and win the battle after the enemy had gotten in its rear. The battle was also one that turned fatefully on the deaths of two Confederate generals, Ben McCulloch and James McIntosh, killed within thirty minutes of each other on the morning of the first day. Without hyperbole, George W. Herr, a corporal in the 59th Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment and a veteran of nine campaigns in nine states, later wrote that Pea Ridge “was the wildest, weirdest, most disjointed and uncivilized of all battles of the civil war.”¹

This chapter starts with an overview of the literature and the changing interpretations of the Battle of Pea Ridge since 1862. It then moves into a narrative description of what happened in February and March of that year. Since so much has already been written about military leadership and decisions and the course of the battle, this study will emphasize civilian and ordinary soldier experiences rather than

¹ George W. Herr, *Episodes of the Civil War: Nine Campaigns in Nine States* (San Francisco: The Bancroft Company, 1890), 63.

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generalship. Also, since this study is an aid to historic preservation, it will emphasize significant places and features of the natural landscape and the built environment.

Historiography

Efforts to place the battle in context with larger currents in the war and to understand the battle’s historical significance began at once with the writing of after-action reports by the major officers involved. Eventually the after-action reports were collected in the *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, filling 141 pages of Volume 8 in Series I. The collected Union and Confederate correspondence before and after the battle took up another 500 pages in the same volume.²

By the time the government began publication of the *Official Records* in the 1880s, many officers, soldiers, and newspaper correspondents’ accounts of the Battle of Pea Ridge were already published or reprinted in newspapers.³ Also by this time the campaigns and battles in Virginia dominated the emerging military history of the war while campaigns and battles in the Trans-Mississippi West were hardly covered at all. Civilians who lived through the Battle of Pea Ridge recorded their experiences, but their accounts were mostly oral histories that were passed down by family members and were not written down and published until a generation or two later.

Officers’ accounts naturally focused on the role of the commanders, praising or criticizing the various generals’ decisions and actions. When historians began to write accounts of the Battle of Pea Ridge, they tended to focus on the leaders as well. The first historians to study the battle made much of interpersonal conflicts that hobbled the Confederate command: the bitter rivalry between Price and McCulloch, and the disparagement of these western army officers by the newly appointed senior commander, Maj. Gen. Earl Van Dorn, who was a career military officer trained at West Point. On the Union side, the historians praised Curtis and were more dubious of Brig. Gen. Franz

² U.S. War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 128 volumes (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901). Hereafter cited as *O.R.*.

³ Officers’ recollections include Franz Sigel, “The Pea Ridge Campaign,” in *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, Vol. 1*, ed. Robert U. Johnson and Clarence C. Buel (New York: The Century Co., 1887), 314-34; Cyrus Bussey, “The Pea Ridge Campaign Considered,” in *War Papers: Being Papers Read Before the Commandery of the District of Columbia, Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, Vol. 3*. Reprint, 1907: Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot Publishing Company, 1993; 265-86; John D. Crabtree, “Recollection of the Pea Ridge Campaign, and the Army of the Southwest, in 1862,” in *Military Essays and Recollections: Papers Read before the Commandery of the State of Illinois, Military Order of the Loyal Legion of the United States, Vol. 3* (Chicago: The Dial Press, 1899), 211-26; L. G. Bennett and Wm. M. Haigh, *History of the Thirty-Sixth Regiment Illinois Volunteers, during the War of the Rebellion* (Aurora, IL: Knickerbocker & Hodder, Printers and Binders, 1876), 144-78; and Henry G. Bunn, “Early Days of War in the West,” *Confederate Veteran* 10 (1902), 449-53.

Sigel, who had important ties to the German-American population around St. Louis but somewhat questionable instincts as a military man. Historian Harvey S. Ford attributed the Union victory at Pea Ridge mainly to Van Dorn's mistakes and miscalculations: poor reconnaissance of the roads, marching his men too hard before the battle, and losing contact with his supply train and the right wing of his army. Historian Robert G. Hartje basically agreed with Ford but put more blame on Price and McCulloch, who remained adversarial even when Van Dorn was put in overall command.⁴

Arkansas historian Walter L. Brown, in his article "Pea Ridge: Gettysburg of the West," which was published in 1956, began with the assertion: "No Civil War historian has yet recognized the true significance of the battle of Pea Ridge." Putting the battle in larger context, Brown showed how Van Dorn's strategy aimed for a knock-out blow against the Federal army in northwest Arkansas followed by a march on St. Louis. Van Dorn's campaign to take St. Louis was in turn part of a grand strategy by the Confederacy to relieve pressure on the Confederate center along the Kentucky-Tennessee border where two Federal armies bore down on Gen. Albert Sidney Johnston's long defensive line. The grand strategy concocted in Arkansas was a clear-eyed gamble. Curtis's narrowly won victory at Pea Ridge thwarted it decisively.⁵

Brown's thesis that Pea Ridge was the decisive battle of the Civil War in the west resonated, especially as historians of the Civil War in the mid-twentieth century generally sought to redress what they saw as a century-long overemphasis on the eastern theater of the war. Brown's thesis drew support from the popular and authoritative Civil War historian Bruce Catton.⁶ Brown's appellation for Pea Ridge as the "Gettysburg of the West" got picked up by another popular historian Dee Brown, who wrote an article by the same title for *Civil War Times Illustrated* in 1967. More importantly, it was a boon for preservationists in Arkansas who were trying to get Pea Ridge National Military Park established as the first Civil War commemorative site located west of the Mississippi.⁷

As the National Park Service became involved with preserving the battlefield, Edwin C. Bearss, then a research historian at Vicksburg National Military Park, embarked on the first detailed research of the battle yet undertaken. Besides producing a wealth of data on historic resources and land title history that was specifically germane to

⁴ Harvey S. Ford, "Van Dorn and the Pea Ridge Campaign," *Journal of the American Military Institute* 3, no. 4 (Winter 1939), 222-36; Robert G. Hartje, "A Confederate Dilemma Across the Mississippi," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 17, no. 2 (Summer 1958), 119-31.

⁵ Walter L. Brown, "Pea Ridge: Gettysburg of the West," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 15, no. 1 (Spring 1956), 3-4, 15-16. The appellation "Gettysburg of the West" is most commonly used to refer to the Battle of Glorietta Pass in New Mexico and is claimed by a few other battlefields as well. The NPS does not use this term for the Battle of Pea Ridge since it is used in multiple places.

⁶ Bruce Catton, *Terrible Swift Sword, Vol. 2 of the Centennial History of the Civil War* (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1963), 223-24.

⁷ Dee Brown, "The Battle of Pea Ridge, 'Gettysburg of the West,'" *Civil War Times Illustrated* 6 (1967), 4-11 Huggard, *Pea Ridge National Military Park*, 24.

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setting up the park, Bearss published the most detailed narrative accounts of the battle produced to that time.⁸

In 1968, historian Albert Castel offered a more nuanced version of Brown’s thesis. Agreeing with Brown that Pea Ridge was “important, dramatic,” and “one of the few major engagements of the Civil War west of the Mississippi,” he posited that its significance “should not be exaggerated.” Castel’s point was that the Confederacy could not have taken and held Missouri in any case. It is doubtful that Van Dorn could have taken St. Louis even if he had achieved his objective at Pea Ridge. And anyway, the Trans-Mississippi West was always going to be nearly impossible for the Confederacy to control precisely because it was across the great river and the Union had a navy. Furthermore, even when the Confederate army was withdrawn east of the Mississippi River after Pea Ridge, the Confederacy did not concede Missouri and Arkansas. Though the Union had turned aside the imminent threat to Missouri, the military campaigning in Arkansas and Missouri was far from over. Viewed in this light, Van Dorn’s attempt to encircle the Federal army at Pea Ridge appears reckless. Had Van Dorn succeeded, Castel writes, it would have been a “maneuver worthy of Napoleon.” But the plan was overambitious. It strung out his forces and allowed Curtis with his smaller army to come out victorious. Van Dorn squandered the rare numerical advantage he had over his opponent.⁹

More recent historical works on Pea Ridge and the Civil War in the west basically go along with Castel’s reasoning and are critical of Van Dorn’s battle plan as well as how he executed it. But they add emphasis to another dimension: the common soldier’s perspective and the effect of soldier morale on the battle’s outcome. Historians William L. Shea and Earl J. Hess – the foremost modern authorities on Pea Ridge – emphasize how the outnumbered Federal troops were able to vanquish their foes because Van Dorn’s men were utterly fatigued when they went into battle. Van Dorn’s audacious battle plan took an unacceptable toll on his men. Night marches, missed meals, cold weather, and poor supply once the battle was engaged all had a cumulative effect on the men’s morale and fighting fitness. Shea and Hess give Curtis credit for managing to press the enemy in a winter campaign without similarly exhausting his own men. The Southern soldiers at Pea Ridge were at the point of exhaustion while the Northern soldiers were comparatively well rested and well supplied with food, warm covers, and ammunition.¹⁰

⁸ Edwin C. Bearss, “From Rolla to Fayetteville with General Curtis,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 19, no. 3 (Autumn 1960), 225-59; Edwin C. Bearss, “The First Day at Pea Ridge, March 7, 1862,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 17, no. 2 (Summer 1958), 132-54.

⁹ Albert Castel, “A New View of the Battle of Pea Ridge,” *Missouri Historical Review* 62, no.1 (January 1968), 136-51.

¹⁰ Shea and Hess, *Pea Ridge*. See also James R. Knight, *The Battle of Pea Ridge: The Civil War Fight for the Ozarks* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2012).

Historian Thomas W. Cutrer, in a recent synthesis of the Civil War west of the Mississippi, agrees that Van Dorn was a naïve strategist and a poor battlefield commander at Pea Ridge. In his judgment, Curtis's battlefield victory at Pea Ridge, while impressive, did not greatly influence the rest of the war because it did not bring peace even to the Trans-Mississippi. Moreover, Cutrer affirms that the Confederate government always thought of the Trans-Mississippi West as expendable in its quest for independence, whereas the Union saw the entire region as being vital and integral to the transcontinental United States.¹¹

Even though Shea's work presents an admiring portrait of Curtis as a strong and shrewd military campaigner and a courageous general on the battlefield, Shea would probably agree with Cutrer's judgment on the larger significance of Pea Ridge: it was an important battle in the Trans-Mississippi West, but it was not a decisive battle in the Civil War.¹²

Troop Movements and Skirmishes before Pea Ridge

There are two narrative threads leading to the Battle of Pea Ridge. One narrative thread follows Curtis's command, tracing his movements after his appointment to the command of the Army of the Southwest on Christmas Day 1861. Through late January and early February Curtis's command chased Price's Missouri State Guards from Springfield southward over the border into Arkansas where McCulloch had his troops in winter quarters. The other narrative thread starts with the Confederate high command and the crisis for the Confederacy in Tennessee. It follows Van Dorn from his appointment on January 10 to head the pro-Confederate forces in northwest Arkansas through that general's arrival at Van Buren on March 1. From that moment, the pro-Confederate forces in northwest Arkansas outnumbered the Federals. Then, in the closing days before Pea Ridge, the two narratives intertwine: both sides raced to gather their dispersed forces in preparation for the inevitable grand battle. In Shea's and Hess's masterly account, the hunter (Curtis) temporarily became the hunted.

Telegraph Road

Curtis's winter campaign was limited by one major factor: its tenuous supply line. The western railroad ended at Rolla, Missouri, 110 miles northeast of Springfield. Once Curtis's army moved south of Springfield, all supplies had to be transported by wagons moving south on the Fayetteville-to-Springfield Road or else procured by foraging parties

¹¹ Thomas W. Cutrer, *Theater of a Separate War: The Civil War West of the Mississippi River, 1861-1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 2-6, 91-93.

¹² William L. Shea, "The Road to Pea Ridge," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 52, no. 3 (Autumn 1993), 222.

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going out into the thinly settled country where much of the population was hostile or at least unfriendly to foragers.¹³

In the last year of peace before the Civil War, a telegraph line was strung along the Fayetteville-to-Springfield Road and onward to Fort Smith. The old road immediately became known as Telegraph Road, or simply the Wire Road. The Pea Ridge campaign began with Curtis advancing and Price retreating down this road in a long, running fight. As the Southern army fell back it took down the telegraph wire; as the Northern army pursued, it put the wire back up again (until Rebel saboteurs cut the line again – the back and forth would be continuous until the end of the war). While Curtis was in northwest Arkansas the road was not only his communication and supply line, it was also his best route of retreat if he should have to retreat. So, when Curtis looked for a place to stand and defend at the beginning of March, he gathered his army on the high ground above Little Sugar Creek where the road crosses the creek in order to protect his line of retreat northward. The section of the road through the park is still visible and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places – in part because of its association with the Cherokee Trail of Tears at an earlier stage in its existence and in part because of its association with the Civil War.¹⁴

In 1862, Telegraph Road was narrow, unpaved, and largely unimproved. In warm, dry weather it could be a dusty trench; after a hard rain it could turn into a morass. In wintertime, it was even worse; muddy sections could alternately freeze up in a congealed mess of sharp, deep ruts or thaw out into mudholes that could swallow a heavy supply wagon up to the axles.¹⁵

Passing from north to south, the road went through two hamlets at the southern edge of Missouri, Cassville and Keetsville (today’s Washburn), and then descended between bluffs to Big Sugar Creek. From there it followed Big Sugar Creek upstream through an area called Cross Timber Hollow (the upper portion of which extends into the northeast corner of the present park). The name was given to the area by local residents after McCulloch in the previous November had his men fell thousands of trees over a four-mile stretch of the road in an effort to gate this travel corridor against the Northern invader. When the Federal army did not pursue, McCulloch assigned some soldiers to go back and clear a winding passage through the jumble of felled timbers. The timber blockade actually lay north of the state line whereas the name Cross Timber Hollow was

¹³ Maynard J. Hanson, “The Battle of Pea Ridge, Arkansas, March 6-8, 1862,” *Journal of the West* 19 (October 1980), 39-40.

¹⁴ Chris Huggard and Greg Kizer, “Springfield to Fayetteville Road,” National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, October 7, 2004, copy obtained from the National Park Service; Erwin Funk, “First Telegraph Line Built in 1860,” *Benton County Pioneer* 3, no. 2 (January 1958), 12; Shea and Hess, *Pea Ridge*, 12.

¹⁵ Shea and Hess, *Pea Ridge*, 13.

applied to the whole long gully where Telegraph Road came up Big Sugar Creek and emerged onto the Pea Ridge at the Elkhorn Tavern.¹⁶

Price's army retreated southward past the Elkhorn Tavern on February 16. Hess and Shea provide a strong image of the army supply train at a point along the retreat two days prior:

During the retreat the Missouri army was burdened with an overabundance of stores, surely a rare if not unique occurrence in Confederate military history. The rebel force lacked institutionalized logistical support and literally had to haul around its base of supplies. While at Springfield, Quartermaster Maj. James Harding had worked diligently to gather food, forage, and equipment. Price was determined to take as much of this as he could. The result was spectacular. The countless numbers of wagons that followed the Missouri army down Telegraph Road constituted "the most *multitudinous* and *variegated* wagon-train ever concentrated on the continent," according to one veteran. "Every species of wheel vehicle, from the jolting old ox-cart to the most fantastically-painted stage-coach, rolled along the road." With the Federals apparently in pursuit, the safety of the huge train was of paramount importance. Price ordered the road cleared south of Crane Creek and sent the train ahead of the army. As the wagons creaked and rumbled past his immobilized troops for hours on end during the night of February 14-15, even Price was surprised at the number of vehicles. At one point he turned to Harding and asked, "Is there no end to the train?" It was nearly dawn before the troops were able to get onto the road and follow the train south.¹⁷

Curtis's army marched through Cross Timber Hollow and past the Elkhorn Tavern on the morning of February 17. Again, Shea and Hess offer a vivid account:

When the Federals crossed the state line into Arkansas, they sent up cheer after cheer for the Union as bands played "The Arkansas Traveler," "Yankee Doodle," and other patriotic tunes. "Such yelling and whooping, it was glorious," wrote an Illinois officer. Curtis, riding near the head of the column on this auspicious day, congratulated his men for restoring the Stars and Stripes to the "virgin soil" of Arkansas. Before pushing on into the

¹⁶ Shea and Hess, *Pea Ridge*, 36-37. Keetsville was burned down in the Civil War and came back in 1868 as Washburn.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 33.

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Confederacy, he paused to savor the moment and composed a brief but triumphant message to Halleck. “The flag of our Union again floats in Arkansas.”¹⁸

Skirmish at Dunagin’s Farm

Troops under McCulloch’s command met Price’s Missourians near the border to shield Price’s retreat. Federals in the vanguard of Curtis’s army clashed with the Rebel forces covering Price’s rear at Dunagin’s farm, which occupied the high ground on the south side of Little Sugar Creek. The skirmish was officially named for Little Sugar Creek and was the first battle of the Civil War in Arkansas.¹⁹

Today, County Road 1703, also known as North Old Wire Road, runs through the skirmish site about where Telegraph Road went, while the fields on either side are privately owned. A historic marker was erected in 1963 stating that the Federals lost twenty men killed while the Confederates lost three or four. The modern view is that the Federals lost thirteen killed and about twenty wounded, while the Confederate casualties were not reported officially but may have numbered up to twenty-six killed according to Federal soldiers who had to bury the dead. The historic marker also names Brig. Gen. James S. Rains and the 4th Arkansas on the Confederate side in this action, whereas modern accounts name the Confederate commanding officer as Col. Louis Hébert and state that elements of the 3rd Louisiana and the 4th and 15th Arkansas along with Clark’s Missouri Battery took part in this action.²⁰

Troy Banzhaf, the historian at Pea Ridge NMP, informed the author that nearby this point are the locations of four gun emplacements on the edge of the bluff overlooking the point where Telegraph Road once forded Little Sugar Creek. Presumably this was where Clark’s Missouri Battery was positioned just prior to the skirmish. Hébert hoped that the sight of the battery atop the bluff would cause the Federals to slow their pursuit. After this quick demonstration the guns were limbered up and pulled away. The Federals led by Col. Calvin Ellis were undaunted in their pursuit, however, and caught up with Hébert’s men a short distance up Telegraph Road at Dunagin’s Farm.²¹

Shea and Hess describe the action at Dunagin’s farm:

¹⁸ Shea and Hess, *Pea Ridge*, 39.

¹⁹ The engagement at Little Sugar Creek is usually classified as a skirmish. Locally it is better known as the Battle of Dunagin’s Farm. Considering its scale, some historians contend it was really a battle rather than a skirmish. Contemporary Confederate sources described it as a rearguard action or minor affair.

²⁰ Shea and Hess, *Pea Ridge*, 41-44; “Action at Sugar Creek,” *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*, at <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/action-at-sugar-creek-6641/>.

²¹ Troy Banzhaf, conversation with author, September 6, 2022; Shea and Hess, *Pea Ridge*, 41.

When Ellis reached the top of the southern bluffs, he spotted Confederate stragglers hurrying away to the south. Fleeing rebels were a familiar sight to Ellis, and he followed at a gallop without waiting for infantry or artillery support. After advancing about half a mile the Federals blundered headlong into the Confederate position on Dunagin's farm. Clark's battery opened the engagement with a "heavy fire of ball and shell" straight down Telegraph Road. The first salvo shrieked just over the heads of the oncoming yankees. Ellis immediately ordered the 1st Missouri Cavalry off the road to left and right. Taking their cue from Ellis, [Maj. Clark] Wright swung his battalion of the 6th Missouri Cavalry into the woods to the right of the road while [Col. John] McConnell led his battalion of the 3rd Illinois Cavalry to the left. Telegraph Road soon was empty except for the leading battalion of the 1st Missouri Cavalry, led by Maj. James M. Hubbard, which advanced at a dead run directly toward the rebel position. Hubbard was well out in front and apparently failed to hear Ellis's order to get off the road.

At this moment a number of mounted rebels dashed out of the woods and fled down Telegraph Road. They were overtaken by Hubbard's onrushing battalion, and the intermingled mass of horsemen swept into Dunagin's field directly in front of the main line of Confederate infantry and artillery. It was almost a reprise of what had occurred the day before in Cross Timber Hollow. The Federals turned about and fled in wild disorder through a hail of Confederate small arms fire. A rebel observed that the Federals "found themselves in a hornet's nest and got out the best they could." Hubbard and most of the loyal Missourians managed to escape in the smoke and confusion, but the field was dotted with blue-clad bodies and dead and dying horses.²²

After this the two sides fought an artillery duel for the better part of an hour; then as the day ended the Confederates broke it off and escaped under the cover of darkness. The Federals carried the wounded to Enoch Trott's store, making that place the first of many Pea Ridge residences that would be turned into a temporary hospital. Other Federal soldiers, in high temper after the bloody skirmish, allegedly set fire to the farmstead of the Rev. Jasper Dunagin and burned it to the ground. This fact was given by Dunagin to the writers of the Goodspeed history of the area some twenty years later. If true, then it was the first building in Benton County destroyed in the Pea Ridge campaign.²³

²² Shea and Hess, *Pea Ridge*, 42.

²³ Shea and Hess, *Pea Ridge*, 43; Goodspeed Publishing Co., *Reprint Benton County Section of Goodspeed's*, 84. Many other homes were burned down by guerrillas during a later phase of the war, which makes Dunagin's recollection slightly dubious.

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Cross Hollow and Boston Mountain

Price’s and McCulloch’s armies were united at Cross Hollow where McCulloch had his winter headquarters. Not to be confused with Cross Timber Hollow, Cross Hollow was located about twelve miles south of Pea Ridge and a mile east of present day Lowell. Today, there are no features that reflect that this is where the two armies linked up other than a historical marker erected by the Pea Ridge Memorial Association.²⁴ McCulloch’s men built a large complex of barracks where they expected to pass the winter unmolested until it became evident that Curtis was making a winter campaign. Will Tunnard of the 3rd Louisiana described the buildings:

They were substantial wooden buildings, constructed of tongued and grooved planks placed upright, with roofing of the same material. The flooring was the very best, and would have been a credit to the handsomest of private residences. Each building was 38 by 20 feet, divided into two rooms by a partition meeting in the center at the chimney, constructed of brick, with a fire-place in each room, with a smooth brick hearth.²⁵

Once Price and McCulloch were both at Cross Hollow, Price wanted to make a stand there but McCulloch insisted on falling back. The Confederates burned most of this extensive cantonment when they left. Curtis found it a smoldering ruin, commenting to Halleck that “long rows of brick chimneys show where the barracks were nicely arranged.”²⁶ The chimneys were mute testimony to McCulloch’s misimpression that military campaigning would practically cease over the winter. There must have been many barracks to house so many men.

The combined Southern army under Price and McCulloch retreated to Fayetteville, then farther south to Boston Mountain. Boston Mountain is another place name in this history that may be confusing. Today, the Boston Mountains refer to the mountain range running east to west across the southern Ozark Plateau. In Civil War times, Boston Mountain nearly always appeared in the singular. It usually referred to the section of this mountain range south of Fayetteville but it was also used to refer to the

²⁴ The text on the sign reads: This post office was established in 1843. Nov. 29, 1861, Gen. Ben McCulloch moved his army into winter quarters here. Numerous, large, two-room, plank barracks were built in two rows facing each other, extending eastward more than a mile. Ten or twelve thousand soldiers wintered here. Feb. 22, 1862, the Union army of Gen. Curtis entered Cross Hollows to find abandoned barracks and commissary stores still smoldering [sic]. Curtis pitched his tent near McGarrah’s house. His soldiers tented east, and south to Mud Town. Mar. 4, Curtis moved his army into battle line north of Little Sugar Creek.

²⁵ Quoted in “Cross Hollow,” *The Civil War Muse*, at <http://www.thecivilwarmuse.com/index.php?page=cross-hollow>.

²⁶ *O. R.*, Vol. 8, 562.

part of the mountain range around Huntsville in Madison County and to a particular summit in the same range in Searcy County. There was a Camp Boston Mountain near Bentonville that was used in the spring and fall of 1862 for a mustering ground. When Price and McCulloch retreated through Fayetteville to Boston Mountain in February 1862, they were in the vicinity of Cane Hill.²⁷

Curtis occupied Fayetteville with a part of his army on February 23 but there he at last broke off the pursuit. With his army now more than 200 miles from the railhead at Rolla, and his winter campaign now well into its second month, supply considerations finally had to come first. To facilitate foraging and to impress the local population, he had his army split up between several locations, including Fayetteville, Cross Hollow, Bentonville, and Keetsville.²⁸

Federal Trenches overlooking Little Sugar Creek

By the end of February, Curtis's main encampment was on McKissick Creek southwest of Bentonville. On March 5, Curtis moved his headquarters to the north bank of Little Sugar Creek where Telegraph Road forded the stream. This was the place Curtis had previously identified as a strong defensive position in the event that later on he would be thrown onto the defensive. Assuming that the enemy approached from the south on Telegraph Road, it would encounter a rampart of rocky limestone bluffs running east and west perpendicular to the north-south road. Curtis gathered his troops at this spot, arranged them in a line along the high ground, and ordered them to dig in. Of course, this strong position would not be defended in the actual battle because Van Dorn attacked Curtis from the north instead. The visible remains of this prepared defensive position are preserved today in a noncontiguous section of the park about a mile south of the rest of the park. While the trenches are now partially filled in, they are still clearly defined along most of their length, with sections still exhibiting a head log placed along the top to form a crude parapet. As Bearss wrote in his report for management on the Federal earthworks, "Although the 'Federal Earthworks' overlooking Little Sugar Creek were never used for the purpose for which they were thrown up, they were instrumental in causing Van Dorn to alter his plan of attack. Thus they played a vital part in determining where and how the battle would be fought."²⁹

As the various contingents of Curtis's army came together at this spot and took their positions along the bluff, the soldiers hastily went to work on the earthworks to

²⁷ Shea and Hess, *Pea Ridge*, 46-48; Arkansas Edward G. Gerdes Civil War website; "Veterans of Yell County," at https://archive.org/stream/veteransofyellco7565unse/veteransofyellco7565unse_djvu.txt.

²⁸ *O.R.*, Vol. 8, 196; Bearss, "From Rolla to Fayetteville," 256-59; Blevins, *A History of the Ozarks*, Vol. 2, *The Conflicted Ozarks*, 68-69.

²⁹ Edwin C. Bearss, "Leetown, Elkhorn Tavern Grounds, Federal Earthworks, and Tanyard as of March, 1862," typescript, 1965, Pea Ridge NMP, history files, pp. 19-20.

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fortify the naturally strong position. The strenuous work by bone-tired men may be imagined. Most of the earthworks were built on the night of March 5 after a tiring day on which the men endured blowing snow and cutting wind. A soldier in the 59th Illinois wrote about the construction in a letter to his parents after the battle:

It was late in the afternoon when we reached the creek and went into camp a safe distance back from the brow of the hill north of the stream. The first order was to built [sic] earth works on this hillside and get the artillery into position as this slope faced the south and thus commanded the direct approach of the rebels coming from that direction. It was a most tedious and difficult work. Up through a heavy underbrush over the rough uneven surface the men pulled the heavy guns by means of long ropes. I was detailed with my Company, our captain having returned home on leave of absence, to place and protect a four gun battery belonging to our brigade. From the evening of the 5th, all night we worked and finished just at sunrise next morning, when we went to camp for rations and rest.³⁰

Side Roads and Obstructions

Curtis's preparations for battle included reconnoitering the lay of the land and other roads in the area. In the lightly settled country there were little connecting roads that could potentially help an advancing enemy steer clear of making a frontal assault on his strong position. Particularly troubling was the Bentonville Detour. This relatively good gravel road branched off of Telegraph Road north of Elkhorn Mountain and swung to the west, linking up to the north-south Bentonville Road. The Southern army could potentially take the detour to get behind Curtis's position. Late in the day on March 6, Curtis dispatched Col. Grenville M. Dodge with six companies of the 4th Iowa and one company of the 3rd Illinois Cavalry to cut down trees and form a blockade on that road.³¹

Dodge's men cut down trees and obstructed the road in two places. The first blockade was about one mile east of the Twelve Corners Church (a little north of the northwest corner of the national military park). The second blockade was closer to the junction of the Bentonville Detour and Telegraph Road in Cross Timber Hollow. Again, it is worth pausing here for a point of clarification. These timber blockades made on the night of March 6 along the Bentonville Detour should not be confused with the timber blockade made by McCulloch's men some months earlier that gave Cross Timber Hollow its name. While the older timber blockade in Cross Timber Hollow was still largely in

³⁰ Quoted in Edwin C. Bearss, "Leetown, Elkhorn Tavern Grounds, Federal Earthworks, and Tanyard as of March, 1862," typescript, 1965, Pea Ridge NMP, history files, pp. 23-24.

³¹ Shea and Hess, *Pea Ridge*, 82.

place and would be important in hindering the Rebels' pell-mell retreat *after* the battle, the two freshly formed timber blockades on the Bentonville Detour would be crucial in slowing Van Dorn's night movement *before* the battle. Van Dorn's weary troops began to encounter logs across the road around midnight on March 7.

Dodge and his men by this time were working on the second timber blockade a few miles up the road. Dodge's pickets heard a commotion as the agitated Rebels contended with this unexpected obstacle in their path. At that point, Dodge decided it was time to consider the blockading work done and make haste back to camp. Underscoring the significance of what Dodge's men accomplished, Shea and Hess write:

The failure to detect the Confederate march on the Bentonville Detour might have had disastrous consequences for the Federals but for the initiative of an Iowa colonel. Dodge and his men garnered more blisters than glory for their labor that night, but without firing a shot they changed the outcome of the battle.³²

Cannon Fire at the Kindley Farm

After the Rev. Dunagin, Cyrus and Cynthia Ann Kindley may have been the first people of Benton County to discover that their home was right in the path of the coming tornado. It will be recalled that the Kindley place was about three miles northeast of Bentonville on a hill that overlooked where the Bentonville Road forded Little Sugar Creek. A Kindley family history states that the Kindley place "was where the first main battle occurred." This appears to be a reference to the action that occurred on March 6, when the Southern army was moving swiftly northward, attempting to hit Curtis before he could gather all the units of his army together. That morning, Sigel was in Bentonville with about 600 men, unaware of the imminent danger facing his command. When he learned belatedly that a Confederate cavalry brigade was on the verge of intercepting and surrounding his command, Sigel declared to a subordinate, "we must cut our way through." The situation developed into a running fight in which Sigel barely escaped with his command.³³

After a first brush up in this running fight, write Shea and Hess, "Sigel and his men regrouped in Little Sugar Creek Valley near a Y-shaped junction where Bentonville Road intersected Little Sugar Creek Road." This appears to have been the approximate site of the Kindley farm. Shea and Hess continue their account:

³² Shea and Hess, *Pea Ridge*, 84.

³³ Holloway, "Family History of Kindley, Lambeth, and Oakley," 3; Shea and Hess, *Pea Ridge*, 74.

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The Federals marched less than a mile up the narrowing valley before scouts rushed in reporting a large cavalry force approaching from the rear. Sigel halted and quickly deployed his command so that the Confederates would have to make a frontal assault. He placed his artillery and cavalry in a patch of woods on the valley floor and spread his infantry up the rocky bluffs on either side. He then sent a squad of cavalry down toward the junction to observe the enemy.

McIntosh was a short distance ahead of the brigade when he saw the squad of Federal horsemen at the junction. When they turned and galloped away, he impulsively set out in pursuit and bellowed for his leading regiment to charge. The 3rd Texas Cavalry was thrown into total disarray by the unexpected and irregular command. The forward portion of the regiment under Lt. Col. Walker Lane thundered after McIntosh in column of fours while the remainder deployed for a conventional attack on a broad front, a difficult undertaking in the confined valley. The rest of the brigade was strung for miles along the narrow road and had no idea what was happening up front. Many of the men still were walking their horses.

McIntosh’s force passed through the junction and blundered headlong into Sigel’s line. “We all raised the Texas war whoop and rushed ahead,” recalled B. P. Hollingsworth of the 3rd Texas Cavalry, “but soon a most galling fire of small arms, followed by the thunder of artillery, opened our eyes and closed our mouths.” McIntosh and Lane survived the initial blast of bullets and canister but found themselves almost alone in the open barely sixty yards from the Federal guns. Dead and wounded horses and men lay sprawled around them. McIntosh reached down and picked up the regimental flag, waved it above his head, and called upon the stunned Texans to rally for another assault; but his dramatic appeal was spoiled by Lane, who galloped back down the road yelling, “Fall back or you will all be murdered!” The Texans chose to heed Lane’s advice and retreated in a confused mass with McIntosh reluctantly following. Ten dead men and twice that number of dead horses were left behind; another twenty or more men were wounded. The survivors were shaken by their experience with artillery at close range. “Why they did not kill all of Company A and B of our regiment the Lord only knows,” wondered the dazed regimental bugler.³⁴

³⁴ Shea and Hess, *Pea Ridge*, 76.

The roar of cannons was not only terrifying to the Texans, it frightened the Kindley family as well. The deafening noise and the closeness of the battle all around their house must have been shocking, but it did not come as a complete surprise to them as they were aware that the opposing armies were gathering around Pea Ridge. Already their property had been visited by foraging parties. When the battle erupted on their farm in the early afternoon of March 6, the parents swept up their three small children and retreated to the cellar. Crouched in the dark, they could hear Minie balls zinging and knew the fighting must be close by. Cyrus Kindley became overwhelmed by the thought that the house could catch fire and the chimney could collapse on the cellar, trapping them. He opened the cellar door and ran to the barn to get a pick so that they could dig their way out if that should happen.³⁵

John Buttry Dragooned as a Scout

On the night of March 6-7, few if any of the 16,000 men in the Southern army got much sleep. Most of them were on their feet marching in the cold and dark through the long night. Van Dorn badly misjudged how long it would take to get his army around the far side of Elkhorn Mountain to the rear of Curtis's defensive line. He failed to take account of what a toll it would take on the men, who had gone too long already without a regular hot meal or a good night's sleep. The forced march was doomed to fail. First the army was delayed by the difficult creek crossing below the Kindley place. Then it was delayed by the timber blockade near the Twelve Corners Church. Finally it was delayed by the second timber blockade near the junction of the Bentonville Detour and Telegraph Road. Van Dorn reached Telegraph Road junction about an hour past sunrise on March 7, but his army was so strung out behind him that trailing units would not come up for many more hours. As Shea and Hess write in their eloquent account of this disastrous night march, "The Army of the West was not only falling behind, it was falling apart. Soldiers were collapsing in droves."³⁶

James Wade Sikes and John Buttry were two Pea Ridge farmers who belonged to the same Baptist church before the war and who found themselves on opposite sides in the conflict. Sikes, it will be recalled, volunteered for the Confederate army in July 1861 and was in the 2nd Arkansas Mounted Rifles, now assigned to McCulloch's Division. Due to his familiarity with the area, Sikes and a few other local men were handpicked to guide Van Dorn's army along the Bentonville Detour during the night of March 6-7.³⁷

³⁵ Holloway, "Family History of Kindley, Lambeth, and Oakley," 3.

³⁶ Shea and Hess, *Pea Ridge*, 86.

³⁷ James M. Sikes, "James Wade Sikes (1828-1929)," 2008, Rogers Museum, Sikes vertical file.

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Sikes not only knew the road, he knew who the residents were along the road. He no doubt knew that John Buttry had given some of his land for the Twelve Corners Church about a decade earlier. When the scouts came to the Twelve Corners Church, they had a problem. Ford Road forked to the right, while the Bentonville Detour was blockaded by a jumble of felled trees a little ways beyond where it forked to the left. Someone who knew Buttry led the party of scouts to Buttry’s home. Perhaps it was Sikes who suggested that they enlist the help of Buttry, even though Buttry was known to be a Union man.

Buttry was roused from his bed that night by a group of soldiers coming up to his door. They demanded entrance and put him under arrest. He did not know the men but they knew that he was not on their side. The soldiers ordered Buttry to get dressed, come outside, and saddle up his horse. They did not say what they were going to do with him. When he was on his horse, he was told to ride out in front with a small party to scout the Bentonville Detour down to its junction with Telegraph Road, to see if timber was lying across the road anywhere farther along it. At some point the party halted and Buttry was told to go out in front alone as their pilot. Buttry did as he was ordered. But when the men did not immediately follow behind him, he gradually lengthened the distance between himself and the Rebel scouts. Since he did not want to help the Confederate army in the coming battle, he just kept going and eventually circled back to his home.³⁸

The Night March and the Hannah Scott Place

The widow Hannah Scott, it will be recalled, lived with her several grown children on a cluster of farms north of Elkhorn Mountain where the Bentonville Detour passed nearby. Around midnight, Hannah’s household was awakened by the sound of musket fire. Family lore asserts that it came from the place along Big Sugar Creek where “Federal and Confederate troops skirmished” as they first came in contact. In fact, Van Dorn’s scouts were coming upon the first timber blockade around midnight, and perhaps a few of them nervously discharged their weapons in the dark. As there was no skirmish there, Hannah Scott’s family must have heard the commotion coming from the Southern army as it groped its way forward in the dark.³⁹

Civilians in the Battle on March 7 and 8

At the Elkhorn Tavern, the Cox family had been warned of the approaching battle but they had decided to stay in their home, little expecting that their place would become

³⁸ *Records of the Commission of Claims (Southern Claims Commission), 1871-1880*, John Buttry claim 9278.

³⁹ Harris, “The James and Hannah Scott Story,” 18; Shea and Hess, *Pea Ridge*, 84.

the very center of the fighting. In the preceding couple of days, as the Northern army took up a defensive position along Little Sugar Creek, the open fields around the Elkhorn Tavern and farther south along Telegraph Road became covered with hundreds of supply wagons and thousands of draft animals – the baggage train of the Army of the Southwest. Maj. Eli Weston, Curtis’s provost marshal, commandeered the place to serve as a temporary prisoner of war camp as well as his own headquarters, and he stored some of his supplies in Jesse Cox’s barn. From these developments it would have been clear to the Coxes that the area was supposed to remain at the rear of the impending action. Perhaps that gave the Coxes a measure of hope that their place would not become engulfed in the battle.⁴⁰

Around mid-morning of March 7, the Coxes would have begun to realize that battle lines were unexpectedly forming right around their property. Federal troops under Col. Eugene A. Carr began to deploy in the area, while Weston had some of his men relocate forty Rebel prisoners from the tavern to Pratt’s store. According to Cox family tradition, several family members, enslaved persons, and neighbors – perhaps as many as twenty-three people altogether – hastily sought refuge in the tavern cellar and remained huddled together in that dark, dank space for two days as the battle raged.⁴¹

The members of the Cox family who are known to have been present in the cellar included Polly Parker Cox, her youngest son Elias Franklin (Frank), age about twelve, another son Joseph, sixteen, and Joseph’s wife Lucinda, also sixteen. Lucinda was pregnant with the couple’s first child. One source for information on this episode was Frances Cox Scott, the daughter of Joseph and Lucinda, who was not yet born at this time but would hear the story and recount it to younger family members, newspaper reporters, and Civil War buffs decades later when she continued to reside at the place in her old age. Frances was born December 7, 1865. She was raised at the Elkhorn Tavern and went to school with many of the children who were present in the cellar on those two March days in 1862, so her account would appear to be reliable.⁴²

Among the neighbors who took refuge in the cellar were the widow Jane Ruddick and her children, including Elizabeth who was ten or eleven years old. According to a granddaughter of Elizabeth, the girl and her mother provided coffee to wounded soldiers after the battle.⁴³

⁴⁰ Shea and Hess, *Pea Ridge*, 152; Gailey, “The Cox Family of Elkhorn Tavern,” 58.

⁴¹ Shea and Hess, *Pea Ridge*, 154-55; Gailey, “The Cox Family of Elkhorn Tavern,” 58.

⁴² Gailey, “The Cox Family of Elkhorn Tavern,” 58; Jines, “Elkhorn Tavern Residents were Teenagers when Battle erupted,” 66; Bill Butler, “Civil War Survivor,” *Tulsa Sunday World Magazine*, undated clipping, Rogers Museum, Elkhorn Tavern vertical file; “Notes on the Jesse C. Cox Family,” typescript abstracted from Elsa Vaught, “Notes on the Jesse C. Cox family with a partial genealogy of his four sons who lived in Benton County, Arkansas,” at Pea Ridge NMP, history files.

⁴³ Ethel Perry, “My Grandparents Perry – Reddick,” *Backtracker* 8, no. 4 (October 1979), 5.

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A granddaughter of Joseph and Lucinda Cox named Lottie Dokes was interviewed in 1962. Although some of her statements about the Cox family are incorrect (for example, she stated that her great grandfather Jesse Cox built the tavern in 1833), in general they ring true. In any case, she gave a graphic description of those harrowing two days in the cellar:

When my Grandmother [Lucinda] and Grandfather [Joseph] Cox knew the battle was really coming they refused to leave home. Instead they grabbed a few necessities and went to the cellar. Grandmother had her knitting needles with her, and in the cellar she found a gourd with grease in it, so she rigged up a lamp. She took a piece of cloth and put it in the grease and propped the cloth up with her knitting needles. By this sort of light, while the bloody battle raged, she wrote a poem called, “The Battle of Elkhorn Tavern.” This poem describes the awfulness of the battle: the wounded crying for help, offering prayers and asking that God protect and care for their loved ones, and some were even begging to die.

My grandparents stayed in the cellar three dreadful days and nights. Grandmother told how horrible it was cringing from the cannon’s thunder, hearing the screams of the wounded and dying, and trying to dodge the blood seeping through the crevices of the upstairs rooms. These rooms were being used as a hospital by both armies. Men were undergoing surgery without benefit of an anesthetic.

Grandmother said the dying men begged for water. After the springs were cut off by the Federals, Southern troops were without water as well as without food and shoes. How could the Confederates have possibly won under such horrible conditions?

Gen. Sterling Price was wounded in the battle and my Grandmother Cox tore a strip from her apron and bandaged his wound. She did this in the cellar. General Price was a friend of Grandfather’s. They had known each other before the battle.

When the terrible battle ended and my grandparents came from the cellar a ghastly scene lay all around them. Clear around the tavern were piled arms, legs, hands, and feet. While the battle raged, there was nothing else the doctors could do but toss the amputations out the windows. There were bodies of men and horses scattered all over – guns and sabers and the like, too. Even

the trees were scarred and disfigured. Tops were broken out of old oak trees and part of the walnut tree, standing in the yard, was shot away.⁴⁴

The sixteen-year-old Lucinda Cox was the daughter of Samuel Lewis Pratt, whose place was located a mile and a quarter down Telegraph Road from the Elkhorn Tavern. Lucinda's husband and in-laws were pro-Confederate while her father was Unionist. Such division among her intimates would have been excruciating no matter what, but the Cox and Pratt families' close involvement in the Battle of Pea Ridge made the circumstances even harder.

On March 5, Curtis established his headquarters in Pratt's general store. Curtis advised Pratt and his family to vacate the farmstead, which they did, moving three miles eastward. From the Pratts' place of refuge, they could hear the not-too-distant rumble of cannons. Of course, through this whole ordeal the Pratt family knew that one member of their family, Lucinda, was trapped in the cellar of Elkhorn Tavern. After three days of fighting, the guns at last fell silent and the Pratts judged it was safe to return home. When they arrived back at their place, presumably on March 9, the Pratts found Lucinda was okay but their property was a wreck. Soldiers were still occupying the store. Their house, meanwhile, had been gutted of all the sawn lumber that could be pried loose and put to use elsewhere. The floor, ceilings, windows and doors were all gone. Nothing was left but the frame of the house. At least that is what Pratt declared in a claim submitted to the Southern Claims Commission many years later. Pratt also stated in his claim that the only livestock left to him was one cow and four sheep; everything else had been taken and consumed. Lewis told the Southern Claims Commission that he had welcomed the Federal army on his property because he was for the Union. Prior to the battle he had shown Capt. Keys around his place telling him to take whatever he needed and give the receipts to Gen. Curtis. The investigator of Lewis's claim stated that these details had the air of truth. Although Pratt lost a great deal, his loyalty to the Union was worth something: his claim before the Southern Claims Commission many years later was allowed and he recovered \$899 (worth about \$26,000 today).⁴⁵

Today, a wayside exhibit on the Tour Road at the site of Pratt's homestead tells park visitors that "a temporary city of soldiers covered the field" across the road from Pratt's general store, and that with the constant coming and going of couriers Curtis's headquarters was the "nerve center of the Union army during the two-day fight for Pea Ridge." It was here, at about 10:00 a.m. on March 7, that a messenger came dashing into

⁴⁴ Wasson, "Cox Family and the Elkhorn Tavern." See also Dorothy Ellis Ross, "Rosses at Elk Horn Tavern," in Benton County Heritage Committee, *History of Benton County, Arkansas*, 127-29.

⁴⁵ *Records of the Commission of Claims (Southern Claims Commission), 1871-1880*, Lewis Pratt claim 9,649.

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headquarters with information that the Confederates were in Cross Timber Hollow – two miles in the rear of the Union position.⁴⁶

Next to the Pratt place was the Ruddick farmstead – or farmsteads, as there were now multiple Ruddick generations and households at Pea Ridge. In one Ruddick household, Samuel and Polly Ruddick prepared to evacuate when the Federal army began to gather at Pea Ridge in the first days of March. But the Ruddicks faced a complication: Polly was pregnant and about to give birth. It seems that the family had the wagon packed with supplies and precious belongings and was waiting on pins and needles to see if Polly would go into labor. Sadly, the baby was stillborn on March 5. With no time to make a wooden coffin, the anxious and grieving family departed with Polly tucked in a little nook in the bed of the wagon with her lifeless baby wrapped in a shroud. It is likely that they were joined by neighbors Jefferson Tilton Ford and his wife Mary Polly (Ruddick) Ford. Samuel Ruddick and Mary Polly Ford were siblings. The Fords owned property on the White River, and it is known that the Ruddicks went to a place on the White River to stay until the battle was over, so it is a reasonable conjecture that they evacuated together.⁴⁷

At the other end of the battlefield, more Pea Ridge farmsteads lay in the path of the fighting. Charles W. Rice’s home, which was probably located in the Leetown hamlet or nearby it, had a big cellar like the Elkhorn Tavern did and became another point of refuge as the battle began. Timothy Sullivan Rice, the six-year-old son of Charles, was among those who took shelter there, and many decades later he stated to local historian Alvin Seamster that the cellar provided shelter for about twenty-five children and some adults. “The battlefield natives were caught unawares,” Rice remembered. “They never suspected a battle would be pulled off right on their front doorstep. The natives had to hunt their holes in double quick time to get out of the firing range.” The people crowded into the cellar and Rice’s mother Julia barred the door so that none of the children, who were curious and claustrophobic, would go outside. Once during this ordeal, Rice stated, he gave his mother the slip and almost got through the door. “She drug me back and gave me the hardest whipping I ever got, right before the rest of them. But they couldn’t hear me yell on account of the noise of the battle on the outside.”⁴⁸

One Pea Ridge farm couple was unable to evacuate because both the husband and wife were bedridden when the opposing armies gathered. The consequences were tragic. W. J. Howard wrote to his son after the battle that their farm house “was in the center of both lines.” The Federals formed a line through the Howards’ field “anchored perhaps a

⁴⁶ Shea and Hess, *Pea Ridge*, 68, 154; McCoy and McCoy, *Elkhorn Tavern 1860*, 50; Wayside exhibit at Tour Stop 2 on the tour road.

⁴⁷ Monte Harris, “The Story of the Old Pea Ridge Coverlets,” undated typescript, copy at Pea Ridge NMP, history files.

⁴⁸ Alvin Seamster, “Early Settlers,” *Benton County Pioneer* 20, no. 4 (Fall 1975), 105.

100 yards east of my house.” The Rebels formed a line “400 yards west of the spring.” The roar of cannons and clatter of muskets was constant, Howard wrote, and the excitement was more than his wife could take. A few days after the battle she died.⁴⁹

The Patton family was another family caught at home when the battle engulfed Leetown. Robert S. Patton, a young man in his mid-twenties, worked in a training camp in western Benton County in 1861 but perhaps because of a disability he never enlisted in the army although his older and younger brothers William and John did – both on the same day. In March 1862, Robert was living at home with his mother Anna, his sister Elizabeth, and “one Negro boy.” When the battle commenced, Robert bolted from the farmstead and scrambled up a hill – probably Elkhorn Mountain – to get out of the path of the fighting. From his hideout on the hilltop he watched the vast clash of armies, knowing that his brothers were out there somewhere on the battlefield. The brothers survived the fighting, thankfully, while the story of Robert’s spectacular spectator role became a family legend.⁵⁰

Many Pea Ridge farmhouses were abruptly turned into hospitals during the battle. Martha Lee’s house was selected to serve as a Confederate hospital, according to another family legend. “Before the battle started Martha Lee brought her horse, a magnificent black animal, into the kitchen of her home. She could not think of letting this horse get hurt in the battle if she could help it.” With the rest of the house and the grounds around the house taken up by the hospital, Martha Lee remained stabled in the kitchen with her horse until a few days after the battle.⁵¹

The home of widow Elizabeth Morgan was another such dwelling commandeered for use as a hospital. All of Elizabeth Morgan’s grown children who were present in the household were pressed into service as hospital assistants. Malinda, the youngest at eighteen years of age, was sent to the nearby springs to fetch water – even as “bullets and cannon balls whistled overhead.” Malinda must have made many trips to the spring, because buckets and buckets of water were desperately required to slake the thirst of the wounded soldiers, to wash wounds and rinse out bandaging material, and to cleanse the slippery, blood-soaked floor. When Malinda was not fetching water she was dressing wounds. As she and her mother and older siblings worked, more wounded soldiers were carried in while other soldiers – some of them lifeless – were carried out. The ones who

⁴⁹ W. J. Howard to W. H. Howard, April 1866, transcription by the great grandson of W. J. Howard, copy at Pea Ridge NMP, history files. It is not clear from Howard’s description where the house was located. No record of a W. J. Howard was found in the U.S. census or the General Land Office records.

⁵⁰ “William Frazier ‘Captain Billy’ Patton,” <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/66171709/william-frazier-patton>; Arkansas Edward G. Gerdes Civil War website; Monte Harris, conversation with author, September 23, 2022.

⁵¹ J. Dickson Black, *History of Benton County* (Little Rock, AR: J. Dickson Black, 1975), 182. This account is a little suspect since Confederate forces were never in a position to set up a hospital in Leetown. It may have been a Federal hospital.

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succumbed to their wounds were laid out on the front porch to be picked up when the battle was over.⁵²

Fighting on the Home Field

Many of the young men of the Pea Ridge community were in Van Dorn’s army and actually fought in the fields and woods they knew so well. One such soldier was James Wade Sikes, the farmer and school teacher. On the first day of the battle, his regiment, the 2nd Arkansas Mounted Rifles (Dismounted), formed a line on McCulloch’s right and advanced across the center of Oberson’s Field. Sikes was very aware of his surroundings as he was practically within sight of his own home. Many decades later when he died after a long life of service to the community, a newspaper story about him recalled that “in the Battle of Pea Ridge, he fought over the fence that divided his own farm from one he had sold to a neighbor.”⁵³

Death of McIntosh

Civilian sources have long maintained that Gen. McIntosh was killed on the Morgan farm. However, other authorities maintain that McIntosh died at a spot close to where Gen. McCulloch fell, which was along the north edge of Oberson’s Fields. The Morgan property straddled the shallow ravine of Lee Creek and was in a rough area covered by a dense tangle of trees, vines, and brush. The area is known today as Morgan’s Woods. The battle on the west end of the battlefield started in the open fields north of Leetown, with the fiercest actions taking place around Oberson’s Field. In the early afternoon – shortly after McCulloch was killed – the fighting spread eastward to Morgan’s Woods. Hébert led his brigade forward into Morgan’s Woods on McCulloch’s order, not yet informed that both McCulloch and McIntosh were dead and that paralysis was beginning to spread through the whole leaderless right wing of the Southern army. Amidst the “fog of war” surrounding those pivotal developments on the battlefield, McIntosh’s crucial last movements might appear to be in dispute still. If McIntosh died at the edge of Oberson’s Field as Shea and Hess maintain, and not on Morgan’s Farm as

⁵² Nellie Jewell Lovelace Jones, “A Brief Look at a Family Tree,” December 1969, typescript, Pea Ridge NMP, history files; Virgil A. Lovelace, “The History of the John Ivy Lovelace Family,” December 1986, typescript, same file.

⁵³ James M. Sikes, “James Wade Sikes (1828-1929),” 2008, Rogers Museum, Sikes vertical file. Other young men of Pea Ridge who fought in the battle included W. F. Patton, R. A. Hickman, and C. L. Pickens, among numerous others. See “The Pea Ridge Battlefield as seen by Citizens of 1921,” *Backtracker* 40, no. 2 (May 2011), 55.

several civilian sources maintain, it remains unclear why local residents placed his death on Morgan's farm instead.⁵⁴

Shea and Hess state that McIntosh impulsively led an attack shortly after McCulloch was killed, when it would have been more prudent for him to stay in the rear and effectively take over McCulloch's command. He led his 2nd Arkansas Mounted Rifles through the belt of timber between Foster's farm and Oberson's Field, and when he emerged into view of the Federal line on the other side of Oberson's Field he was killed instantly by a shot through the heart. "McIntosh died in full view of his old comrades in the 2nd Arkansas Mounted Rifles, who quickly carried his body to the rear." Shea and Hess give several sources for that statement, the primary one appearing to be Maj. John H. Brown of McCulloch's staff.⁵⁵

According to local historian Alvin Seamster, veterans erected a marker on the battlefield in 1885 where McIntosh fell, and the marker was not at that location but rather on the Morgan farm. Seamster stated that the place was "directly north of the old Mayfield home at Leetown and on the north side of the timber." There were several depressions in the earth around it where Union soldiers had been buried following the battle, the graves having been moved to a cemetery nearly a decade later, which shows that the place was indeed in the thick of the fighting. The monument to McIntosh consisted of an obelisk on a foundation. Apparently the monument was there for just two years and then moved to a spot near the Elkhorn Tavern, but a pile of rocks was put on the foundation in place of the obelisk and it remained for many years. One old soldier who was especially dedicated to McIntosh's memory, wrote Seamster, returned each year until the end of his life to the presumed spot where McIntosh was killed.⁵⁶

A simple solution to this puzzle might be that the marker was misplaced in 1885 and misinformation about the death of McIntosh followed from that error. However, the marker was there for just two years and yet the local memory of the spot where McIntosh was killed lived on. In 1969, a grand-daughter of Malinda Morgan wrote a sketch of the Morgan family and its experience in the Battle of Pea Ridge and after. She wrote, "When Malinda was age 19 the Civil War closed in on Pea Ridge, Elkhorn tavern, and the Morgan home was right in the thick and heat of battle. Brig. General James M. McIntosh was killed on the Morgan farm....."⁵⁷ Neighbors of the Morgans remembered it the same way. In 1975, there were two cabins up Lee Creek from the Morgan farm, one called the old Springer cabin – probably a ruin – that dated back to Civil War times, another called

⁵⁴ Billie Jines, "Three Families recount 112 years," *Northwest Arkansas Morning News*, June 24, 1990, clipping at Rogers Museum, Lovelace vertical file.

⁵⁵ Shea and Hess, *Pea Ridge*, 108, 113-116, 359.

⁵⁶ Alvin Seamster, "First Marker Placed on Battlefield in 1885," *Benton County Pioneer* 20, no. 4 (Fall 1975), 104.

⁵⁷ Nellie Jewell Lovelace Jones, "A Brief Look at a Family Tree," December 1969, typescript, Pea Ridge NMP, history files.

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the new Springer cabin. While researching the history of the Springer cabins, park staff consulted the former landowners. One Mrs. Frank A. Walker made a sketch map of the section showing the locations of the Morgan place and the two Springer cabins as well as Lee Creek, the old Leetown Road, and the spot where McIntosh was killed. Another former landowner Emery Bailey was consulted on site about the original Springer cabin and the Springer family, whose occupation of the site went back two generations to Civil War times. Bailey stated that A. B. Springer built the original cabin about three years before the war, and that the place had thirty-two acres of sheep pasture, a garden, an ox-cart road, a well, and a dugout where the Springer family of seven sheltered during the battle. Bailey pointed out the site of the “explosion of three wagon loads of ammunition.” Bailey stated “that some years ago he pointed out the site of McIntosh’s death to a ranger.”⁵⁸

The archeological investigation of the battlefield performed by the NPS Midwest Archeological Center in the early 2000s found evidence from the litter of bullets that the fighting in Morgan’s woods was even heavier and more confused than Shea and Hess supposed. While the archeology report did not touch upon where McIntosh was killed, it did advocate for more study of this crucial phase of the battle:

The artifact distribution pattern suggests that the fighting in Morgan’s woods spilled over on to the eastern side of Oberson’s field, and that area played a much larger role in the fight than previously suspected. The physical evidence allows us to offer a reconstruction of the last phase of the fighting at Leetown suggesting that it was an intense firefight that nearly broke the Union lines....

In order to verify this scenario, some of which is at direct odds with conventional interpretations of the fight in Morgan’s woods (Shea and Hess 1992:120-145), additional archeological metal detecting should be undertaken in Morgan’s woods and in the timbered area south of Oberson’s field. Extensive metal detecting efforts were thwarted by dense understory in these areas during the 2001-2003 project. Based on the limited work that was accomplished in these areas there should be more evidence near the Leetown road for Hebert’s lines as well as the movement to the south and west by Confederate troops in their attempt to flank the Union line and take the 2nd Illinois battery’s guns.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Sketch map by Mrs. Frank A. Walker, December 24, 1975, and record of conversation with Emery Bailey, April 21, 1975, Pea Ridge NMP, history files, File “Springer Cabin.”

⁵⁹ Carlson-Drexler, et al., “*The Battle Raged...With Terrible Fury*”, 117, 120.

Soldiers' Accounts of the Battle

Soldier morale was crucial in the Battle of Pea Ridge. The Confederates entered the battle with superior numbers and the element of surprise, yet those important factors failed to carry the day. Whereas the Union army might have been demoralized when it found itself being attacked in the rear, instead it was Confederate morale that cracked when the rank and file learned of the loss of two of their generals and the Federals' repulse of their attack north of Leetown. Soldier accounts of the battle shed some light on why Union morale held while Confederate morale faltered. Soldier accounts also reflect the soldiers' experience of battle, which was vital in shaping soldiers' feelings about the war both then and in memory.⁶⁰

Soldier Morale

Joseph M. Bailey of Carroll County wrote a retrospective piece on the death of Gen. McCulloch that was published in *Confederate Veteran* in 1928. The piece not only describes a Rebel soldier's close-at-hand experience at that critical point in the battle, it also reflects on the impact of McCulloch's death for the soldiers on both sides:

My regiment, the 16th Arkansas Infantry, commanded by Col. John F. Hill, was formed on the extreme right of the Confederate infantry under General McCulloch. Our line of battle was formed about one hundred yards north of a field, or fields, lying east and west, and three or four hundred yards across to the south. From this position, we could see the enemy's artillery and infantry along the edge of the woods opposite. They greeted us with a few rounds of grape or canister. While occupying the position, General McCulloch came riding along in our front, going to our right. He carried a short, breech-loading rifle. When near the right of the regiment, he ordered Captains Swagerty and Goodnight to deploy their companies in our front as skirmishers. He then rode on alone into some thick woods to our right. In a very a short time, probably ten or fifteen minutes, the regiment was ordered by the right flank about two hundred yards to our right, then forward, right oblique to the field fence, driving a line of Federal skirmishers across the field. I was the color bearer of my regiment. The flag showing above the bushes along the fence was a target for the enemy's artillery, and their shells were passing uncomfortably close, when Colonel Hill ordered me to lower the

⁶⁰ The park's history files contain many soldier accounts. A few additional ones were collected for this study and synthesis. For a model synthesis of soldier accounts pertaining to the entire war and the slavery issue, see Chandra Manning, *What This Cruel War Was Over: Soldiers, Slavery, and the Civil War* (New York: Vintage Books, 2007). The author discusses her methodology on pp. 7-11.

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colors. Feeling at liberty to leave my place for a few minutes, I passed to the right of the regiment, where my brother, Lieutenant Bailey, was in command of Company D, to which company I belonged, to ascertain if they had sustained any loss. When near the right of the regiment, a young man named John Jones, of the same company, some thirty yards to the right and rear, called to me, saying: “Here is General McCulloch.” He was lying full length on his back. From a bullet hole in the right breast of his coat I picked a white cotton patching, such as was used around the balls of the old squirrel rifle. The calm, placid expression of his face indicated that death was instantaneous and that he died without a struggle.

I called to Lieutenant Pixley, adjutant to the regiment, a short distance away. He pulled off his overcoat and threw it over the body, covering the face with the cape, saying: “We must not let the men know that General McCulloch is killed.” His gun, field glasses, and watch were gone. Whether he was afoot or mounted, we never knew. He had evidently started to the field fence to get a view of the enemy’s line of defense on the opposite side of the field, and was killed by one of the Federal skirmishers not over thirty yards away. A detail of four or five men was made from Company D, to carry the body to the rear, and it was then sent to Fort Smith, Ark., where it was temporarily buried.

Federal soldiers with whom I have since talked who were in the battle of Elkhorn, told me that when the Confederate forces gained a position in their rear, cutting off the only feasible line of retreat and the source of their supplies, that they were more or less demoralized and thought defeat and capture almost certain. They learned of General McCulloch’s death immediately after it occurred. His watch, with name engraved thereon told the story. His death gave them hope and courage. General McIntosh, the second in command, was killed about the same time, and Colonel Hebert, the ranking colonel, was wounded, leaving the right wing of the Confederate forces without a commander. Colonels of regiments, without orders, acted on their own initiative without any concert of action. The untimely deaths of these two officers turned the tide of battle in favor of the Federals.⁶¹

As Shea and Hess make clear, Confederate morale was already weakened by too much marching in the days leading up to the battle, as well as by the harsh winter

⁶¹ J. M. Bailey, “The Death of General McCulloch,” *Confederate Veteran* 36 (1928), 175. For more on the death of McCulloch, see W. J. Lemke, ed., “‘The Paths of Glory—’ (The war-time diary of Maj. John Henry Brown, C.S.A.)” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 15, no. 4 (Winter 1956), 344-59.

conditions, and by the Southern army's chronic deficiencies in equipment and supply, which became acute on the second day of battle. In this reminiscence by veteran soldier Henry G. Bunn of the 4th Arkansas, published in *Confederate Veteran* in 1902, the author suggests that despite its grave supply problems at Pea Ridge the Confederate army maintained morale until the second day when Van Dorn gave the order to retreat:

It is easy to imagine the condition of the commissary and quartermaster departments. But the ordnance department was most poorly supplied, almost to ridiculousness. Half the troops were armed with hunting rifles and shotguns, for which they made cartridges with their own hands, if indeed they had any at all. How the meager supply lasted for parts of two days occupied in the battle is something no one has ever tried to explain. It was a drawn fight, with little apparent advantage on either side, until it began to be known that the Confederate army was to be withdrawn. That order, of course, was the result of the utter exhaustion of ammunition, and the danger of attempting to bring up the wagon train, which contained all the food supplies on hand and which was in more easy reach of the Federals than of the Confederates, having been left under guard on Sugar Creek, about two and a half miles west of the Federal encampment, while the Confederate army was now all to the north of it, with mountains intervening between it and its supplies, and the Federal cavalry was free to operate in the locality between the Confederate army, as it was on the second day of the battle, and its commissary train.⁶²

While the Confederate soldiers at Pea Ridge were beset by great weariness and hunger almost to a man, many on the Union side experienced extreme privation, too. Dyer O. Clark of the 36th Illinois Infantry Regiment was among those with Sigel in the running fight on March 6. For him, that was the first day of a *three*-day ordeal marked by sleeplessness and hunger:

We slept that night without any tents and only half our blankets. We did not sleep much. And the next day we ate our breakfast, and the boys marched out and fought most all day, and travelled most all night, and did not get a wink of sleep, and then fought all next day, and did not get anything to eat until supper time; so they were 36 hours without anything to eat, and then only one cold pancake.⁶³

⁶² Henry G. Bunn, "Early Days of War in the West," *Confederate Veteran* 10 (1902), 452.

⁶³ Dyer O. Clark, "Letter from Pea Ridge," *Belvidere (IL) Standard*, April 1, 1862.

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Many Rebel soldiers maintained, like Bunn did, that the morale on their side held up until Van Dorn gave the order to retreat and only then did it crack. That sentiment was expressed by some individuals soon after the battle and undoubtedly that was their honest and frank opinion then. For many others, who expressed the same view months or years later, it is possible that the idea that Rebel morale only cracked at the very end grew in their hearts and minds as it provided something of a palliative for a stinging defeat. As the years passed, more and more soldiers came to echo the phrase that “Nobody was whipped at the battle of Pea Ridge but Van Dorn.”⁶⁴ In this retrospective account, I. V. Smith of the 3rd Missouri Infantry Regiment, wrote convincingly about the fighting spirit of the Southern soldiers at the close of the battle, treating the matter with exceptional clarity and sensitivity:

Morning came and found the First Missouri Brigade and the Second Missouri Brigade in position. The balance of the army had been withdrawn and was in full retreat towards Vanburen, Arkansas, although we did not know it. We had seen the Texas and Arkansas troops pass during the night, but thought they were being moved to a new position. The 1st Missouri Brigade received orders to keep on a line with the Second Brigade. Our artillery was massed in our rear, thirty-nine pieces. The enemy massed their batteries in our front, as well as the remainder of their army. We were lying across the only road into Missouri and had to be removed so they could go. The artillery began a lively duel, ours firing over our regiment, which, of course, drew the fire of the enemy’s batteries. Such an incessant booming of cannon and bursting of shells I had never heard. Large trees were falling all around us....

After about one hour of this furious cannonade our artillery limbered up and withdrew. Then four lines of Federal infantry began an assault on our front. When they made their appearance, the Second Missouri Brigade fell back, and about this time Col. E. H. Rieves, who was standing on the ground just behind me, holding his horse and by the bridle, received a mortal wound. He was helped on his horse and some helped him off the field. Our regiment began to fall back to keep in line with the 2nd Brigade. Some of us did not understand why this move was made and some of the men would rally, make a stand and then retreat. This movement was kept up for about one-half mile, when the regiment swung into column and was in full retreat at a quick step,

⁶⁴ This verdict appears in many sources. Here it is quoted in Faye L. Stewart, “Battle of Pea Ridge,” *Missouri Historical Review* 22, no. 2 (January 1928), 190. See also H. P. Greene, “Diary of Battle of Pea Ridge by H. P. Greene,” in *Pea Ridge The Community...as seen through the writings of Billie Jines*, edited by Bob Jines (Ozark, MO: Dogwood Printing, 1997), 3-5. See also Shea and Hess, *Pea Ridge*, 260, where the phrase is said to have been uttered by Brig. Gen. James S. Rains right after the battle within Van Dorn’s earshot, for which remark Rains was placed under temporary arrest.

but did not know it until they had gone about five miles, when a cannon which had been left by the roadside, spiked had been reached. Then we realized that we were retreating, but we had given the enemy such a drubbing that they did not follow.

I was told by those that were left on the battle field that as soon as they saw we had opened the road into Missouri and was not opposing them, they filled Ash Hollow full of men, each one trying to go faster than the other, and all determined to get out of Arkansas as soon as their legs would carry them....

We camped at VanWinkle's Mills, about sixteen miles south of the Elk Horn Tavern, that night, in a pine forest. I had never seen a pine forest before, and had never heard the wind moan through their boughs; it seemed awful to listen to it. The trees seemed to be wailing our retreat. Then, to add to this lonesome feeling, Gen. Price came along in a buggy with his arm in a sling, having been wounded. He was bowing to every one. When he met a man who had been wounded, would say something to him. All of which seemed solemn in the extreme.⁶⁵

A Union officer in the 44th Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment, in a letter sent home after the battle, described the bravery of his men with these eloquent words:

You ought to see with what coolness men go into action [when] they have heard tell of the enemy so much and been in hearing of their guns so long that they never appear to think of death.⁶⁶

In the Heat of Battle

Soldiers' letters written after the battle aimed to reassure loved ones at home that they were alive and well. Some soldiers wrote about the experience factually or nonchalantly, others wrote in more vivid tones. Lt. William B. Chapman of the 2nd

⁶⁵ I. V. Smith, "From the *Personal Memoirs of I. V. Smith, 1902*, in the Western Historical Manuscripts Collection University of Missouri Library Columbia, Mo." (typescript), Pea Ridge NMP, history files. For another strong account of the Confederates' retreat, written by a Texan artilleryman in McCulloch's Division, see "Private Thompson of Texas Tells His Experiences at the Battle of Pea Ridge," *Benton County Pioneer* 2, no. 4 (May 1957), 17-20. See also the diary of Texas cavalryman Thomas Hart Benton Lovelady in *Confederate Reminiscences and Letters 1861-1865, Vol. 15* (Atlanta: Georgia Division, United Daughters of the Confederacy, 2000), 113-16.

⁶⁶ Jesse C. quoted in Paul R. Cooper and Ted R. Worley, "Letter of a Veteran of Pea Ridge," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 6, no. 4 (Winter 1947), 463.

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Independent Battery, Ohio Light Artillery wrote to his mother from Keetsville on March 9, knowing how anxious she would be to hear from him when news reached her of a great battle in Arkansas. First he described how the 2nd Ohio deployed on the Leetown Road in the heat of battle:

The tide of battle was then against us. Our troops were on the retreat. I met three batteries running for dear life. They said that the rebels had come down in their full strength, and as I got to a place where I could plant the battery the rebels were within fifty rods of us.

Chapman continued with a detailed account of his battery’s firing off volleys and repositioning and firing off more volleys as the battle lines shifted around them. He then closed his letter on a more personal note, divulging to his mother that he was wounded:

Tell the friends of the 2d Ohio that she will stand second to none. She has covered herself with glory, for it is said that if it had not been for our battery, our camp would have been taken by the rebels. When the first charge was made I was shot with a round ball in the left hip, which came out about six inches from where it entered. I have the ball, and will bring it home when I come; which will be as soon as I can ride. It is thought that I will not be fit for duty for 30 days. I am quite weak, have some fever, but am not considered dangerous.⁶⁷

In a letter written soon after the battle to relatives back home, Capt. Harry Griffith of the 4th Iowa Infantry Regiment in Carr’s 4th Division described the heavy fighting in Clemens Field on March 7 and in Ruddick’s Field on March 8:

On the first day the Fourth Regiment was in a perfect “Hell on earth” as 24 pieces of cannon were playing on us, and at that, 10,000 rebels in our front and left flank, pouring it into us. But here the brave boys stood and

⁶⁷ W. B. Chapman, “From Carlin’s Battery,” *Cleveland Daily Herald*, March 24, 1862. The thirty-four-year-old Chapman, a lawyer from Conneaut, Ohio, remained with the battery for just a few more months. He was promoted to captain on June 19, 1862 when his unit was stationed at Helena but resigned and was discharged for wounds on October 11, 1862 ending his Civil War service. He returned home with the ball as promised and with his coat with the hole in it. In 2014, the coat auctioned for \$18,000. See “Presentation Civil War Artillery Frock Worn by Capt. William B. Chapman, 2nd OHLA when WIA Pea Ridge,” at <https://www.cowanauctions.com/lot/presentation-civil-war-artillery-frock-worn-by-capt-william-b-chapman-2nd-ohla-when-wia-pea-ridge-139640>.

drove them back again and again, until no help coming, and they exhausted with the fierce labors of the battle, we fell back, firing in retreat, and holding the swarming masses of the enemy at bay, until two batteries and two Regiments came to our relief, holding the ground on both sides of us a moment and we formed again and drove them back until we had gained our former position....

We fought...all day, but were obliged to give way, and the night closed in on us gloriously. One hundred and fifty of the Fourth lay dead and wounded, and the Iowa Ninth and both Batteries badly cut up. We had exhausted all our ammunition – forty rounds, and returned to camp, and filled up our cartridge boxes. At midnight we marched back three miles to our old hard-fought battle field.

At sunrise the ball opened again. The enemy replied and then a murderous conflict ensued. The Rebels fire was much the heaviest, and we were obliged to fall back until it looked very much like a defeat. We took another position, and the enemy changed theirs, which placed the rebels between two fires, ours and Sigel's, and we mowed them down in rows and rows. Before 10 o'clock they began to give way, when we attacked them with the bayonet and such a scattering of buttons you never saw. We ran after them until we were entirely exhausted, and had to give it up. We captured many prisoners, cannon and scattered the devils over the country in their confusion and rout.⁶⁸

John M. Turnbull, a lieutenant in the 36th Illinois, described the fierce artillery barrage at the start of the second day and the Rebel retreat:

Early in the morning the enemy opened some twenty odd guns upon us to begin with....We lay flat on our breasts just behind the batteries, as a guard in case they should charge on them....The firing kept up very brisk and the shells flew over us thick as hail. And as [Sigel] would silence some of their guns, he would move the guns around to their right, and into them again.

About 9 o'clock their batteries were abandoned and the infantry was sent out. There was a very sharp fight for about an hour, when they were

⁶⁸ Harry Griffith, "From Acting Major Griffith," *Iowa Daily Register* (Des Moines), April 2, 1862. Griffith's reference to the enemy engagement as a "ball" was common soldier slang. The massing of artillery at Pea Ridge was almost unprecedented to this point in the war. There were fifty-two guns on the Union side alone and the roar could be heard thirty miles away. See Research Historian to Superintendent, November 21, 1961 (memo on artillery at Pea Ridge), Pea Ridge NMP, history files.

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completely routed and we in their camp. They left in every direction. We followed some miles that evening and all Sabbath day, taking quite a number of prisoners. They were like scared partridges, some of them without hat or shoes.⁶⁹

Battlefield Atrocities

Early in the fighting on March 7, a Federal battery of three guns fired on McCulloch's troops as they were marching in column along the road. The men of Pike's Indian Brigade were riding and walking alongside the column forming a screen. Brig. Gen. Albert Pike ordered two Cherokee regiments of mounted rifles and one squadron of Texas cavalry to charge and silence the guns. Pike's men quickly closed on the Federal battery, killed and scattered the artillerymen as well as a detachment of Federal cavalry who were sent to their aid, and dragged the captured guns into the woods. In this fight Pike's men lost three killed and two wounded while the Federals lost between thirty and forty men.⁷⁰

When the hundreds who were killed at Pea Ridge were being buried on the day after the battle, it was discovered that several men in this sector of the battlefield had been scalped. It was widely suspected that several of the dead had been butchered rather than taken prisoner, as evidenced by the gruesome stab wounds that had been inflicted on the victims by a short, heavy saber that was known to be carried by the Indian and Texas cavalry. As such desecration of the dead or killing of prisoners lay outside the accepted rules of warfare, numerous Federal accounts of the battle seized on this incident to condemn the whole Southern army. Many Federal officers and soldiers held racist views toward American Indians and vented them freely. In truth, the Cherokee mounted rifles were disorganized after the melee and did not take any further meaningful part in the battle, yet their display of so-called savagery drew disproportionate attention in officers' reports, newspaper accounts, and memoirs. More than a century later, historians still labored to put this battlefield atrocity in proper perspective, especially as Pea Ridge was the only battle of the Civil War in which American Indians took part.⁷¹

⁶⁹ John M. Turnbull, "Letter from Arkansas," *Monmouth (IL) Atlas*, March 28, 1862.

⁷⁰ T. C. Peters, "The Indians at Pea Ridge," (typescript, undated), Pea Ridge NMP, history files.

⁷¹ Among officers' reports see especially Bussey's in *O.R.*, Vol. 8, 206-08, and 232-36, and Bussey, "The Pea Ridge Campaign Considered," 285, and Bussey, "Official List of Killed and Wounded of Third Iowa Cavalry at Pea Ridge, Ark.," *Davenport (IO) Daily Gazette*, March 22, 1862. Letters or memoirs that dwell on the atrocities include John C. Lowbower's letter to his father, April 14, 1862, Pea Ridge NMP, history files, File: John C. Lowbower, 9th Iowa; and Thomas F. Anderson, "The Indian Territory," *Confederate Veteran* 4 (1896), 85-87. For historians' treatment of the episode, see Annie Heloise Abel, *The American Indian as Participant in the Civil War*, Vol. 2, *The Slaveholding Indians* (Cleveland, OH: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1919), 13-36; Catton, *Terrible Swift Sword*, 222; Dennis Chapman, "The Indians at Pea Ridge," *Pea Ridge (AR) Graphic-Scene*, March 6, 1974; Walter L. Brown, "Albert Pike and the Pea Ridge Atrocities," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 38, no. 4 (Winter 1979), 345-59; Shea and Hess, *Pea Ridge*,

Scene at Elkhorn Tavern

Soldiers' memoirs sometimes were more descriptive and artful than letters while still displaying the authenticity of a soldier's firsthand experience. In this account by Pvt. A. M. Payne of the 3rd Missouri Infantry Regiment (Confederate), the writer describes in colorful detail the scene at Elkhorn Tavern. This piece is quoted at length beginning on the morning of March 7:

The next morning we ate what remained of our lunch until orders came to march. We had not gone far when we halted, and noticed some mule teams had driven into our lines. They were Federal foragers who had been out foraging and their wagons were loaded with corn-fodder. We had struck the wire road north of Pea Ridge and had cut Curtis' communication. I never will forget how surprised the men looked. One of them seemed to be cheerfully disposed and wanted to know where in the hell we came from, and who we were, and when told we were Confederates said that he had come all the way from Michigan to see the fun and if we would give him a gun he would as soon fight on one side as the other. The other seemed sullen and had nothing to say.

Here we turned south along a deep gulch until we came to a tanyard, when I noticed the artillery was being hauled up the side of the hill on the left. Up to this time I had heard no firing but then I could hear the cannonading to the south and southwest. We had divided our forces and McCullough and McIntosh had opened battle on the south. Here we fell in and advanced in line of battle along each side of the gulch some distance, when our artillery opened fire on our left and we were ordered to lie down. It was not many moments before shells commenced singing over us and bursting in air far beyond and I remember some of our boys would laugh and mock the shells, and others were as pale as death, while still others had great drops of sweat on their faces. Here was a place that tried men's souls, for we all knew that any moment we might be ordered to advance a few yards to top the slight ridge and confront the enemy where Berbig's regiment was hotly engaged. We could see the smoke from their guns which hung like a pall over their line and see a stream of wounded men going down the gulch to the rear of the line. Finally the leaves caught fire from their cartridges and they had both the enemy's fire and the fire of the woods to fight. At last the signal came to

101, 320-21; David Bosse, " 'The Enemy Were Falling Like Autumn Leaves.' Fraudulent Newspaper Reports of the Battle of Pea Ridge," *Arkansas Historical Review* 54, no. 3 (Autumn 1995), 368-69; and Clarissa W. Confer, *The Cherokee Nation in the Civil War* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 94-103.

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charge, I remember each officer called out in turn along the line, “Totten’s Battery,” and we double-quickened to the top of the rise and the Federal line was in full view and I could hear something going zip, zip all around and could see the dust flying out of the trees and the limbs and twigs seemed to be in commotion from the concussion of the guns and while I was a private I remember that I was in the front rank that day, and as soon as we came in view of the Federal lines the boys in the rear rank fired their guns on each side of my head, and in the next night as I lay on the battle field and all was quiet, the sound of the guns was still ringing in my ears. We had hardly reached the top of the rise when one of my mess-mates on my right threw up his hand to his breast and said, “Ase, I’m shot right through,” and I could see the blood trickling down as he passed to the rear, but I afterward learned that the bullet had glanced and he got well.

Just beyond the Federal line at the head of the gulch the Elkhorn Tavern and a large barn where the horses were kept were in plain view and when we reached the top of the ridge the Federal line fell back to the Tavern and across a field beyond. It fell to my lot to pass through the house in our advance and there was a sutler store in there and as we passed through we filled our haversacks with crackers, oysters, sardines, etc. and I remember some of our boys stuck their bayonets into and carried off a pile of cheese on their shoulders as they passed through. There was an old Jew there who was wringing his hands and exclaiming, “Mine God, Mine God, Mine Goods.”

By this time it was sundown and the enemy had planted a battery beyond a field a half mile away in the skirt of some timber and we fell back over the crest of the hill and reformed and Clark’s battery ran up to the corner of a barn and engaged the Federal battery. Here I had an opportunity to witness the courage and coolness of that young officer. I had seen him many times at drill, and watched him sitting on his horse on this occasion while the missiles were throwing the dirt, gravel and pieces of board from the barn all around him and he seemed to be as cool as at drill. And coolly watching the duel between the batteries with his arm in a sling, seated on his horse was the last I remember seeing General Price who had been our commander in the state service and whom we had learned to love.

After re-forming our regiment we flanked around under cover of a skirt of timber and charged the battery that was dueling with Clark. By this time it was almost dark and we got so near the battery that the fire from the guns would pass in jetting streams, through our lines. It was here we lost our First Lieutenant, Irv Glasscock of Randolph County, this state, and strange to say I heard the bullet strike with a thud. He was so near me that he almost brushed

me as he fell, he threw up his hands and said, "O Lord," and fell on his back and was dead.

We lay in line here all night and I feasted on sardines and cheese that I got passing through the sutler store and I imagined I could taste them at intervals for many years afterward.

After our lunch I was detailed with others and sent forward as a skirmish line. We advanced slowly and as noiselessly as possible, keeping in the shade of the jack oak trees (which retain their leaves in winter) as much as possible until we could see the Federals around their camp fire and hear them giving commands but we never fired. Our right rested on the wire road from the direction of the enemy's lines. The noise kept coming nearer and nearer, chucklin along, and drove into our line. It proved to be two cassons or artillery ammunition wagons and there was a German soldier on each wagon with a revolving rifle. When halted and ordered to surrender one raised his gun to shoot and Lieutenant Colonel Prichard struck him on the head with his saber and asked him what command they belonged to and they said "General Seigel's command."

Soon after this I was relieved and I went back to the line and tried to sleep but I imagined I could hear the guns all night when in reality it was deadly still except for the cries of the wounded. It was a beautiful moonlight night, warm and pleasant.

At dawn we advanced our line a short distance until we came to a field and we could see the enemy forming their line of battle beyond the field, just out of range. Here we were ordered to lie down. Soon I saw three soldiers leave their line and come straight for our position, keeping step with each other, apparently unaware of our presence until within range when there were perhaps a dozen guns fired at them and I do not think I ever saw men halt so quick and then run so fast as they did until they reached their lines and I could hear their comrades cheering and laughing at them. This occurrence was perhaps the first guns of the battle the third day of the fight.

A few minutes after this we fell back in the woods to where we had spent the night and were ordered to lie down. Then the artillery opened on us apparently from two directions and the limbs of the oak trees came tumbling down on us and I remember one rifle cannon ball struck a tree near me and made a round hole where it entered and tore off a large slab on the opposite side, and an artillery horse with its nose shot away up to its eyes came through our lines and every time its heart beat the blood would spurt out in jets, and it dropped dead just after passing through. Soon the infantry commenced firing

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in front and the bark and dirt was flying from off the trees all around and the cannon balls and grape shot and minney balls sang like humming birds and bees in the air and to all of this terrific cannonading only Clark with his six guns was replying and the reply grew weaker and weaker until it ceased entirely. I remember wondering why the rest of our artillery did not open. I chanced to glance down the line and saw Colonel Reeves gripping the horn of his saddle and our 2nd Lieutenant (his brother) easing him from his horse.

I think it was about noon when we began falling back and when we reached higher ground where Clark's battery was stationed I witnessed the most horrible spectacle it was my lot to witness during the war. The guns, I believe without an exception were dismounted or disabled and one of the cassons had been struck in the centre by a cannon ball and blown up, and seemingly every artilleryman lay near the guns dead, in some instances lying across each other and mingled with dead horses, all scorched and black from the explosion of the ammunition wagon. And not far away, on his back, in his suit of gray, with his head shot away from his eyes up, one of the brightest gems of the Confederate army, Captain Merriweather Clark of St. Louis, scarcely out of his teens, lay dead.

We fell back in good order but a more dejected and disappointed brigade of men never left a battlefield. We had been victorious on the first and second days of the battle and we did not know what had been going on on other parts of the battle field and we could not realize we had been defeated and that the army was under full retreat. As we afterward learned the Arkansas, Louisiana and Texas troops had been cut to pieces the day before and their commanders killed and that they left the field demoralized and were then miles away and we were simply covering the retreat and holding at bay the whole Federal army which we had done from early morning to twelve o'clock.⁷²

Care of the Wounded

Soldiers' accounts mostly tell a different story from civilians' accounts, but when they talk about the hospitals on the battlefield or the treatment of the wounded by area residents the stories overlap. Pvt. Thomas Depp of the 2nd Missouri Infantry Regiment (Confederate) was wounded in the opening action in Cross Timber Hollow and was taken to a farmhouse where the residents nursed him back to health. Many years later, Depp

⁷² A. M. Payne, "Memoirs of A. M. Payne on Battle of Pea Ridge, Copied from original letters and a typewritten Mss. in possession of Mrs. W. H. Flower, St. Louis, Mo.," (typescript prepared by Idress Head Alvord, 1942), Pea Ridge NMP, history files.

wrote about the night march and his brief but memorable experience in the battle in the *Confederate Veteran*:

We had marched all night so silently that little was heard but the tread of the soldiers' feet and the moving of trees that had been cut and thrown across the road. We followed on, and about ten o'clock the battle began north of the old tavern. I was standing near Captain Cockrell when a bullet passed through the flesh of my left arm and into my left side and the shoulder blade, turning downward. My gun fell and I sank to the ground. I was left within a mile or so of the battle ground in a small log cabin in which young Gilbreath and his wife lived. They did all they could for me for three weeks.⁷³

Col. William Y. Slack was yet another Southerner in high command who was killed at Pea Ridge. (He commanded a brigade in Price's Division, so his death, though a heavy blow, was not as consequential as the deaths of the first and second ranking commanders of McCulloch's Division.) This account of Slack's mortal wounding and hospitalization was written by a newspaper writer in Slack's hometown of Chillicothe, Missouri from interviews conducted with multiple veterans at a reunion:

Early in the engagement, General Slack was struck by a ball, while he was placing troops in position. He was carried off the battlefield to Sugar Hollow, where he was attended by his surgeon, Dr. Peter Austin. On Saturday, after the retreat of the Confederates...he was removed to the farm house of Andrew Roller. Roller's Ridge was one of the ridges in this section, according to Mr. Stith. Later, when fear of capture seemed imminent, General Slack was taken to Moore's Mills, where he died March 21. His faithful sergeant, Joe Ruegger of Chillicothe, was with him until the last and helped to bury him. His family physician, Dr. Keith, and his wife, Mrs. Isabella Slack, were also with him.⁷⁴

Lt. Turnbull wrote that every house for miles around Pea Ridge was turned into a "secesh hospital." Some houses that were fairly modest in size had as many as sixty wounded crammed into them.⁷⁵ Surgeon D. S. McGugin of the 3rd Iowa Cavalry wrote similarly that "all the houses within three miles of the field were taken for hospitals.

⁷³ Thomas Depp, "Personal Experience at Pea Ridge," *Confederate Veteran* 20 (1912), 17.

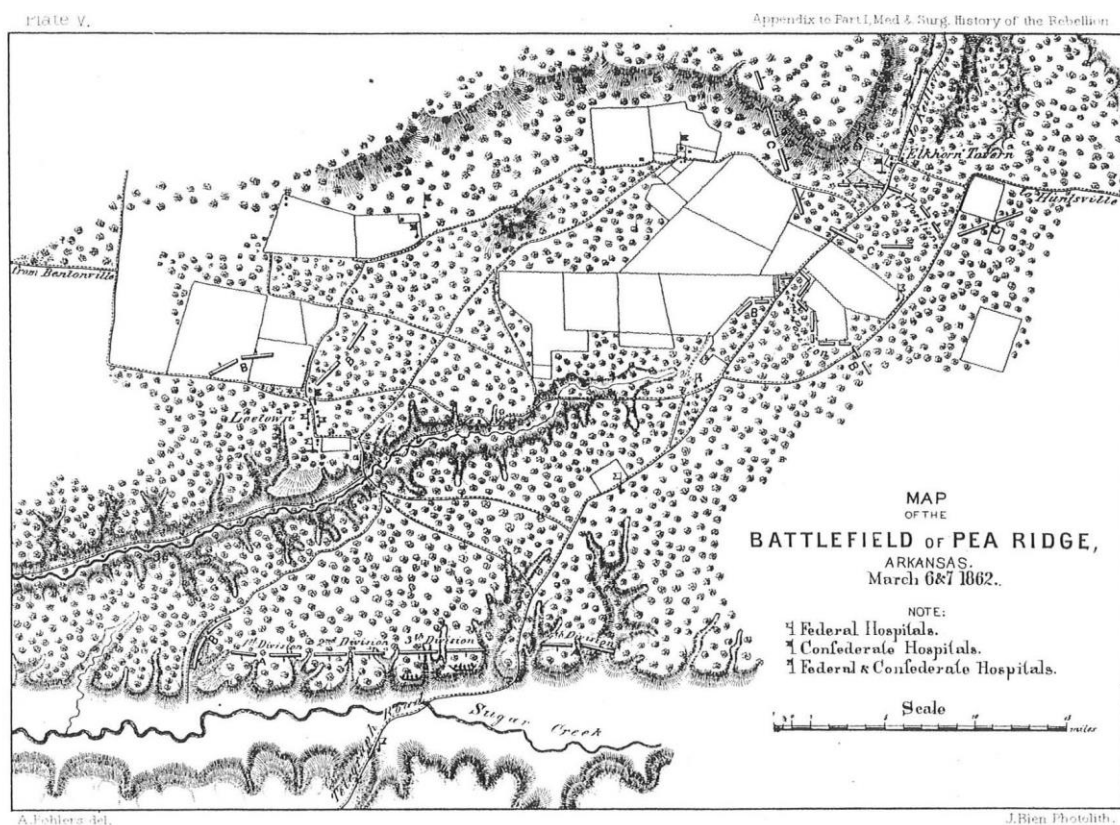
⁷⁴ Stewart, "Battle of Pea Ridge," 191-92. The article is a reprint of a story in the *Daily Tribune* (Chillicothe, MO), March 7, 1927.

⁷⁵ Turnbull, "Letter from Arkansas."

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Some of these sheltered both our wounded and those of the enemy. In one I found both white men and Indians.”⁷⁶

On March 7, Surgeon McGugin joined Surgeon D. W. Young of the 36th Illinois and several medical officers in staffing a hospital that was set up in the general store in Leetown (Map 5). The room in which they worked was about thirty feet long by twenty feet wide by one and a half stories tall. The room could only accommodate about thirty-five patients, so hospital tents were erected outside. The wounded lay on their own blankets or on the bare floor. Later in the day on March 7, McGugin moved to another hospital close to the Leetown Road. It consisted of two one-story log houses, one with a single pen and the other a double pen. Neither one had a kitchen or outhouse. Hospital tents were erected at this place, too. Some of the hospital tents were dedicated to Rebel wounded who had been taken prisoner, and there was a Rebel surgeon who had been taken prisoner who attended them.⁷⁷



Map 5. Field hospitals at Pea Ridge. Source: Cultural Landscape Report.

⁷⁶ Surgeon D. S. McGugin, “Extracts from a Report on the Operations of the Medical Department during the Battle of Pea Ridge,” copy at Pea Ridge NMP, history files, File “McGugin, D. S., Surgeon, 3rd Iowa Cavalry.”

⁷⁷ Ibid.

An agent with the Western Sanitary Commission, who rushed to the battlefield from St. Louis with forty boxes of hospital supplies, described the appalling conditions he found at makeshift hospitals set up in Cassville. Days after the battle, the patients were lying on hard floors in the courthouse and tavern with only their knapsack or blanket for a pillow and a little bit of straw under them. “They had no comforts of any kind, no change of clothes, but were lying in the clothes they fought in, stiff and dirty, with blood and soil.” There were practically no regular nurses present, while the stand-in nurses in soldier uniform who were there under orders were making a poor job of it, “being very unwilling to serve.” According to the agent’s report, the Union army had made very inadequate preparations for the wounded, while the Confederate army had made “none at all.”⁷⁸

One Union soldier’s ordeal in being wounded and taken to the hospital in Cassville was described in this intriguing account recorded in the *Benton County Pioneer*:

Winton Springs, near the scene of the battle, came in for a share of publicity. Both armies fought bitterly for their possession, since they were the main source of drinking water. A small stream fed by the springs ran near the scene of the fighting, which kept at least one Union soldier alive for two days before he was found by his Irish buddy. With a broken leg and other wounds, he had managed to crawl to the edge, and cupped the cold water on his face and into his mouth.

Long years later, this old soldier with his two daughters visited the battlefield during a Blue and Gray reunion. He then was living in Chicago and had acquired considerable wealth. His daughters said he had many times expressed the desire to return to the place where he had almost died.

Together, the three told this incident: When the man was wounded, he was left for dead. When he was found among the dying and the dead, by his buddy, he was ordered to be taken to Cassville, Mo., the nearest point for surgery, which meant in those days amputation of the leg as the quickest way to heal, or else –. The young soldier made his buddy swear that he would not permit a surgeon to amputate the leg which, with its clotted blood, had saturated the trousers leg and dried. Evidence of gangrene were appearing in some of the wounds. Arriving in Cassville in an oxen-drawn cart orderlies were told to place the man on the emergency operating table. His young Irish friend, armed with the oxen yoke, dared any man to amputate that leg. No one did.

⁷⁸ “Arkansas Sick and Wounded,” *Cleveland Daily Herald*, April 11, 1862.

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Somehow the man recovered and fifty years later was in good health, with only a slight lameness as he walked over the Pea Ridge battle ground.⁷⁹

Firsthand Accounts of the Battlefield after the Battle

March 7 and 8, 1862 were among the deadliest days in the war to that point. The huge bloodletting was almost beyond comprehension. A natural spring near Leetown would run red with blood for days.⁸⁰

The Federals lost 1,384 men killed, wounded, and missing. Curtis assumed that the Confederate losses were “much greater,” but no precise number was ever recorded. On the night of March 8, Curtis’s army camped on the field, preparing for the agonizing task the next day of burying the dead and recovering the wounded who still lay among the dead.⁸¹

The eloquent Civil War historian Bruce Catton described how Curtis reflected upon the terrible carnage.

The man had no eye for glory. When he looked out over the field where so much had been won he could see only the price that had been paid, by his own men and by his enemies. A few days after the battle he spoke his mind in a letter to his brother, writing about “the bold rocky mountain...under whose shadow so many fell,” and brooded thoughtfully: “The scene is silent and sad. The vulture and the wolf now have the dominion, and the dead friends and foes sleep in the same lonely graves.” Every general moved to victory across long rows of graves in the trampled earth. Curtis was one who had to look back afterward and think about how those graves had been filled.⁸²

John C. Lowbower, a soldier of the 9th Iowa Infantry Regiment, was one who was haunted by the gore of the battlefield. This son of a German immigrant, proud of his German heritage, was appointed first clerk in Curtis’s headquarters. In the battle he fought with his regiment, which lost more men than any other: 38 killed and 180 wounded or missing, or about one-fourth of its men. When night fell after the first day of fighting, the groaning and wailing of wounded men lying among the silent dead was

⁷⁹ “The following article, written by May C. Downer of Rogers, Arkansas, appeared in the October 16, 1955 Joplin Globe,” *Benton County Pioneer* 2, no. 3 (March 1957), 7.

⁸⁰ “Vandergriff Notes,” *Backtrucker* 5, no. 5 (Winter 1976), 18.

⁸¹ *O.R.*, Vol. 8, 203.

⁸² Catton, *Terrible Swift Sword*, 223-24.

almost more than Lowbower could bear. As he traipsed over the ground looking for the wounded, the dimly torchlit corpses looked to him like ghosts, and he found himself stepping over disembodied arms and legs blown clear away from their torsos by the shattering cannon fire. As if that were not enough, Lowbower was assigned to the burial detail on the night of March 8 and March 9. Lowbower wrote to his “very dear father” on April 14, 1862:

I walked across the battlefield which stretched over hills and hollows, through bushes and woods. It was a sight that made my blood freeze in my veins! Dead leaves had caught fire from the exploding bombs. The fires started spreading rapidly; the poor wounded which could not be carried away fast enough and some of the dead were in part burned! Pickpockets, degrading the uniforms, stole whatever they could – almost every dead body lay there with pant and pocket pockets turned inside out, even bared of their shoes! But this was not yet the pinnacle of horrors. Every now and then there were corpses, scalped by the Indians, or massacred by tomahawks, others had cut open stomachs – and under a rock, from which water dribbled, lay a wounded from the 35th Illinois regiment with a bullet through his thigh and scalped, he had crawled 100 feet to quench his burning thirst. Tons of horses and mules were on the field either killed or mutilated. The number of dead and wounded were later counted at 1500! Those of the enemy about the same. The night of the 8th to the 9th was dedicated to bury the dead. We dug deep holes and buried our dead and those of the enemy all together. I think, I also forgot to mention that at Wilson Creek only a stone has to be lifted to bare the remains of 84 soldiers! This is how things were done. In the battle of Pea Ridge we buried 95 of the best sons of Iowa, almost all young men of the age between 18 and 25; the 9th Iowa entered with only 545 men the three day battle; on this dreadful night it buried 37 men and carried away 176 wounded from the scene of this civil war, lost its “Oberlieutenant” and its major and 6 fell into the hands of the enemy. My company (D) started with 74 men in the field and in the morning of the 9th counted only 43: seven sleep the rest of death in the uninhabited wilderness of Arkansas; the others are more or less mutilated and unfit for further duty in the war....

The enemy sent a delegation under a white flag, to ask General Curtis for permission to bury the dead, to which he quickly complied and gave to this “group of melancholic gravediggers” escorts, to guarantee that from our side there was no desecration of the enemy’s corpses. The army doctors from the side of the enemy, who had fallen into our hands, were given permission

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to administer their functions to their sad lot of wounded within our boundaries. Friend and fiend enjoyed the same humane attention....

The night of the 8th to the 9th, lit almost to the point of day light with the fire of the prairie, bared dreadful scenes. Here was a man, deadly wounded, who had crawled under a fallen tree, to die without any assistance. Others, with limbs shot away had crawled substantial distances to hide away in dry bushes, in order to escape the poisoned arrows, the tomahawks and the scalping knives of the red devils in the shape of human beings. Here again was somebody, in the fight with death, not conscious anymore; over there doctors skillfully assisted the wounded, bandaging open wounds, to amputating limbs, etc. An army minister administered the last rights to a youngster over whose face the white glow of death had spread. Lispering the names of his loved ones, far away in distant lands, he passed away, beautiful in death, noble and faithful in his life – a corporal in our company, 19 years old. And finally under bushes and shrubs, away from comrades, who with sorrow take leave from their dying friends, was a group that should have had a “mill stone” attached to their neck before they grew old enough to do such deeds of horror; I am talking of robbers, who plunder the dead and take away from the wounded their last possessions. We stayed over night on the battle field; but you can imagine, that in spite of our fatigue not much sleep came into our eyes, in spite of being as sure as possible, that the enemy had disbursed into all four directions.⁸³

Another soldier, Jesse Bliss of the 44th Illinois Infantry, lamented in a letter home that he was becoming desensitized to the gore. “Dead and wounded men has become as common that I can walk over a dead man without shuddering,” he wrote. He, too, saw the gruesome results of a ground fire that was ignited in fallen leaves.

I saw one poor fellow wounded and the leaves had burnt over him. I felt sorry for him I felt like saying God have mercy on your soul. We were marching and he was soon out of sight. I passed on and saw another poor secesh dead

⁸³ John C. Lowbower’s letter to his father, April 14, 1862, Pea Ridge NMP, history files, File: John C. Lowbower, 9th Iowa. To read Lowbower’s maudlin letter in historical context, it is helpful to consider that death and dying carried different meanings in the culture of mid-nineteenth century America, when people held strong, shared convictions about the divine spirit and the afterlife. Notably, most Americans conceived of *bodily resurrection*, by which, after death, the body rose to Heaven with the spirit; and they conceived of Heaven as a material place where loved ones were reunited. With these beliefs, death and dying were greatly sentimentalized in the culture. See Mark S. Schantz, *Awaiting the Heavenly Country: The Civil War and America’s Culture of Death* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), and Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008).

and the clothes burnt off him his fleshed crisped up but why shall I picture the horrors of war. We stopped long enough to whip the fire out and passed on to try and kill more.⁸⁴

The widow Hannah Scott who lived on the north side of Elkhorn Mountain learned of the fire in the forest litter that smoldered across part of the battlefield. It was rumored that the armies had left and there were still dead bodies and perhaps some badly wounded men as well remaining unattended on the field. Hannah Scott's two sons, David and Isaac, were both signed up with the Confederate army for thirty-day "emergency" service, and she could not be certain that her two sons were not themselves lying on the battlefield somewhere. She took her fifteen-year-old daughter Hannah Marriah to investigate. Unsure what supplies to take with them, they grabbed a hoe and a shovel.⁸⁵

Much to their relief they did not find David or Isaac and had to presume that they were with the retreating army. But the rumors of a fire and unburied dead were true: they did find badly burnt bodies that the burial detail had missed. Hannah Scott and her daughter dug a trench. While they were digging, two drifters rode up and dismounted. One of them inquired if they were burying kin, to which the widow replied: "We came to bury the men out of respect for the dead and to keep the wild hogs from eating them." One man stooped over and spat in the face of one of the corpses. The other man drew his revolver and said to him, "If you do that again, I will kill you. You can spit in their face when they are alive but not after they are dead." Then the two men got back on their mounts and rode off.⁸⁶

Love and War

Not all of the Scott family's Civil War stories were so bleak. A day or two after the battle a Confederate soldier who had become separated from his unit knocked at the Scotts' door. The young Hannah Marriah Scott was working at the loom and answered the knock. The man asked how to get to the Elkhorn Tavern and then went on his way. This soldier, whose name was Robert Coleman Bone, rejoined his unit and was later wounded at the Battle of Jenkins' Ferry southwest of Little Rock. There he was nursed back to health by a local resident, a girl whom he subsequently married and took back to his home in northern Missouri. In 1881, Bone moved with his wife to Big Sugar Creek just north of the Arkansas line. Bone's son and daughter both happened to marry into the

⁸⁴ Jesse C. Bliss to H. B. Lucas, March 13, 1862, Pea Ridge NMP, history files, File: Bliss, Jesse C., 44th Illinois Infantry.

⁸⁵ Harris, "The James and Hannah Scott Story," 22-23. David and Isaac are listed in the 1860 U.S. Census and on the Arkansas Edward G. Gerdes Civil War website, which records that they enlisted in Company I of the 15th Arkansas Infantry Regiment on February 23, 1862 at Boston Mountain.

⁸⁶ Harris, "The James and Hannah Scott Story," 23.

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Scott clan. One day, Bone was visiting in the home of one of his children when Hannah Marriah Scott also dropped by. When introductions were made, Hannah Marriah Scott said to Bone, “I remember you. You are the soldier that came to our door twenty years ago inquiring the way to Elkhorn Tavern.”⁸⁷

The Morgan family had an even sweeter story from the war that was passed down and cherished from generation to generation. Again, it must have been only a day or two after the battle when a Union soldier named James E. Lovelace, age twenty-two, was brought to the Morgan home for medical care, having become ill with smallpox. Evidently, the Morgan hospital was still taking patients. Eighteen-year-old Malinda Morgan, who had risked her life making runs for spring water when the battle raged around their place on March 7, now became the primary caretaker for this ailing soldier until he was well enough to rejoin his unit. The soldier fell in love with her and asked her if she would become his bride if he returned after the war. Promises were made, and James Lovelace did return. Malinda and James were married on November 27, 1869, the Rev. Jasper Dunagin presiding.⁸⁸

Even in times of unfathomable destruction and suffering, people have an unyielding ability to find meaning and happiness.

⁸⁷ Harris, “The James and Hannah Scott Story,” 23.

⁸⁸ Nellie Jewell Lovelace Jones, “A Brief Look at a Family Tree,” December 1969, typescript, Pea Ridge NMP, history files; Virgil A. Lovelace, “The History of the John Ivy Lovelace Family,” December 1986, typescript, same file.

Chapter Five

After the Battle: Guerrilla War and Civilian Plight

Union Next Moves

At the conclusion of the Federals' hard-won victory, Curtis had to rest his exhausted army and allow the enemy to slip away almost unmolested. The two wings of Van Dorn's army fled in two directions from the battlefield. All of Price's Division and some of the regiments in McCulloch's Division left by way of the Huntsville Road, then turned south to Van Winkle's Mill, and then turned west to Elm Springs, making a grand circuit from where they had begun their enveloping movement on March 5. Strangely, when the battle was viewed as a week-long affair, Curtis's army held the high ground on Pea Ridge while the major part of Van Dorn's army marched in a great circle all the way around it.¹ Meanwhile, Pike's disorganized Indian Brigade fled the battlefield by way of Telegraph Road and the Bentonville Detour, eventually falling back to the Indian Territory.

With the return of drier, warmer weather, Curtis's Army of the Southwest marched north on Telegraph Road to Cassville, Missouri, then east across the Ozark Plateau in southern Missouri to West Plains where it resupplied for a continuation of the winter campaign. By this time it was the end of April. Van Dorn's army had been transferred east of the Mississippi River to shore up Confederate defenses in Tennessee, so there was no effective Rebel fighting force between Curtis and the Arkansas state capital at Little Rock. Even as Halleck ordered Curtis to send half his regiments eastward as well, the victor at Pea Ridge prepared to lead what was left of his army on a bid to capture and occupy Little Rock.²

On April 29, Curtis invaded Arkansas for the second time. His line of march was southward along the eastern edge of the Ozark hill country. He took Batesville on May 2 and continued on the road to Little Rock, causing the state government to flee the capital in a panic. But skirmishing with Rebel guerrillas along the way eventually persuaded Curtis that the prize of taking Little Rock was not worth the risk of losing the initiative so deep in enemy territory. Abandoning that objective, he marched his army to Jacksonport and then southward down the White River valley, investing the Mississippi River town of Helena on July 12. While that marked the end of Curtis's campaigning in Arkansas with the Confederates still in control of Little Rock, Curtis made the most of his capture of

¹ *O.R.*, Vol. 8, 281.

² Shea and Hess, *Pea Ridge*, 289-95.

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Helena by establishing his headquarters in Hindman’s elegant mansion there and hoisting a U.S. flag over it.³

While Little Rock would not fall to Federal forces for another year, Curtis’s winter campaign in northwest Arkansas combined with his subsequent march through northeastern Arkansas in late spring and early summer did produce significant results. First and foremost, the battlefield victory at Pea Ridge secured Missouri for the Union. Less well-known but also significant, Curtis’s approach to campaigning in Arkansas set important precedents that influenced the war-making still ahead. As Curtis’s subordinate officer Grenville M. Dodge would later attest, “This campaign demonstrated early in the war what could be accomplished by a small Army 300 miles away from any rail or water communication, in a rugged, mountainous, sparsely settled country, marching in winter, and virtually subsisting upon the country.” Curtis’s march through Arkansas in 1862 anticipated General Sherman’s much more renown and decisive march through Georgia in 1864. More to the point, it emboldened the Union side to undertake large raids deep into Confederate-held territory through the mid-war period.⁴

Campaigning through the winter brought its own challenges, which Curtis proved could be surmounted as well. The army with its many horses and mules and supply wagons moved at a good clip on primitive roads that were often no better than muddy troughs. It survived on food foraged along the way. Sometimes the men had to subsist on reduced rations for days at a stretch but they endured it. “I doubt if there was any campaign in the whole war where there was greater physical suffering and more manly endurance than in this campaign,” one soldier asserted.⁵

Curtis had to lean hard on the civilian population to sustain his army when he was operating such a long way from regular communication and supply lines. He dragooned Union sympathizers in the local population to guide his scouts over unfamiliar roads. He fed his army on farmers’ food stocks requisitioned by his army’s foraging parties. Monetary claims submitted by Arkansas citizens to the Southern Claims Commission many years later provide glimpses into the army’s requisitioning and foraging operations and the impact that these actions had on civilian households. One Pea Ridge claimant, Robert C. Foster, said that a foraging party of Curtis’s army consisting of about 100 soldiers, wagon masters, teamsters, and officers came to his farm and carried off 200 bushels of corn, virtually clearing out his corn crib. In another claim, Pea Ridge farmer Thomas Marshall stated that Sigel’s command came to his property a few days after the battle and took 100 bushels of fodder. How did Marshall know the quantity? He had a square pen made of ten-foot rails that stood about twelve to fourteen feet high and the full pen was nearly emptied. The soldiers told Marshall they would leave him ten bushels but

³ Shea and Hess, *Pea Ridge*, 292-303.

⁴ Dodge quoted in Shea and Hess, *Pea Ridge*, 310.

⁵ Shea and Hess, *Pea Ridge*, 309.

they did not leave him five. Another Benton County resident, John S. Reynolds, claimed that Curtis's army requisitioned eleven feather beds and bedding from his home for use in a field hospital. The value of the items, placed at \$330, was equal to about \$10,000 in today's dollars. Charles W. Rice of Pea Ridge was a witness to Reynolds's claim.⁶

When Curtis's army remained camped on Pea Ridge after the battle many fence rails were taken for firewood. As one Pea Ridge resident sardonically remembered it: "They had a rule to take only the top rails, but when the top ones were gone the next ones became the top ones and so on to the ground." Many farmers reported losing entire fences as the nights were cold and the soldiers fed the rails into big campfires to keep themselves warm.⁷

Curtis also went out of his way to capture gristmills as he marched. He did so for two reasons. The first was to take over the actual milling operation so as to mill the grain that was gathered by foraging parties to keep the army in supply of flour. The second reason was to capture the large grain stores from the miller's granary, which were generally equal to the grain stores of many farms combined. The Confederates, seeing the capture of gristmills as an emerging pattern in the northern invasion, destroyed mills to prevent their falling to the enemy. When Curtis planted his Army of the Southwest in Benton County in February, he required that all millowners come to his army headquarters and take an oath of loyalty to the Union. Under their oath of loyalty, the millowners could only sell flour or grain to customers who could show a written document attesting to their own loyalty to the Union.⁸

As Curtis marched through northeastern Arkansas in the late spring and early summer, his treatment of the civilian population grew increasingly harsh. One soldier wrote in a letter home, "I am wandering over the wilds of Arkansas, and desolating the country as we pass. We make a clean thing of almost everything as we pass along, in the way of forage, both for man and beast." Coming into an area of larger farms and cotton plantations, Curtis's foraging parties not only seized all kinds of provisions for the army, they sometimes burned public buildings or private homes when they recognized that the owners were secessionists. Soldier letters reveal the fact that the violence perpetrated against the civilian population stemmed not only from the Union soldiers' animosity toward secessionists, but from their growing anger when they observed the awful conditions of slavery and the obscene wealth accrued by slaveholders. One Northern soldier wrote, "Now I have witnessed the unnaturalness of slavery with my own eyes and with disgust." Another wrote, "I am not yet quite an Abolitionist but am fast becoming

⁶ *Records of the Commission of Claims (Southern Claims Commission), 1871-1880*, Robert C. Foster claim 5785, Thomas R. Marshall claim 9632, John S. Reynolds claim 18132.

⁷ Bessie L. Tuck Rogan, "Civil War Stories," *Benton County Pioneer* 3, no. 1 (November 1957), 21.

⁸ Michael A. Hughes, "Wartime Gristmill Destruction in Northwest Arkansas and Military Farm-Colonies," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 46, no. 2 (Summer 1987), 169-70; John C. Lowbower's letter to his father, April 14, 1862, Pea Ridge NMP, history files, File: John C. Lowbower, 9th Iowa.

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one.” By allowing the troops to pillage, Curtis was taking the war directly to the civilian population in a way that transformed the Civil War into a “total war” such as would become more common in the twentieth century.⁹

Enslaved people across the entire South generally understood that the war was being fought over slavery and that the northern legions were effectively coming to liberate them. Wherever the Northern armies invaded slave territory, freedom-seeking bondspeople left their homes and made their way to the Federals’ encampments. Curtis was among the very first Northern generals to welcome this development. At this point in the war, still nine months ahead of the Emancipation Proclamation, the army’s treatment of fugitive slaves was inconsistent and controversial. President Lincoln could not afford to alienate the border states where slavery still hung on. Abolitionist-leaning generals like Curtis, Benjamin Butler, and John C. Frémont took matters into their own hands to move the political needle toward abolition. When Curtis established his headquarters in Benton County in February 1862 prior to the Battle of Pea Ridge, he issued numerous “freedom passes” to freedom seekers. The freedom passes assured the holders of the right to stay under the protection of the Federal army until the army was on free soil again. Curtis’s bold action came just months after Lincoln countermanded a similar initiative by Frémont in Missouri.¹⁰

As there were few enslaved blacks in Benton County, Curtis’s action may have escaped much notice at first. But a month after the Battle of Pea Ridge, when Curtis marched through northeastern Arkansas where the slave population was far greater, his army drew thousands of freedom seekers making it one of the most spectacular processions of freed slaves seen to that point in the war. Shea and Hess describe what happened:

In towns along the way soldiers commandeered printing presses and produced stacks of emancipation forms. News of what the Federals were doing spread like wildfire, and by the end of the campaign, more than three thousand refugee slaves, “freedom papers” in hand, trailed the dusty blue column en route to an uncertain future. Thousands more headed north toward Missouri. Few of the midwesterners in the army had seen a black person before the

⁹ William L. Shea, “A Semi-Savage State: The Image of Arkansas in the Civil War,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 48, no. 4 (Winter 1989), 324-26; Hughes, “Wartime Gristmill Destruction in Northwest Arkansas and Military Farm-Colonies,” 177; Whyne et al., *Arkansas*, 197.

¹⁰ Philip Shaw Paludin, *The Presidency of Abraham Lincoln* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994), 83-87; John C. Lowbower’s letter to his father, April 14, 1862, Pea Ridge NMP, history files, File: John C. Lowbower, 9th Iowa.

campaign, but they quickly adjusted to having men, women, and children of African descent “wandering around the camp as thick as blackberries.”¹¹

Confederate Next Moves

Following the Confederates’ withdrawal from the battlefield, the tattered remains of Van Dorn’s army regrouped at Van Buren. Van Dorn’s initial reports to his superiors characterized the battle as more of a hard-fought draw than a defeat, notwithstanding the heavy loss of several Confederate commanders. Van Dorn still had plenty of fight in him. “I was not defeated, but only foiled in my intentions,” he wrote. “I am yet sanguine of success, and will not cease to repeat my blows whenever the opportunity is offered.” But as the Confederate leaders received more reports and gained a fuller grasp of the situation, they started to see Arkansas as expendable and to focus instead on saving the situation in Tennessee and blocking the Federals from advancing down the Central Mississippi Valley. Van Dorn wanted to stay in the region and harry the Federal supply lines running to the Indian Territory, but he was soon ordered to withdraw his army from Arkansas and reinforce Confederate defenses east of the Mississippi.¹²

The transfer eastward further demoralized Van Dorn’s men. Many Arkansas soldiers questioned why they should fight for the Confederacy when the Confederacy was unwilling to stand and defend their own state’s soil. Arkansas soldiers who came from the northwest counties and who did not support secession in the first place now deserted in droves and walked back to their farms. Many Missourians under Price shared the Arkansans’ misgivings but reluctantly joined their leader in being transferred from the Missouri State Guard into Confederate service. While the former Missouri State Guard units that fought at Pea Ridge were held together after the battle by Price’s leadership, the Arkansas regiments in Van Dorn’s army seemed less trustworthy in the aftermath of the Battle of Pea Ridge and were mostly transferred to the eastern theater where the soldiers would be too far from home to desert.¹³

Governor Rector complained to President Davis that Arkansas was now practically undefended. He warned that the state might secede from the Confederacy and negotiate a separate peace if it did not receive military support. In response, the Confederate military leadership appointed Maj. Gen. Thomas C. Hindman, the former Arkansas congressman, in command of the Trans-Mississippi Department and sent him to

¹¹ Shea and Hess, *Pea Ridge*, 301-02.

¹² *O.R.*, Vol. 8, 282-83; Michael E. Banasik, *Embattled Arkansas: The Prairie Grove Campaign of 1862* (Wilmington, NC: Broadfoot Publishing Company, 1996), 7-9.

¹³ Blevins, *A History of the Ozarks: Vol. 2, The Conflicted Ozarks*, 72.

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Little Rock. Though the military department covered four states, Hindman understood that his immediate purpose was to organize the defense of Arkansas.¹⁴

Energetic, determined, and fanatical toward the Confederate cause, Hindman quickly declared martial law and usurped the governor’s direction of the state emergency. The governor started to raise an Arkansas state guard, but Hindman circumvented him. Hindman quickly raised a new Confederate army in the state, summoning volunteers and forming regiments even though he lacked the legal authority to do so. To raise large numbers of conscripts under the new Confederate conscription law, he sent enrolling officers into all parts of the state including the northwestern counties where citizens were still reeling from the suppression of the Peace Society six months earlier. Demanding still more from the people, he ordered Arkansas planters and farmers in the northeastern counties to burn their own crops and drive off their own livestock rather than let them fall into the hands of the invading army.¹⁵

Hindman’s most controversial measure was to issue General Order No. 17, a directive aimed at the formation of guerrilla units in enemy occupied areas. Called “partisan rangers,” these units were to operate independently (without orders from the regular army) and do their utmost to tie down Federal troops that would otherwise be used somewhere else. The initial purpose of the so-called partisan rangers was to harry Curtis’s army when it marched on Little Rock. The partisan rangers, or guerrillas as it were, hit the vulnerable trailing end of the army, pounced on foraging parties, and picked off stragglers. The deadly pinpricks on Curtis’s army probably did much to persuade the general to halt his march on the state capital. But if the hit-and-run guerrilla tactics were effective in the first instance, they soon became generalized. Guerrilla bands formed in many places, often attracting a lawless breed of men. As the guerrilla bands answered to no one but their own leaders, they destroyed the civil order. The unleashing of guerrilla warfare would prove devastating for the civilian population, especially in the northwestern part of the state where the population was perilously divided between Unionists and secessionists.¹⁶

¹⁴ Cutrer, *Theater of a Separate War*, 134; Banasik, *Embattled Arkansas*, 10-13; Stephen B. Oates, *Confederate Cavalry West of the River* (Austin: University of Texas Press), 37-38.

¹⁵ Whyne et al., *Arkansas*, 198.

¹⁶ There is a burgeoning scholarly literature on the guerrilla war. See Daniel E. Sutherland, “Guerrillas: The Real War in Arkansas,” in *Civil War Arkansas: Beyond Battles and Leaders*, edited by Anne J. Bailey and Daniel E. Sutherland (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2000); Sutherland, *Guerrillas, Unionists, and Violence on the Confederate Home Front* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1999); Sutherland, *A Savage Conflict: The Decisive Role of Guerrillas in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Stephen V. Ash, *When the Yankees Came: Conflict and Chaos in the Occupied South, 1861-1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Matthew M. Stith, “Guerrilla Warfare and the Environment in the Trans-Mississippi Theater,” in *The Guerrilla Hunters: Irregular Conflicts During the Civil War*, edited by Brian D. McKnight and Barton A. Myers (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2017); and Leo E. Huff, “Guerrillas, Jayhawkers and

Hindman took other drastic measures as well. He called for the execution of deserters, requisitioned slave labor for the army, and established military-run munitions factories. Hindman's harsh methods were effective but unpopular, and by midsummer the people of Arkansas demanded his ouster. President Davis directed the military leadership to remove him from command and reorganize the department.¹⁷

The new Confederate commander of the Trans-Mississippi Department was Lt. Gen. Theophilus Holmes. As the summer advanced into fall, Arkansas faced a renewed threat of invasion from two directions this time: one from southwestern Missouri as before, and the other from the Arkansas and White rivers flowing to the Mississippi. The state's two main tributary rivers were susceptible to invasion by a combined force of naval gunboats and army units making their way down the Mississippi and then up the tributary rivers. An early effort by the Federals to force the White River without sufficient army support ended in disaster for the Federal gunboats. However, as the main Federal army in the Western Theater gained ground and built up troop strength in the Central Mississippi Valley the threat to Arkansas via the rivers loomed ever larger. To defend against both invasion routes at once, Holmes put Hindman in charge of defending the northwestern approaches while Holmes concentrated on fortifying points along the riverways and garrisoning the most strategically located river towns in eastern Arkansas.¹⁸

The Battle of Prairie Grove

Hindman quickly assembled an army of about 6,000 men. Though they were ill-equipped and ill-trained, there was little in the way of Union forces stationed in northwest Arkansas or southwestern Missouri to oppose them. Hindman went on the offensive and marched northward into Missouri. The Union soon organized a force to stop him. This was called the Army of the Frontier and it was under the command of Brig. Gen. John M. Schofield. Hindman found his jerrybuilt army outmatched. Driven out of Missouri, he fell back to Fort Smith to rest his troops. The Army of the Frontier then splintered into three divisions, each one going in pursuit of small Rebel forces in Missouri, Arkansas, and the Indian Territory. Seeing the Federal forces divided, Hindman conceived a plan to counterattack and defeat one division at a time. He saw his chance in early December when but one division, commanded by Brig. Gen. James Blunt, was left to garrison the towns in northwest Arkansas. However, Hindman's plan was discovered and another Federal division under Brig. Gen. Francis J. Herron raced from Springfield to reinforce Blunt. Hindman struck at Herron's force first, but Blunt was able to bring his division to

Bushwhackers in Northern Arkansas During the Civil War," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 24, no. 2 (Summer 1965).

¹⁷ DeBlack, *With Fire and Sword*, 61.

¹⁸ Whyne, et al., *Arkansas*, 200-01; Banasik, *Embattled Arkansas*, 56-57.

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the fray before the Confederates could clobber Herron’s division, more than equalizing the numbers and assuring a Union victory on the battlefield.¹⁹

The result, the Battle of Prairie Grove, which was fought a few miles west of Fayetteville on December 7, 1862, was a repetition of the Battle of Pea Ridge inasmuch as the Union victory dashed Confederate hopes – ever more vain – of making serious trouble for the Union in Missouri. Ozarks historian Blevins observes that the results of the two battles were alike and points out the crucial differences:

Like Van Dorn nine months earlier, Hindman conceded crucial northwestern Arkansas to Union forces. This time that concession extended into the Arkansas Valley. Unlike the aftermath of Pea Ridge, however, there would be no chance for Confederate redemption in the Ozarks after Prairie Grove. If Pea Ridge had secured Missouri for the Union, Prairie Grove completed the Union’s conquest of the Springfield Plain, the most populous, prosperous, and traversable subregion of the Ozarks, and effectively obliterated any hopes the Confederacy might have had for maintaining a controlling presence in Arkansas and a fighting chance in the Trans-Mississippi West.²⁰

Prairie Grove marked the end of conventional warfare in the Ozarks, Blevins contends, as he notes that it was the last traditional battle between large armies of roughly similar size in the Ozarks. Tactically, the Battle of Prairie Grove was an ugly slugfest of frontal assaults, both sides suffering heavy casualties. The Confederate losses were compounded by a wave of desertions in the days following the battle.

Numerous young men from Pea Ridge fought and died in the Battle of Prairie Grove. Among the casualties were John T. Ford, William Martin, T. J. Martin, who were killed in battle; William Clifton and J. W. Lee, who died of wounds received, and Joseph Ruddick, who was wounded and survived. Several men from Pea Ridge who were conscripted in August 1862 fought at Prairie Grove and deserted soon thereafter. Among them was Capt. John Miser, whose father had barely escaped being lynched in the fall of 1861 for alleged involvement in the Peace Society. It would appear that John Miser was an unwilling conscript and a Unionist like his father who only entered the Confederate service to save his neck. Another Pea Ridge man, William F. Patton, was more enthused to fight for the Confederate cause, receiving a commendation for gallantry at Prairie

¹⁹ James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 668; DeBlack, *With Fire and Sword*, 65-72; Blevins, *The Ozarks, Vol. 2, The Conflicted Ozarks*, 76-84; William L. Shea, “Prelude to Prairie Grove: Cane Hill, November 28, 1862,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 71, no. 2 (Summer 2012), 125-26.

²⁰ Blevins, *The Ozarks, Vol. 2, The Conflicted Ozarks*, 83.

Grove. He was promoted to captain of Company F, 35th Arkansas Infantry Regiment, in Miser's place.²¹

Pvt. Henry D. Reed, a Rebel soldier in W. P. Lane's Regiment, was injured in a fall from his horse at Prairie Grove and hospitalized for a week at Cane Hill. After rejoining his unit near Van Buren, Reed contracted the measles and died.²² While in camp near Van Buren, on December 19, 1862, he wrote this missive to his wife:

Dear Wife,

I rec. your letter on the 17th of Dec. I was glad to hear from you and was sorry to hear that was sick. I am tolerable well. My horse fell down and hirt my arm. It is getting well. I hope this few lines may find you all well.

On the 7th day of Dec. the battle was fought at Prairie Grove and I stayed at the hospital at Cain Hill till the 16th and then I came in to Camp at the Dripping Spring near Van Buren. Henry Moody is at Cain Hill detail to wait on the wounded.

Dear wife and family I want to see you all very bad and I intend to come home and see you all as soon as I get a chance to come home. If I can get a furlow or detail I will be home.

Corn is very scarce and wheet is scarce in this part of the country. I do not know how long we will stay here or where we will be ordered to.

Dear wife I want you to take good care of yourself and children and I think that I will see you again. ----- Moody, I wish you would see to my little family as much as you can and I will be much obliged to you and Jasper Weever to do the same and I will satisfy you both for doing so.

Nothing more at present only remain your friend until death.

/ s / H. D. Reed

The Ozarks Become a No-Man's Land

During the first half of 1863, there was a lull in campaigning in Arkansas as the Union generals focused their efforts on the capture of Vicksburg. When Vicksburg fell in early July, it signaled that the North now had control of the Mississippi River, thereby achieving its first major goal in its grand strategy of splitting the South into pieces. Arkansas was now cut off from the Confederacy east of the Mississippi. In the months

²¹ "Records of a Confederate Officer – from the Day Books, Scrap Books and Receipts of Captain William Frasier Patton," *Benton County Pioneer* 3, no. 1 (November 1957), 13; Arkansas Edward G. Gerdes Civil War Home Page, at <http://www.couchgenweb.com/civilwar/>. The J.W. Lee named by Patton is not to be confused with John W. Lee of Leetown. The Gerdes website lists a Sgt. J. W. Lee who enlisted at Bentonville in the 35th Arkansas Infantry Regiment, Company F in 1862.

²² Maudine Rand, "Letter from Henry D. Reed," *Backtracker* 1, no. 1 (January 1972), 15.

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following, the Federals exploited their success by turning against the state’s weak remaining defenses. Overall command of Union forces in Arkansas now went to Maj. Gen. Frederick Steele. Steele called for a two-pronged invasion. Starting with his own army in Helena, he marched westward. A second force under Blunt at Fort Gibson, Indian Territory, marched eastward. In September 1863, Steele took Little Rock and Blunt occupied Fort Smith.²³ With the removal of the Confederate government from the state capital the way was clear to establish a Unionist government and commence reconstruction. In January 1864, eligible voters in Arkansas elected Isaac Murphy, the staunch opponent of secession in the 1860 secession convention, to be their new governor.²⁴

But with the major military campaigns in Virginia, Tennessee, and Georgia still underway, the North could only commit a minimal number of troops to occupy the conquered Southern state. Remnants of the Confederate army remained at large in Arkansas. Indeed, in the early fall of 1864 the three ranking Confederate commanders in Arkansas – Brigadier Generals Sterling Price, John Marmaduke, and Joseph O. Shelby – were able to scrape together enough troops for one last raid into Missouri. After that ill-fated adventure the Southern army was forced to fall back into a defensive stand in the southwest part of the state along the line of the Ouachita Mountains. Yet even in 1865 Union forces in Arkansas were too thinly scattered to go on the offensive and both sides could only await the outcome of events east of the Mississippi.²⁵

For the whole period from January 1863 to the end of the war, the minor Union and Confederate conventional forces still in Arkansas largely skirted around the edges of the Ozarks as they sparred over a state that had long since become relegated to the outer margin of the Confederate war effort. But if Arkansas was no longer of much importance in the larger conflict, northwest Arkansas saw no let-up in deadly fighting. The civilians’ suffering actually increased after the end of conventional warfare, because guerrilla warfare filled the void left by the departing conventional armies and the fighting in this little corner of the embattled Confederacy became especially fitful and prolonged.

Civil War historian Stephen V. Ash, in his study of Union military occupation of the South during the war, found that there were basically three types of occupied areas. One, which he called the Confederate frontier, consisted of territory in the seceded states that the Union was still in the process of conquering. The second type, garrisoned towns, was where Union troops made the Union’s territorial gains secure. The third, which he called no-man’s land, consisted of areas of Union conquest that were too expansive to be kept secure by Union troops and had to be left in a state of simmering guerrilla conflict

²³ Carl H. Moneyhon, *The Impact of the Civil War and Reconstruction in Arkansas: Persistence in the Midst of Ruin* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1994), 124-27.

²⁴ DeBlack, *With Fire and Sword*, 105.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 124-31, 136.

while the vast bulk of Union forces were directed to the fighting front.²⁶ This was most of Arkansas after the fall of Vicksburg and Little Rock in 1863. The Ozarks, being about evenly populated by Northern and Southern sympathizers, was the classic no-man's land in Ash's rendering. The region became a place of unrelenting and devastating guerrilla war. No other place in the South was so plagued by guerrilla war as the Arkansas Ozarks. West Virginia and east Tennessee were similar "no-man's lands" inasmuch as they also contained evenly divided populations of mountain farmers, but those places were more firmly held by Union forces.²⁷

Union troops garrisoned few towns in northwest Arkansas. Fayetteville became the primary garrisoned town. Yellville was another for most of the time from January 1863 to the end of the war. Springfield, Missouri, across the state line, was another. Lesser Union outposts were strung across southern Missouri.²⁸ Union troops also garrisoned Fort Smith, Little Rock, and a few river towns in the Arkansas Valley such as Dardanelle and Lewisburg. From those centers of Union control, detachments of a few hundred men made periodic forays into the interior to hunt the Rebel guerrilla bands and prevent them from controlling the interior or coalescing into a large force that could attack the garrisoned towns or mount a raid into Missouri. In modern terms, the Union effort in the region amounted to a counterinsurgency operation.

The counterinsurgency was characterized by small firefights or skirmishes of a few dozen or a few hundred men on each side. Combatants on both sides were nearly always mounted, and skirmishes were usually hit-and-run affairs with one side having the advantage of surprise and the other side the advantage of numbers.²⁹

The Confederate cavalryman Jo Shelby was the highest ranking officer of either side to enter the area, and he did so on three separate occasions from January 1863 to the end of the war. In January 1863, Shelby led a force of about 1,600 men on an expedition northward over the Boston Mountains to Yellville and Dubuque (on the Missouri border).³⁰ Shelby returned to the area in October 1863 during a forty-one day, 1,500-mile raid through northern Arkansas and western Missouri. On this expedition Shelby had about 600 men comprised of detachments from three regiments and two artillery pieces.

²⁶ Stephen V. Ash, *When the Yankees Came: Conflict and Chaos in the Occupied South, 1861-1865* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 76-78.

²⁷ The term "no-man's land" has a long history. It was used in Medieval England to describe execution grounds and plague pits. Perhaps most famously it was applied to the lethal, ravaged area between enemy trenches in World War I. In modern usage no-man's lands are ungovernable places that develop as a result of war, strife, or catastrophe. Modern examples include an ungoverned wedge of land between Egypt and Sudan that is rejected by both nations and the contaminated "exclusion zone" around the Chernobyl failed nuclear powerplant. (Durham University, "No-Man's Land: A Brief History," <https://artsandculture.google.com/story/no-man-s-land-a-brief-history-durham-university/7wXh2O6jHQisIQ?hl=en>.)

²⁸ Blevins, *The Ozarks, Vol. 2, The Conflicted Ozarks*, 96.

²⁹ Catton, *Life, Leisure, and Hardship Along the Buffalo*, 91-92.

³⁰ *O.R., Vol. 12*, 196, 208.

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Starting from south of the Arkansas River he went north by way of Ozark and Bentonville and got as far north as the Missouri River. On his return south, Federal troops stationed in Fayetteville attempted to intercept him but only succeeded in forcing a light skirmish somewhere in the Boston Mountains.³¹ Shelby’s third expedition through the Ozarks came in May 1864. Combing the country for recruits in preparation of Price’s final raid into Missouri, he was appalled by the starving condition of the country. He noted the lack of forage, and lamented that his horses were “unshod, unfed, warn out, and must have rest.” He raised just 300 recruits.³²

By 1864, the main Rebel forces in the area consisted of irregular units or guerrilla bands, each headed by a “colonel” or “captain” depending on their numeric strength, with the largest units numbering but a few hundred men. Although these units operated independently from one another and were not under the command of the Confederate army, they were a deadly menace to Union forces. Union commanders worried that the Rebel irregulars would combine into a single, effective fighting force and come out of the mountains to raid and disrupt Union supply lines. It was largely for purposes of keeping these irregular units scattered that the Union army began making frequent patrols or “scouts” through the region starting in December 1863. The Union forces averaged about one patrol a month through 1864. These dangerous missions fell mainly to the 2nd Arkansas (Union) Cavalry, which was organized at the beginning of 1864 under the command of Col. John E. Phelps. Phelps and his junior officers respected the fighting capability of the irregular Rebel units, calling them “regiments” and identifying them by the names of their leaders: Colonels Love, Freeman, McRae, and Jackman.³³

Elkhorn Tavern and the Telegraph

On November 3, 1862, Generals Schofield and Blunt met at the Elkhorn Tavern and held a telegraphic conference with their superior, Curtis, in St. Louis. Schofield told Curtis he had driven Hindman out of the area again and asked permission to withdraw his forces. As the main Union force withdrew, small garrisons were left to guard strategic points. One small garrison was placed at Elkhorn Tavern to guard the telegraph line from Little Sugar Creek to Keetsville.³⁴

³¹ *O.R.*, Vol. 22, 677.

³² *O. R.* Vol. 34, 925.

³³ Wiley Britton, *The Civil War on the Border: A Narrative of Operations in Missouri, Kansas, Arkansas and the Indian Territory during the Years 1861-1862 Based Upon the Official Reports of the Federal Commanders Lyon, Sigel, Sturgis, Fremont, Halleck, Curtis, Schofield, Blunt, Herron, and Totten, and of the Confederate Commanders McCulloch, Price, Van Dorn, Hindman, Marmaduke, and Shelby* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1890), 331-34.

³⁴ William L. Shea, *Fields of Blood: The Prairie Grove Campaign* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 63.

GUERRILLA WAR AND CIVILIAN PLIGHT

The officer in charge of the garrison at Elkhorn Tavern was Lt. Col. Albert W. Bishop of the 1st Arkansas Cavalry (Union). Bishop and his men stayed at Elkhorn Tavern for about one month. In 1863, Bishop published a book about his experience at Elkhorn Tavern along with soldier stories he absorbed while in Springfield and Fayetteville shortly before and after his time at Elkhorn Tavern. Written for a Northern audience eager for news from the front, his book was titled *Loyalty on the Frontier*.

Bishop, who was originally from New York, volunteered for the Union army in the summer of 1861, became a junior officer in the 2nd Wisconsin Volunteer Cavalry, and was sent with his regiment to garrison Springfield, Missouri in May 1862. There he transferred to the newly formed 1st Arkansas Cavalry (Union), the department's first counterinsurgency unit, which was under the command of Col. M. LaRue Harrison and which was made up principally of Unionist mountain farmers who had been driven from their Arkansas Ozark farms. Bishop was an executive officer in the new regiment, and when assigned to Elkhorn Tavern he was made provost marshal with the task of reviewing applications and administering oaths of loyalty for any Arkansas citizens in the area wanting to renounce his or her allegiance to the Confederacy.³⁵

Evidence is fairly conclusive that the Coxes were present in the tavern in November 1862 and that the small Union garrison billeted with this pro-Confederate family. Tradition holds that the pregnant Lucinda Cox gave birth to her baby in the tavern on October 8, 1862, which would imply that she and her husband Joseph were living there when the Union garrison arrived the next month. The long surviving resident of the tavern and daughter of Lucinda, Frances Cox Scott, stated that her parents and grandmother moved out of the tavern following the battle and remained absent for the duration of the Federal occupation of the area, but she probably meant for the duration that Curtis's army was there in the aftermath of the Battle of Pea Ridge. A son of Frances Cox Scott, Wallace Scott, said that Polly Cox moved back into the tavern as soon as the place was cleaned up after the battle.³⁶

Perhaps the strongest evidence of cohabitation by the Union soldiers and the members of the Cox family comes from Bishop since he was himself present and recorded events so soon after they occurred. He stated that the tavern owner's wife (Polly Cox) and her family were indeed living there and that he well knew they were pro-Confederate. If the Union garrison did share the space with the Coxes, it must have been a tense situation for the Coxes. Bishop related how, as provost marshal, he found a way to entrap one Mrs. Vestal, a frequent and suspicious visitor to the tavern. Bishop found a

³⁵ Kim Allen Scott, "Editor's Introduction," in A. W. Bishop, *Loyalty on the Frontier or Sketches of Union Men of the South-West*, edited by Kim Allen Scott (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2003), xiv-xv.

³⁶ Sarah Olson, "Elkhorn Tavern, Pea Ridge National Military Park, Arkansas, Furnishing Study," report prepared for the National Park Service, no date, typescript, Pea Ridge NMP, history files.

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Southern man who was able and willing to pose as a Texan prisoner-of-war in the garrison’s temporary custody. Using this plant, Bishop tricked Mrs. Vestal into confiding to the supposed Rebel Texan prisoner that she came to the tavern to spy, for she was a secret informant for the Rebels. Bishop then arrested the woman and had her escorted to Springfield for trial.³⁷

Besides administering loyalty oaths and catching Confederate spies, the main purpose of the small garrison at Elkhorn Tavern was to guard the telegraph line. When Bishop and his party arrived, the line had just been restored from Springfield to Elkhorn. But Rebels continued to cut the line again. The most frequent attacks on the line, Bishop said, occurred in the Sugar Creek Valley and around Cross Hollow.³⁸

Almost immediately after Bishop’s arrival at Elkhorn, the line was cut again and the garrison sent a few cavalymen galloping north to Keetsville in an attempt to catch the saboteurs. The saboteurs got away but the Federals found the break and repaired the line. The officer in charge then issued a warning to all the residents in the area between Keetsville and Elkhorn that if someone should cut the line again there would be reprisals: “not a house would be left standing for miles along the highway.” Bishop thought the threat succeeded, for the line remained in working order for weeks. During this period Blunt used the telegraph line to make his urgent call for reinforcements in the days leading to the Battle of Prairie Grove. Herron received the telegraphic message and arrived at the Elkhorn Tavern on December 5 on his way to link up with Blunt, confirming that the telegraph line was indeed a vital resource for the Union occupation force.³⁹

Bishop received orders to join Blunt at Prairie Grove and probably left the tavern on December 3 or 4 one or two days before Herron got there. Herron and his troops moved out on the morning of December 6. According to tradition, three days after Herron left Rebel guerrillas came and set fire to the place. The date of the building’s destruction is unconfirmed, but it is known to have remained a ruin with only the chimneys still standing until the end of the war.⁴⁰

In the ongoing contest over the telegraph wire, Rebel saboteurs got the upper hand and kept the telegraph between Fayetteville and Springfield mostly out of service through 1863. Meanwhile, telegraph communications were becoming more and more vital to Federal military operations in the eastern and western theaters of war and even in the Trans-Mississippi West where so few telegraph lines existed at the beginning of the war. Some 749 miles of new telegraph line were constructed in Missouri, Kansas, and Arkansas in the first three years of the war. The responsibility for improving and

³⁷ Bishop, *Loyalty on the Frontier*, 60-61.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 198.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 56-57, 61.

⁴⁰ Bond, “The History of Elkhorn Tavern,” 12.

maintaining telegraphic communications was assigned to the Signal Corps in the army. Training men to serve as telegraph operators was another matter, however, and for this task the War Department turned to a newly established civilian outfit called the Military Telegraph Service.⁴¹

Employees of the Military Telegraph Service not only served as telegraph operators, they also served as line repairmen. In a no-man's land like the Arkansas Ozarks, repairing the line was exceedingly dangerous work. Rebel guerrillas were just as inclined to murder a civilian in this service as a soldier. Many such workers were ambushed, captured, or killed while in the line of duty. Across the nation, one in twelve operators in the Military Telegraph Service were killed, wounded, captured, or died of exposure in the war.⁴²

The work was even more hazardous in Arkansas. After the Union captured Little Rock, telegraph lines were strung up and down the Arkansas Valley. Rebel guerrillas targeted the lines as well as Union supply barges on the Arkansas River. There was a new line from Little Rock to Fort Smith but the Union command in Arkansas soon gave up trying to maintain this line west of Lewisburg. Likewise, the line from Fayetteville to Fort Smith was abandoned. The work of maintaining telegraphic communications in Arkansas was so dangerous that it was mostly turned over to military administration. Capt. R. C. Clowry was appointed Superintendent of Telegraphs in Missouri and Arkansas toward the end of 1863. In November 1863, he established his headquarters in Little Rock. Before long, three line repairmen working under Clowry's command were killed and their bodies mutilated as a warning to others.⁴³

In the spring of 1864, the Federals sought to reestablish telegraphic communications between Springfield and Fayetteville along Telegraph Road. The work fell primarily to operators R. N. Howell at Cassville and Harden Case at Fayetteville, who seem to have been civilian employees of the Military-Telegraph Service rather than military men under Clowry's command. These men were taken by military escort to their respective stations, Howell with seven line repairmen under his supervision and Case with a similar number. Howell's men were responsible for keeping the line up from Cassville to Little Sugar Creek. They had limited success for a while. In the summer of 1864, Rebel guerrillas posted notice on poles that any line repairman caught mending the line would be shot on the spot. Despite the threat, the work continued. Once, some men were attacked while repairing the line but managed to mount their horses and make a

⁴¹ William R. Plum, *The Military Telegraph during the Civil War in the United States* (Chicago: Jansen, McClurg, and Company, Publishers, 1882), 101, 224.

⁴² A. W. Greely, "The Military-Telegraph Service," in *The Photographic Record of the Civil War in Ten Volumes, Vol. 8, Soldier Life, Secret Service* (Springfield, MA: Patriot Publishing Company, 1911), 360. "Died of exposure" here probably refers to exposure to disease as well as exposure to the elements.

⁴³ *O.R.*, Vol. 125, 847; Greely, "The Military-Telegraph Service," 360; Plum, *The Military Telegraph during the Civil War in the United States*, 48.

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narrow escape. The guerrillas, who were also mounted, chased them all the way to Cassville.⁴⁴

The line from Cassville to Fayetteville was cut almost as fast as it could be repaired. That summer the line south of Cassville was abandoned. During Price’s raid into Missouri in October 1864, the 1st Arkansas Cavalry (Union) pulled out of Cassville ahead of Price’s superior force but left Howell alone in his telegraph office. Through the ensuing telegraphic communications, Howell came to understand too late that he was the only man still in Cassville, with Price’s army rapidly approaching. He telegraphed the Union commander, “For God’s sake, send some relief to get me away, as there is not a horse, mule or cow here to ride on.” His communication was received, and a few cavalrymen came in the nick of time to rescue him.⁴⁵

Guerrilla Attacks on Pea Ridge Families

The Pea Ridge community suffered through the guerrilla war much as the rest of the Ozarks did. Virtually every family came to live in fear of a guerrilla attack on its own farmstead. Many families, perhaps even most, were victimized at one time or another or even multiple times. “Bushwhacker” and “jayhawker” stories were common and became part of the Ozarks’ folklore. These sad stories of incredible brutality and heavy loss probably formed the bulk of the local population’s memory of the war – or at least what was handed down from generation to generation.

The guerrilla war began as an outgrowth of efforts by both sides to recruit and form companies of soldiers. On the Confederate side, Hindman’s Order No. 17 explicitly called for the formation of companies of “partisan rangers” who would operate independently from the regular army. On the Union side, the federal government initially disavowed the formation of “home guard” companies in the Ozarks but later acquiesced when Governor Hamilton R. Gamble of Missouri established a minuteman program in his state for creating a militia in each county. Ostensibly called up to defend civilians against Confederate guerrilla attacks, the Union militias went over to the offensive after Pea Ridge and became the region’s first counterinsurgency force, soon joined by the 1st Arkansas Cavalry (Union). Many Arkansas Unionists who fled to Missouri in the first year of the war joined one counterinsurgency force or the other to help take the fight back to Arkansas. Both sides used the labels of home guard or militia to give the irregulars a patina of official sanction. The civilians’ pejorative terms for them, bushwhackers and jayhawkers, became more common. “Mountain Feds” was yet another label for the Union militias, but this term stretched to include the 1st Arkansas and later the 2nd Arkansas Cavalry regiments as well. Hindman’s term partisan rangers did not stick, while the

⁴⁴ Plum, *The Military Telegraph during the Civil War in the United States*, 221.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 222.

modern term guerrilla, which is of Spanish derivation, though an accurate descriptor was not part of American English in Civil War times.⁴⁶

In the Ozarks there was no clear line to distinguish where recruiting by the state left off and recruiting for guerrilla warfare began. Under Hindman's order, the minimal requirements for a partisan ranger company were that it number at least ten men, that it have a captain who would be responsible for the men's good conduct, and that the captain would report to Hindman's headquarters from time to time. The new companies were to elect their own captains and provide their own weapons and equipment.⁴⁷

James M. Ingram was captain of a Rebel home guard unit in Benton County when the 1st Arkansas briefly garrisoned Elkhorn Tavern late in the year 1862. Ingram sent a threat letter to all Mountain Feds by way of the 1st Arkansas headquarters in Fayetteville a couple of months later.⁴⁸ In Ingram's manifesto, one finds the guerrilla captain laboring to define the rules of war and the code of good conduct that he and his men would follow, for they were already being branded as outlaws:

Headquarters⁴⁹

White River hill to the militia of Benton, Madison and Washington Co. Ark. and all it may concern. I am opposed to burning and robbing families of their stuff and provisions and abuse to women. The militia is as well acquainted with the hill as I am and if they can take the advantage of me and my men from the brush and kill or take us prisoners we will but try to pay it back and will not go and burn nor plunder nor give abuse. But if you carry out the plan of burning and robbing I shall be compelled to patronize your plan. But it is a plan that I abhor and I would be glad you will drop the plan. We don't want it said that the Southern people brought families to suffer and turn out of doors. I expect to fight you on all occasions and if men fall prisoners in my hands they will be treated as prisoners of war. They will be give a trial and if they are not guilty of four crimes they will not be hurt and that is burning, robbing women and children of their provisions and household, abuse to

⁴⁶ Blevins, *A History of the Ozarks, Vol. 2, The Conflicted Ozarks*, 94-95; Kenneth C. Barnes, "The Williams Clan: Mountain Farmers and Union Fighters in North Central Arkansas," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 52, no. 3 (Autumn 1993), 294; Mark K. Christ, "Mountain Federals," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*, at <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/mountain-federals-8632/>.

⁴⁷ Daniel E. Sutherland, "Guerrillas: The Real War in Arkansas," in *Civil War Arkansas: Beyond Battles and Leaders*, edited by Anne J. Bailey and Daniel E. Sutherland (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2000), 135.

⁴⁸ Bishop, *Loyalty on the Frontier*, 199-200.

⁴⁹ Spelling and punctuation corrected. See Appendix 3, "Ingram Manifesto" for the original spelling and punctuation.

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families, and murdering men at home not in arms. The militia knows that I have not robbed nor burnt and have treated prisoners with respect.

To Colonel Bishop don't you know that the war is close at a end and you should be careful for you have give orders to murder innocent, unarmed men and burn. If you don't mind you will not be forgot after peace. I think men, women and children that had no hand in bringing up the war should not be hurt.

Colonel Bishop post at Fayetteville, Ark from Capt. James Ingram of the 6h provost Benton Co. Ark.

Feb. 27, 1863

Capt. JAMES INGRAM

Ingram's personal warning to Col. Bishop that he would face retribution after the war was ironic because Ingram would suffer that very fate himself. A self-taught Baptist preacher after the war, he would be shot and killed at his church by a seventeen-year-old boy, John Stone, whose father had been hanged by Ingram's band.⁵⁰

As the war dragged on, irregular units like Ingram's operated more and more independently from army command. Guerrilla fighters were fiercely loyal to their captains and resisted efforts to combine their forces with other guerrilla bands or join regular units. As one Rebel guerrilla explained his decision to serve in an irregular unit: "I wanted to get out where I could have it more lively; where I could fight if I wanted to, or run if I so desired; I wanted to be my own general."⁵¹

Many irregular units began as companies in the regular army and formed following a mass desertion from regular command. The pattern is illustrated by the wartime career of Capt. James H. Love of Searcy County and his band of followers. Capt. Love and the men of Company K in the 14th Arkansas Infantry Regiment fought at Pea Ridge and afterwards found themselves encamped in Saltillo, Mississippi, far from home. Capt. Love, suffering pain in his torso related to an old stab wound, resigned his commission on July 18, 1862 and returned to Searcy County. The next month, more than a score of Love's men left the army without authorization when their one-year terms of enlistment expired, and followed their captain back to Arkansas. These men were listed as deserters and a \$30 reward was offered for their capture, but none returned to the regiment. The following February, Love persuaded many of these same men to re-enlist under his command, this time in Company C of the 7th Arkansas Cavalry. Stationed at Fort Smith, Love again returned home on sick leave in August 1863, and again his departure precipitated a mass desertion, this time fifty out of sixty-one men in his

⁵⁰ Mark K. Christ, "James M. Ingram (1826-1870)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*, at <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/james-m-ingram-17761/>

⁵¹ George T. Maddox quoted in Sutherland, "The Real War in Arkansas," 136.

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company, who followed on his heels to Searcy County. Sometime thereafter, Love formed a company of irregulars, composed of many of the same individuals who had enlisted with him in the Confederate army previously. Love's Company of guerrillas remained in the field in the Ozarks from then until the end of the war.⁵²

A similar devolution from regular to irregular fighting units occurred on the Union side. In Conway County, Jeff Williams, a Unionist, led forty compatriots to Batesville in 1862 to enlist in the Federal army. But after six months of service the men were dispirited because their unit was not operating anywhere near their homes, which remained under threat from Confederate troops and especially the pro-Confederate home guards. The Federal commander, Brig. Gen. Frederick Steele, when faced with mass desertion by his Conway County men, issued special orders on September 15, 1863 authorizing all Union men of Conway County to form a company for purposes of protecting their homes and families against Rebel guerrillas. For the next eighteen months Williams captained "a ragtag independent company" whose principal aim was to defend the civilian population against the growing number of Rebel guerrillas roving about the county. The Williams Clan's chief foe was a Rebel guerrilla band led by Col. Allen R. Witt. In February 1865, Witt's men trapped Williams alone in his house and shot him dead on his doorstep. Williams' son Nathan took command of the company for the remainder of the war.⁵³

As guerrilla bands became more aggressive in requisitioning horses and supplies from the civilian population, more ruthless in their acts of retribution against people on the other side, and more remote from regular army command, their deeds grew to resemble armed banditry. The people who suffered at the hands of these guerrillas usually perceived that each band was at least nominally aligned with either the Union or Confederate cause. If the band targeted Southern sympathizers then the men were called "jayhawkers" and if the band victimized Unionists then the men were called "bushwhackers," but as the war went on many guerrilla bands were little more than bands of deadbeat outlaws who were simply trying to avoid being conscripted and get through the war any way they could. In the late war period, many regular army officers expressed dismay over the fact that the irregular units functioned more or less as desperadoes. Confederate Brig. Gen. Shelby lamented the state of affairs in May 1864 when he passed through the Boston Mountains from Clarksville to the White River in another search for recruits. "The condition of this country is pitiable in the extreme; Confederate soldiers in nothing save the name, robbers, and jayhawkers have vied with the Federals in

⁵² Mary Frances Harrell, ed., *History and Folklore of Searcy County, Arkansas* (Harrison, AR: New Leaf Press, Inc., 1977), 96. When Love's men were listed as deserters at Fort Smith the officer entered in the report sympathetically: "This company hant ben in no fite sense the Poin Bluff fite. These men [w]hom I reported deserted is in the north of the Arkansas River with Captain Love fitin the federals ever chanse the get." (See Arkansas Edward G. Gerdes Civil War Home Page, at <http://www.couchgenweb.com/civilwar/>)

⁵³ Barnes, "The Williams Clan," 304-10.

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plundering, devouring, and wasting the substance of loyal Southerners,” he reported. “The condition of the so-called Confederate forces here was horrible....no organization, no concentration, no discipline, no law, no leader, no anything.”⁵⁴

While military reports such as Shelby’s often gave fairly detailed descriptions of skirmishes with guerrilla forces and the character of the guerrillas involved, they provided only sketchy, secondhand accounts of guerrilla attacks on civilians. Most of what is known about the latter comes from the testimony of civilians, generally in the form of stories passed down orally in the family. Searcy County historian James J. Johnston collected and studied the plethora of “jayhawker stories” in his part of the Ozarks and argued that they were an important kind of folklore that aided families and communities in the healing process after the war.⁵⁵

Johnston observed that there is a formula to the jayhawker stories: the brigands come; they demand food, livestock, or money; often they torture one or more of the victims to extort information; sometimes they commit murder; generally they pillage or burn the place; and then they depart. In these stories the badmen rarely strike the women and never commit rape. Johnston suggested that that was probably an accurate reflection, but if the brigands did sexually assault the women social mores would not have allowed the fact to be passed down in oral tradition as “rape was considered a much less acceptable offense than murder, which was a common method for settling a quarrel.” Moreover, Johnston observed, the stories almost never identify the brigands by name. In Johnston’s view that was because the jayhawker stories were not crafted to open old wounds or create new animosities, but rather to share the lingering hurt of these Civil War atrocities, which blighted so many lives. Instead of naming names, the brigands were vilified collectively. Whether they were nominally pro-Confederate or pro-Union it did not matter, for the whole civilian population was victimized.⁵⁶

Just how much violence was perpetrated against female noncombatants by male combatants in the Civil War is vigorously debated by historians today. Some historians agree with Michael Fellman, who made a study of the guerrilla war in Missouri, and who argued similarly to Johnston that a nineteenth-century code of manliness tended to shield women from most physical violence to their bodies. Instead of committing rape, Fellman wrote, soldiers and guerrillas were more apt to abuse women verbally or to act out their aggression by trashing a woman’s personal belongings. Cultural taboos around sex in mid-nineteenth century America, some historians say, tended to lower the overall incidence of sexual assault in the Civil War. Other historians strongly disagree, arguing that the historical record is simply being misread, because mid-nineteenth-century

⁵⁴ *O. R.*, Vol. 34, 925.

⁵⁵ James J. Johnston, “Jayhawker Stories: Historical Lore in the Arkansas Ozarks,” *Midsouth Folklore* 4, no. 1 (Spring 1976), 3-9.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

paternalistic power structures and cultural taboos around sex led to gross underreporting of incidents of sexual violence. These historians roundly reject the contention that the Civil War was a “low-rape war.” Rather, they insist, women recognized that sexual violence was prevalent in the overall mayhem of this war and they suffered sexual violence or lived in fear of it even if it was seldom recorded.⁵⁷

Many families in the Pea Ridge community had “jayhawker stories,” a few examples of which will be given here. Hannah Scott’s descendants had more than one jayhawker story, the first of which follows the pattern described by Johnston with all of the tension of suppressed violence but in this case the actual outbreak of violence was narrowly averted:

By 1863 livestock, feed, and food was getting scarce along the Arkansas-Missouri line; and those that had any hid it in various ways to fool the bushwhackers that were riding through the neighborhoods robbing, stealing, and often committing murder. The Scott family kept theirs under the house. The floor was plain-edged boards that had shrunk leaving cracks, and in one spot exposed the provisions underneath. One day four men rode up to the home and demanded their dinner but were told it would have to be cooked. So they waited. It appears that Hannah (Granny), Hannah Marriah (Aunt Puss), and Mary Ann (Polly) were alone that day. Hannah Marriah picked up a basket of unshelled peas, sat down on the floor and spread her dress over the spot that exposed the provisions under the floor and shelled peas while Granny and Mary Ann cooked dinner. When the men had finished their meal, they rode away without further trouble.⁵⁸

In a second jayhawker story from this family the outcome was not so benign:

The James Vansandt home was down Big Sugar Creek on the Missouri side, about three miles northwest of the Scott home. It is still owned by the

⁵⁷ Michael Fellman, “Women and Guerrilla Warfare,” in *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War*, edited by Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 150-52; Kim Murphy, *I Had Rather Die: Rape in the Civil War* (Batesville, VA: Coachlight Press, 2014). See also Lisa Tendrich Frank, “The Union War on Women,” in *The Guerrilla Hunters: Irregular Conflicts During the Civil War*, edited by Brian D. McKnight and Barton A. Myers (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2017); Frank, “Bedrooms as Battlefields: The Role of Gender Politics in Sherman’s March,” in *Occupied Women: Gender, Military Occupation, and the American Civil War*, edited by LeeAnn Whites and Alecia P. Long (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009); and E. Susan Barber and Charles F. Ritter, “‘Physical Abuse...and Rough Handling’: Race, Gender, and Sexual Justice in the Occupied South,” also in *Occupied Women*.

⁵⁸ Harris, “The James and Hannah Scott Story,” 23.

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descendants. One day in 1863 bushwhackers took the Vansandt home by surprise. James had been on the scout but was home that day and barely escaped with his life. Hannah (Granny) Scott, mother of Sarah Melinda, was there sick in bed. Granny was reputed to possess considerable sums of money, and that was what the bushwhackers came for. They had threatening attitudes in their demands; but if granny had any money there, she was not about to give it to the robbers. One of them walked to the fireplace and scooped up a shovel of hot ashes and live coals and was going to throw it on Granny's feet but Sarah Melinda knocked it out of his hands. After scary threats, they left but not for long. They returned and set the house on fire and burned it down. Mary Ann (Polly) saw the smoke from the burning house and went galloping right up to the fire. A bushwhacker grabbed the horse by the bridle, pulled off the side saddle and threw it in the fire. With nothing else to gain, they went away taking Polly's horse with them.⁵⁹

Men and boys found at home were in particular danger when guerrillas attacked because they could be judged to be of fighting age and accused of dodging conscription or secretly helping the other side. Even old men and young boys were vulnerable. One Benton County man by the name of B. Franklin Kimmins expressed his horror over the widespread killing of males almost regardless of age: “No man could stay at home in that part of the country. The tories killed old men who tried to stay and boys not near grown. They killed some very small boys, not large enough to plow.”⁶⁰

David McKissick was seventy-six years old and nearly blind when he was killed by bushwhackers in 1863. He had been a resident of Benton County since 1831. Often it is the small details in the stories of these savage, pointless deaths that render them so poignant and compelling. McKissick's descendants would recall that the nearly blind old man was attracted by the sound of strange men watering their horses in Spavinaw Creek just in front of his house. He went to the door of his cabin and put his hand on the door jamb, trying to see them better. The bushwhackers thought he was reaching for a gun over the door and immediately shot him, mounted up, and rode off. The old man, reeling from the gunshot, stumbled back inside and fell into the fireplace. His wife did not have the strength to pull him out so she doused the fire and went to the neighbor for help. By the time she returned with the neighbor, her husband was dead.⁶¹

Thomas and Susan Tuck lived on a farm south of Little Sugar Creek near present-day Little Flock. Thomas Tuck was in his thirties then and appeared to be in fighting

⁵⁹ Harris, “The James and Hannah Scott Story,” 24.

⁶⁰ Quoted in Blevins, *A History of the Ozarks, Vol. 2: The Conflicted Ozarks*, 130.

⁶¹ “Bushwhackers moved imto [sic] aftermath of war to plunder, pillage, murder in county,” *Benton County Pioneer* 20, no. 4 (Fall 1975), 102.

trim. But he was so near-sighted he could never be a soldier. His age and apparent fitness made him a prime target for abuse whenever fighting men of either side, regulars or irregulars, swept through the area looking for recruits. Once, when Thomas Tuck got word that bushwhackers were coming, he rounded up his wife and children and took them to a nearby ravine to hide. He was more intent on saving their lives than protecting the homestead. But the family's evasive action was costly; returning home after the threat had passed, they found fifteen hogs shot to death and a forty-gallon barrel of sorghum poured out on the ground and their haystack pillaged. This was not requisitioning of supplies, obviously, but sheer, wanton destruction of their home.⁶²

Cyrus Kindley, who was in his mid-forties, and his son Franklin, who was in his teens – both legally outside the age for conscription – knew they were not safe when the bushwhackers came to their place. On one occasion, as the bushwhackers were seen approaching Cyrus hid in his apple orchard behind his house. His son Franklin did not hide in time and was taken prisoner and led away. Cyrus and Cynthia, following the bushwhackers and their captive son at a safe distance, recovered the boy only after he had been beaten and tied to a tree about a mile from their house. As horrible as the treatment of their son was, the parents were relieved that the bushwhackers departed without taking his life.⁶³

On another occasion, guerrillas came to the Kindley place, demanded provisions, and took pillow cases to carry the food away in. The captain of this band took Cynthia's handmade quilt and gave it to another man to carry. Cynthia begged the man to give it back. The man raised his hand to strike her but the captain stopped him and made him do as she asked and return the quilt to her. In this incident the captain may have been exercising a perverse sort of male protection of the female – perhaps akin to the frequently observed male restraint that historian Johnston remarked upon. Historian Fellman recounts an incident in which guerrillas beat a husband in front of his wife and burned down the couple's house but then as the guerrillas were leaving they politely said goodbye and tipped their hats to the lady. In this “perverse reenactment of gentility,” Fellman believes, the guerrillas were demanding acknowledgement of their humanity. Fellman goes further, contending that “Union soldiers and guerrillas did not shoot, violate, or beat women who aided the enemy, restraints not held up in many other guerrilla wars.”⁶⁴ But as noted above, interpreting the motives behind men's actions in such stories is tenuous and not everyone would agree.

⁶² “Carnell writes about Benton County, lives of ancestors during Civil War,” *Northwest Arkansas Morning News*, August 18, 1999, clipping in Rogers Museum, Tuck vertical file; Rogan, “Civil War Stories,” 22.

⁶³ Holloway, “Family History of Kindley, Lambeth, and Oakley,” 4.

⁶⁴ Holloway, “Family History of Kindley, Lambeth, and Oakley,” 4; Michael Fellman, *Inside War: The Guerrilla Conflict in Missouri during the American Civil War* (New York: University of Oxford Press, 1989), 26, 201.

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The Refugee Experience

While many Benton County families evacuated their homes around the time of the Battle of Pea Ridge, it was the longer-term hazards of living in a no-man’s land through three more years of war that finally tipped many more Benton County families into fleeing their homes for safer territory. In most cases when families abandoned their farms they became refugees for the rest of the war. Some took up farms somewhere else, others domiciled with relatives, still others sought protection at the edge of Federal troop encampments, while the most desperate hid out in caves or abandoned buildings.

Several historians have investigated the refugee experience in the Ozarks.⁶⁵ John H. Bradbury, Jr. made the most direct study of the topic in an article in *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*. In this article, Bradbury described the range of experience and the source material it left for the historian:

Wartime emigrations from the Ozark Highland are poorly understood and difficult to study, in part because of the unsettled nature of refugee life. The destruction of local records and personal papers, both during and after the war, compounds the historiographical problem. However, at least from the Union perspective, military records, newspaper correspondence, personal memoirs, and family accounts provide an outline of the phenomenon and the army's response to it. Exact numbers are impossible to arrive at, but it is clear that the dislocation was a significant demographic event involving thousands of people at one time or another. These refugees were a mixed lot. It is no easier now for historians to judge their individual sympathies than it was for military officers at the time. Clearly there were dedicated Unionists in the fugitive crowds, while others were hostile to the Federal cause or, at best, antiwar. There were refugees in the classical sense of those fleeing violence and political persecution and some who would be termed displaced persons in modern parlance. Some Ozarkers soon returned to homes in Union-controlled areas, but an apparently irreducible number of indigent civilians remained in the army's care through the end of the war and survived on government relief administered by the military. Refugees collected at Cape Girardeau, Pilot Knob, Sedalia, Jefferson City, Rolla, and Springfield in Missouri, and at Fayetteville, Fort Smith, and Lewisburg in Arkansas. However, given their

⁶⁵ John F. Bradbury, Jr., “‘Buckwheat Cake Philanthropy’: Refugees and the Union Army in the Ozarks,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 57, no. 3 (Autumn 1998), 233-54; Hughes, “Wartime Gristmill Destruction in Northwest Arkansas and Military Farm-Colonies,” 167-86; Howard, “Civil War Unionists and Their Legacy in the Arkansas Ozarks,” 78-114; Blevins, *A History of the Ozarks, Vol. 2, The Conflicted Ozarks*, 123-36; Fellman, *Inside War*. See also Mary Elizabeth Massey, *Refugee Life in the Confederacy* (1964, reprint, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001).

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proximity to the border region and early development as Federal army regional depots, Rolla and Springfield became the primary relief centers in the interior Ozarks.⁶⁶

People became refugees for a variety of reasons. Getting out of the way of the clashing armies was one, and there were Pea Ridge families who left on the eve of the battle and never returned. As the war progressed, the mounting scale of guerrilla attacks on farms persuaded many more families to pack up and become refugees. Saving one's most valuable possessions was another reason to flee. Jesse Cox moved his cattle herd to Kansas when he realized that the armies were approaching and would be requisitioning livestock to feed the thousands of soldiers. Many slaveholders, fearful that their slaves would run away to the Northern army, took their valuable slave property and fled deeper into slave territory, usually to southern Arkansas or Texas. The final motivation that tipped people into refugee status was want of food. Guerrilla warfare made it harder and harder for subsistence farmers to grow a crop and keep a household provisioned. When people could not farm anymore, they had to leave home or risk starving to death. The last year of the war was the "year of famine" in the Ozarks. Whole families perished.⁶⁷

Lewis Pratt was a refugee off and on through most of the war. It could be said that his refugee experience began even before he left home, when he took the precaution of burying his money on his property in case he should have to leave the place in a hurry.⁶⁸ Many civilians hid or buried their valuables during the war, and outlaw guerrillas soon got wise to it. While it worked for Pratt, many civilians were tortured or terrorized into revealing where they had hidden their stash, and then the robbers made away with their valuables after all.

When Pratt returned home after the Battle of Pea Ridge and found his house had been completely gutted during its short stint serving as Curtis's headquarters, that was not his only problem. His solicitous reception of the Federal army had made his Unionist sympathies evident, and soon he was receiving sly threats and menacing signs from the pro-Confederate faction in the area. Fearing for his own and his children's safety, he helped his son prepare a camp near the White River and fled to that place when Union forces pulled out of northwest Arkansas and persecution of Unionists increased over the winter of 1862-63. In the spring of 1863, as Union forces once more took the initiative in the Ozarks, Pratt decided it was reasonably safe to return to Pea Ridge. He rented some land at the head of Sugar Creek and put in a crop. But that summer he came to feel unsafe again and fled north up Telegraph Road to the garrison town of Cassville, the nearest

⁶⁶ Bradbury, "Buckwheat Cake Philanthropy," 235-36.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 251.

⁶⁸ Mistie, "Pratt Cemetery and the Pratt Family," 14.

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refugee center. Having had to abandon his crop in Arkansas, he worked for wages hauling supplies for the Federals in a government wagon. He performed that duty intermittently in the fall of 1863 and on into the next year. In the last year of the war he lived in Mount Vernon, Missouri, where he tended a gristmill and cultivated about four acres.⁶⁹

Ivan Ford, a Union sympathizer, fled with his wife, his brother, and his brother's family to Springfield, Missouri, in 1864. He later told the Southern Claims Commission that his motivation was plain: their purpose in going was to save their lives. Like many Union sympathizers in northwest Arkansas, Ivan Ford did not take the drastic step of abandoning his place immediately when Arkansas seceded from the Union. Ivan and his wife lived with his brother John Ford and his family on 200 acres. Ivan was invested in the property and hoped to sit out the war on his own land.

In August 1862, one and a half years before Ivan Ford became a refugee, he and his brother were conscripted by the Confederate army. They were threatened with arrest if they failed to report. The brothers were sworn in at Mount Comfort, near Fayetteville, each taking an oath of allegiance to serve in the army for three years. They spent three weeks at Mount Comfort, then another three weeks in a camp near Elkhorn, and then marched south to the Arkansas River. While in camp at Mazard Prairie near Fort Smith, the brothers deserted together. Making their way home, they were arrested in Madison County within about thirty miles of their goal. They were taken under guard back to the Arkansas River and then to Little Rock, where they were reenlisted in another company. On September 10, 1863, the brothers both deserted from the Confederate army a second time. Starting from a point five miles south of Little Rock, they made their way all the way back to Pea Ridge without getting caught this time. In January 1864, Rebel guerrillas came to their farm on Pea Ridge and arrested the two brothers. The guerrillas held them captive for two hours and then released them and left. Ivan Ford's terse description of this incident in his claim to the Southern Claims Commission does not reveal what happened during their brief captivity, but it must have been a frightening close shave for them. In the next month, the two brothers and their families loaded everything they could in their wagons and left their farm, going north under the protection of a Federal scout that was moving through the area.⁷⁰

The refugee experience that awaited the Ivan and John Ford families in Springfield would not have been easy. After the Union army firmly established control of the town it became a haven for refugees from Arkansas. Refugees were crowded into residents' homes and were overflowing into refugee camps. The refugee population probably exceeded the resident population of around 1,500 by a considerable margin.

⁶⁹ *Records of the Commission of Claims (Southern Claims Commission), 1871-1880*, Lewis Pratt claim 9649.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

There were not enough jobs, and many families depended on the Federal army for food. It is not known how the Ford families fared in this challenging milieu. All that is known is that Ivan Ford returned to Pea Ridge from Springfield in February 1866, many months after the war ended.⁷¹

Charles W. Rice and his family became refugees when they abandoned their large house near Leetown sometime in the latter half of the war. Rice was a prosperous and distinguished farmer in his late forties. He secured employment with the Union commissary in Fayetteville. With that post, he and his family were able to live in relative comfort and safety in the garrison town until the end of the war, when they returned to Pea Ridge.⁷²

Rice's wife Julia gave birth to three sons during the Civil War and the birth records provide an indication of how long the family's refugee experience lasted. Their son Stanwix was born at Pea Ridge on July 10, 1861 – three months after the start of the war. Their son Rufus was also born at Pea Ridge on April 5, 1863 – more than a year after the Battle of Pea Ridge. Sometime after Rufus's birth the family went to Fayetteville. Their son Clinton was born in Fayetteville on May 5, 1865 as the war ended. Sadly, their first son Stanwix, who was not quite four years old, died that same day. The fact that Stanwix was buried at Buttram's Chapel near Leetown suggests that the Rice family returned to their home on Pea Ridge at this time.⁷³

The refugee experiences of Lewis Pratt, Ivan Ford, and Charles W. Rice are a small sample of many such experiences endured by the people of Pea Ridge and its environs. By the end of the war, so many people fled the Arkansas Ozarks that the region became conspicuously depopulated. A report to the governor of Arkansas in early 1865 stated that four counties in the interior Ozarks – Carroll, Marion, Searcy, and Newton counties – were almost deserted. Another report declared that all across northwest Arkansas two out of three houses stood unoccupied (or a burned-out ruin). Of the third that were still occupied, only one in three contained an adult male. The number of displaced people in the Arkansas Ozarks increased markedly in the last year when famine stalked the land. Great columns of refugees made their way north under military escorts, some of the people so weak and famished they appeared to be at the point of death. At the war's end, Rolla, Missouri was so clogged with desperate refugees that they lay in great numbers in the town's streets and alleys.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Bradbury, "Buckwheat Cake Philanthropy," 239; *Records of the Commission of Claims (Southern Claims Commission), 1871-1880*, Ivan Ford and John Ford claim 10188.

⁷² Benton County Heritage Committee, *History of Benton County, Arkansas*, 720.

⁷³ Peak, "The Rice Family," 17.

⁷⁴ Blevins, *A History of the Ozarks, Vol. 2, The Conflicted Ozarks*, 133; Bradbury, "Buckwheat Cake Philanthropy," 249-53.

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Experiment with Military Farm Colonies

Benton, Washington, and Madison counties were the scene of a controversial military experiment in the closing months of the war. Refugee families with Unionist sympathies were invited to return to these desolated counties and resume farming operations under the protection of “home guards.” In this way, the military hoped to increase food production in the region, as food supplies were so depressed by war conditions that it was difficult to feed troops and horses. Indeed, as famine arose and the number of refugees swelled near the end of the war, the Federals became concerned about a humanitarian disaster as well as perplexed over the way the refugee problem was interfering with military occupation with thousands of refugees swarming the military camps and clogging the roads.⁷⁵

The main proponent of the farm colony scheme was Col. M. La Rue Harrison, commander of the 1st Arkansas Cavalry Regiment (Union). He established a pilot “post colony” in the vicinity of the garrison town of Fayetteville in the summer of 1864. He initiated several other colony farms in the winter of 1864-65. The organization of each colony began with the selection of a suitable area – often a secessionist’s plantation or large farm property that had been abandoned or confiscated from the owner – and the enlistment of at least fifty men “capable of bearing arms” who agreed to resettle there. Skeptics of the program suspected that the returning farmers were expropriating lands belonging to absent Rebel farmers. But Harrison insisted that the colony farms were merely re-establishing displaced and terror-stricken families by providing them the necessary security from Rebel guerrillas. By the end of the war Harrison either established or planned seventeen colonies: two in Benton County, four in Madison County, and eleven in Washington County. He expected to enroll 1,200 men (each enrollee had to swear allegiance to the Union). He estimated that some 15,000 acres would be cultivated under the program. Governor Isaac Murphy requested that the program be extended to Carroll, Marion, Newton, and Searcy counties, but Harrison answered that he did not have sufficient troops for it. As the war ended, more colonies were established near Little Rock, Pine Bluff, and Fort Smith, and more colonies were planned in the four counties named by the governor.⁷⁶

The two military farm colonies in Benton County were located at Bentonville and Pea Ridge. The exact location of the Bentonville colony is not known. It had about 100 to 200 colonists and was led by Capt. Absalom H. Alfrey. The exact location of the Pea

⁷⁵ Bradbury, ““Buckwheat Cake Philanthropy,”” 247-54; Diane Neal and Thomas W. Kremm, “An Experiment in Collective Security: The Union Army’s Use of Armed Colonies in Arkansas,” *Military History of the Southwest* 20, no. 2 (Fall 1990), 170-72.

⁷⁶ *O.R.*, Vol. 48, 1177-78; Hughes, “Wartime Gristmill Destruction,” 179-83; Neal and Kremm, “An Experiment in Collective Security,” 177-78.

Ridge colony is not definitely known either but it was probably somewhere west of the battlefield.⁷⁷

Thomas and Susan Tuck, whose farm was south of Little Sugar Creek in the vicinity of present-day Little Flock, made their way to one of these two colonies after their farm was repeatedly attacked by guerrillas. According to Bessie L. Tuck Rogan (1887-1963), a granddaughter of this couple, the colony was located “on the Samuel Woods place east of Bentonville.” From Rogan’s description of the location this colony might have been either the Bentonville or the Pea Ridge colony, but more likely it was the latter one with the Bentonville colony lying somewhere west of Bentonville.⁷⁸

Rogan’s account of her grandparents’ experience with the colony is not wholly reliable because she stated that her father, John Tuck, was born in the colony on January 5, 1863, which cannot be accurate since the colony was not established until around two years after that date. That being said, Rogan provided some compelling details about life in the colony:

They remained there to the end of the war. The worries of the war caused grandmother Susan Tuck to be unable to nurse little John, and other food and milk were scarce. A negro woman in the camp gave birth to a baby about the same time, and since she had ample milk for two babies, she acted as a wet nurse for John Tuck.

During the latter part of the war, salt was very hard to get. Each family was allotted so much, regardless of the size of the family. They had to go to a salt depot to get their allotment. I believe that one was at Seligman, Missouri. One time, grandmother Susan took [her teenage stepson] Jarret and went up there to get salt. They thought that perhaps since they were really parts of two families they might get two portions of salt, but when Jarret came in and called grandmother “mother” they wouldn’t let them have the extra salt, though there were nine in the family.

When the war closed a rider was sent out to cry the news to the people. When he got near this camp and they heard what he was saying everyone ran out to hear more. Grandmother and her sister threw arms around each other and cried, and said, “Thank God! Now we can go home.”⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Misty Gittings, “Union Colonies: Civil War settlements provided food, safety,” *Northwest Arkansas Democrat Gazette*, March 4, 2012; Neal and Kremm, “An Experiment in Collective Security,” 176.

⁷⁸ Rogan, “Civil War Stories,” 21.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 22.

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The Pea Ridge colony appears to have grown considerably in the closing months of the war. Harrison reported in mid-March 1865 that it had but forty armed men and was “only partially organized.” Two weeks later, he reported that it had 108 men and there were 4,000 acres under cultivation. One Pea Ridge farmer who signed up in March 1865 was John Buttry. Once he agreed to join, he helped Harrison recruit others to form what Buttry later described as a Union militia company organized for “home protection.”⁸⁰

The number of acres under cultivation varied from colony to colony. Most colonies raised corn, potatoes, and other vegetables. Wheat was usually not grown because the gristmills in northwest Arkansas were mostly out of commission. The Pea Ridge colony was an exception; it had 800 acres in wheat that the colonists expected to harvest in July.⁸¹

In neighboring Madison County, the colonies were located at Huntsville, War Eagle, Richland, and Brush Creek. All four were deemed well-fortified and provisioned in the spring of 1865.⁸²

A few of the colonies in Washington County are somewhat better known. The largest colony was located near Rhea’s Mill outside Fayetteville and was called the Union Valley Post Colony. It contained an earthen fort and stockade redoubt, temporary housing, a school, and a blacksmith and wagon shop. It was under the leadership of Capt. Joseph R. Rutherford, a farmer of Ball Township in southwest Benton County. There were around 300 colonists including 112 armed men. Also included in the colony were many widows and small children. This colony centered on the former plantation of William Wilson. The mansion is still standing and is preserved by descendants of the Wilson family.⁸³

The colonies remained experimental and the Federal army was cautious in embracing them. If Harrison was their main proponent, Gen. Cyrus Bussey was their

⁸⁰ *O.R.*, Vol. 48, 1178, 1294; *Records of the Commission of Claims (Southern Claims Commission), 1871-1880*, John Buttry claim 9278.

⁸¹ Neal and Kremm, “An Experiment in Collective Security,” 179; *O. R.*, Vol. 48, 1294.

⁸² Neal and Kremm, “An Experiment in Collective Security,” 176.

⁸³ Neal and Kremm, “An Experiment in Collective Security,” 175; U.S. Senate, *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Arkansas for the Period of the late Rebellion and to November 1, 1866*, S. Doc. 53, 39th Cong., 2d sess., 267; Gittings, “Union Colonies.” The papers of Joseph Robinson Rutherford are at the University of Arkansas Fayetteville and include a few records of the colony and papers relating to his role in setting up the colonies. A newspaper article about Rutherford states that while in charge of the farm colony “he was permitted to buy rations of the Government for general provision of the citizens. In his hands were entrusted the work of investigating and reporting the actual conditions of the people and the necessary purchases to meet the emergencies. He sold to those able to buy and distributed freely to those in urgent need. He paid the Government for these provisions out of his own money, at Government prices, and he sacrificed from his own pocket whatever he gave out. He received the surrender of several Confederate companies, under the instruction of Gen. Harrison, at Union Valley.” (“Joseph P. Rutherford, A Pioneer Resident,” newspaper clipping at <https://www.wikitree.com/photo.php/8/89/Rutherford-2494.pdf>.)

sharpest critic. He worried that Harrison and other military officers were being too aggressive in arming citizens and threatening farmers who resisted. While Harrison urged action mainly on humanitarian grounds, Bussey was skeptical and thought there could be corrupt motives involved. Historians have noted the army's overall hesitancy toward establishing the colonies but have found that they were more or less successful in forging collective security.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ Neal and Kremm, "An Experiment in Collective Security," 176-81.

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Figure 1. Battle of Pea Ridge lithograph by Kurz and Allison. A partnership of artist Louis Kurz and Alexander Allison, the Chicago-based firm produced a series of scenes of Civil War battles in the mid 1880s. Note the sensationalized depiction of American Indian participation in lower right. Library of Congress.



Figure 2. Battle of Pea Ridge lithograph print by Currier and Ives. Made in 1862, this was one of numerous Civil War battle scenes produced by the New-York based printmaking company. The scene features the popular General Franz Sigel. Library of Congress.



Figure 3. Brig. Gen. Samuel R. Curtis. Public domain.

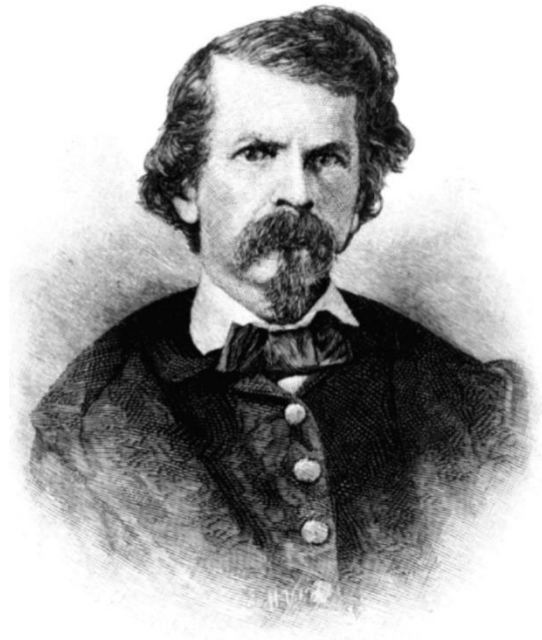


Figure 4. Brig. Gen. Earl Van Dorn. Public domain.



Figure 5. Maj. Gen. Sterling Price. Public domain.

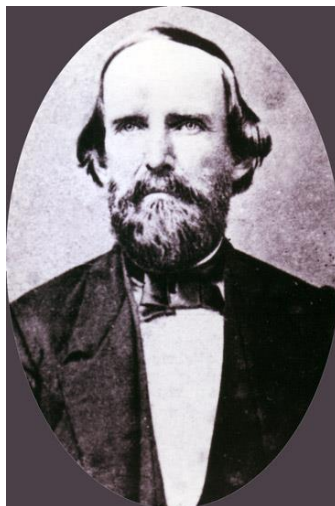


Figure 6. Brig. Gen. Benjamin McCulloch. Public domain.



Figure 7. Col. James McIntosh. Public domain.

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Figure 8. Jesse Bliss, 44th Illinois Infantry. Pea Ridge was his first battle. Courtesy University of Arkansas.



Figure 9. J. Wade Sikes. Farmer and teacher at Pea Ridge, soldier in the 2nd Arkansas Mounted Infantry, pictured here dressed as an old Civil War veteran with coat and badge. Courtesy Rogers Historical Museum.

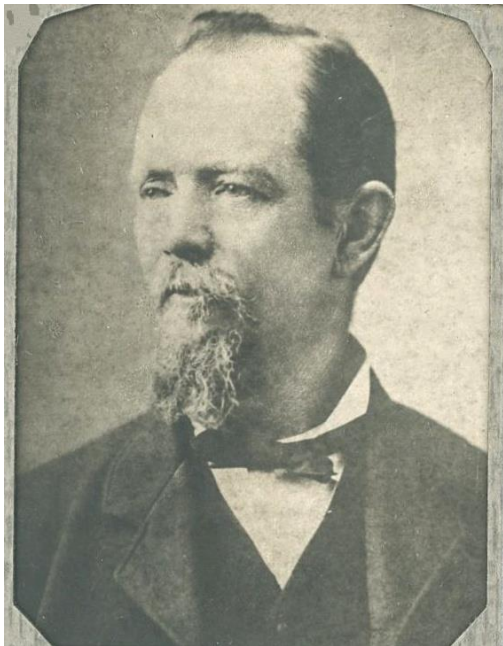


Figure 10. William Frazier “Captain Billy” Patton. He enlisted in Benton County on August 15, 1862, fought at Pea Ridge in the 35th Arkansas Infantry, and was promoted to captain in March 1863, returning to his home at Pea Ridge after the war. Find a Grave.com.

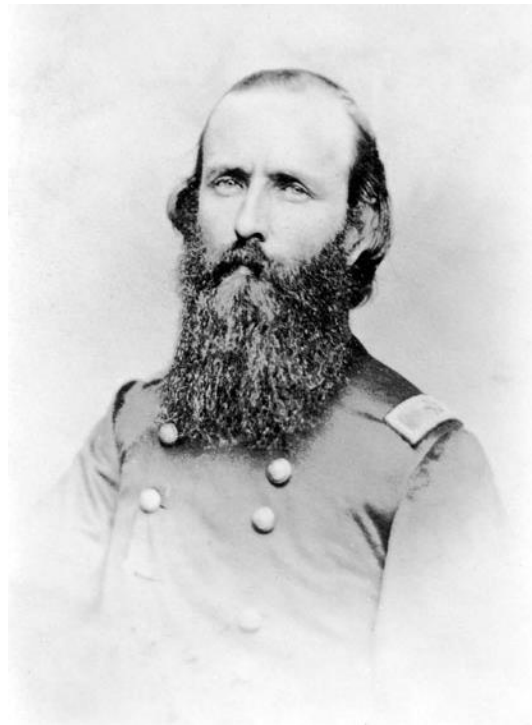


Figure 11. Col. M. La Rue Harrison organized the 1st Arkansas Cavalry (Union) to lead the counterinsurgency against Confederate guerrillas in the Ozarks. Public domain.

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Figure 12. Hannah Scott settled on Pea Ridge about 1845. A widow from the mid 1850s, she owned considerable land on the north side of Elkhorn Mountain and had two sons in the Confederate army in 1862. Find a Grave.com.

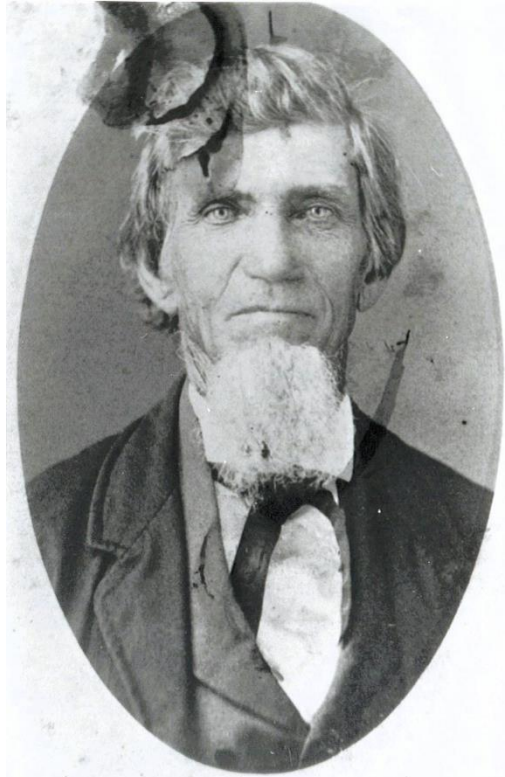


Figure 13. Cyrus Kindley had a farm on Little Sugar Creek just east of Bentonville where Sigel and McIntosh skirmished on March 6, 1862.



Figure 14. The Rev. Jasper Dunagin owned the farm where Curtis's troops skirmished with Price's rear guard on February 17, 1862, marking the first battle on Arkansas soil. Find a Grave.com.



Figure 15. Samuel Burks Jr. (1837-1915). His father built the Elkhorn Tavern with William Ruddick. In 1862, Samuel Burks Jr. married Louisa Blackburn, daughter of wealthy millowner Sylvanus Blackburn of War Eagle. Courtesy Mary Washburn through Rogers Historical Museum.

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Figure 16. Members of the Cox family at the Elkhorn Tavern, 1880s. Library of Congress.

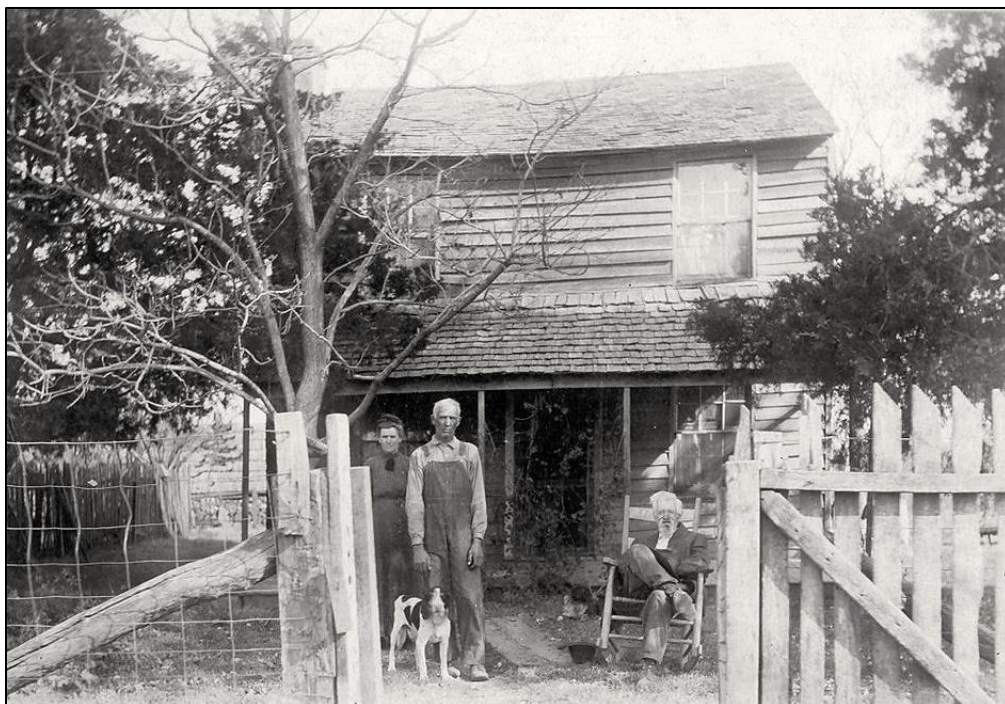


Figure 17. Mr. and Mrs. W. Pierce Mayfield, and Mr. Woodyard (seated) about 1906. Clapboard siding covers the original cabin, which may have been present at the time of the battle. Pea Ridge National Military Park.

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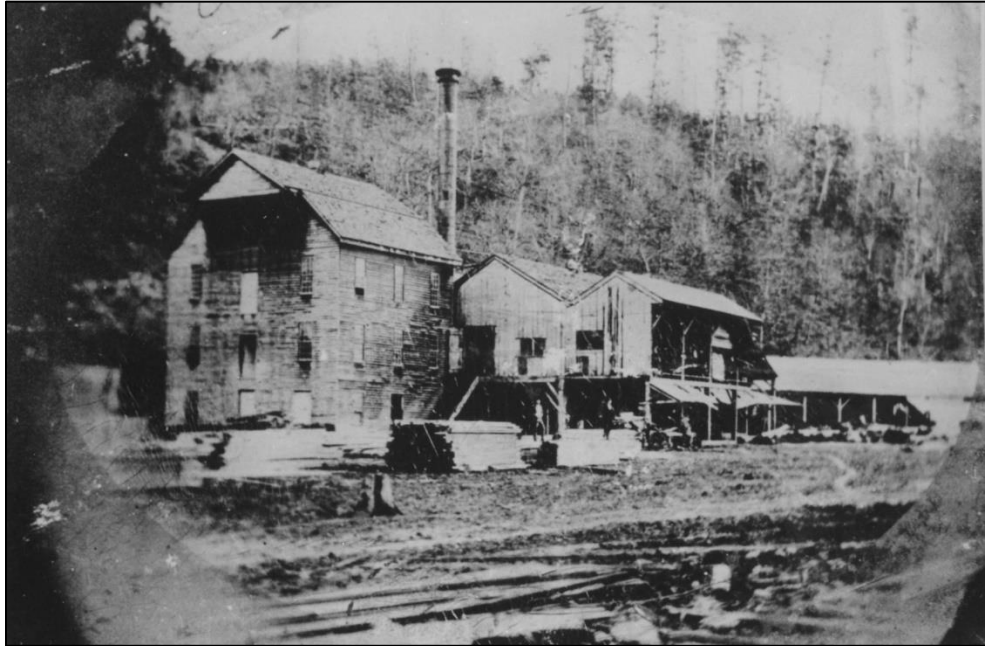


Figure 18. Van Winkle Mill. Courtesy Shiloh Museum of Ozark History / Marilyn Lerner Hicks Collection (S-90-10-4).



Figure 19. Kinsey and Sarah Lambeth with daughter and son. Kinsey Lambeth was enslaved by Cynthia Ann (Lambeth) Kindley. After slavery, he homesteaded near the Kindley place and patented the land in the 1890s. Courtesy of Hortense Adams Brashears through Rogers Historical Museum.

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Figure 20. Apple orchards were all over Benton County during the apple boom that lasted from the 1890s through the 1920s. Courtesy Rogers Historical Museum.



Figure 21. Apple pickers, 1907, Sneed Orchard. Courtesy Rogers Historical Museum.

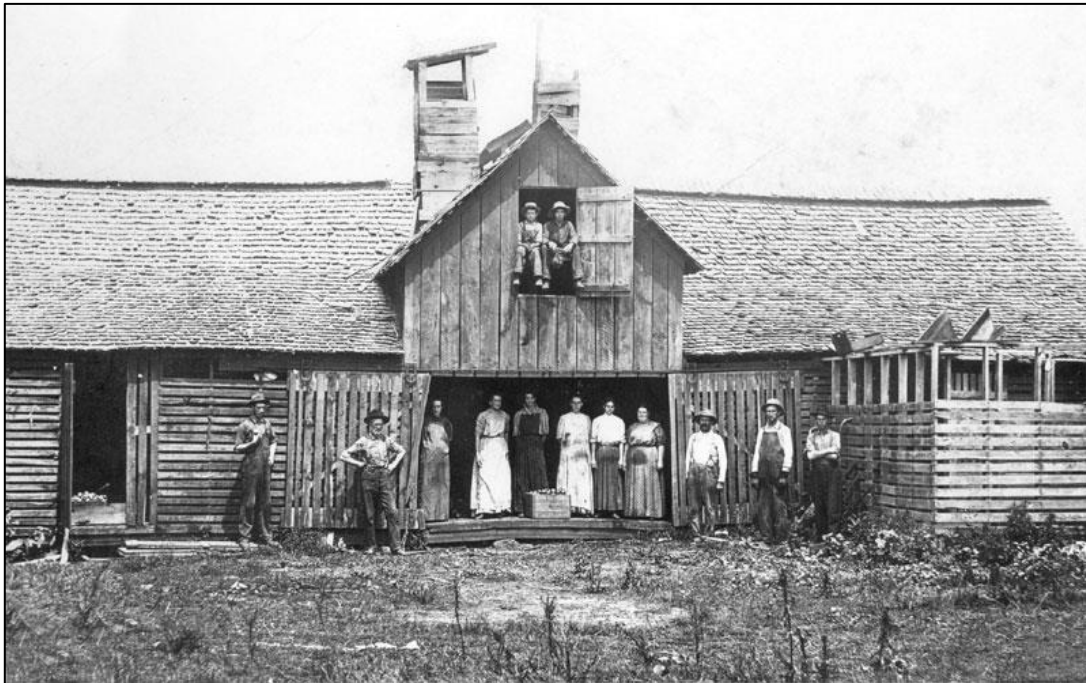


Figure 22. Apple evaporator near Lowell. Courtesy Shiloh Museum of Ozark History / Elza Tucker Collection (S-98-2-183).

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Figure 23. Bentonville Square. Courtesy of Shiloh Museum of Ozark History / Benton County Historical Society Collection (S-83-116-127).



Figure 24. Caption on reverse: "Miss Florence Quinn and her students pose in front of the old Providence Baptist Church in Bentonville. Front row, (second from left), Florence Gilbert. Back row, (third from left), Edna Gilbert. Photo was taken about 1909." Courtesy Monte Harris.

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Figure 25. The two monuments near the Elkhorn Tavern were erected in the late 1880s when veterans reunions became big events. Courtesy Rogers Historical Museum.



Figure 26. The last big veterans reunion at Pea Ridge, October 26, 1926. Public domain.

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Figure 27. The Elkhorn Tavern became a historical museum in the 1930s. Courtesy Rogers Historical Museum.



Figure 28. View of the battlefield from the lookout tower on Elkhorn Mountain. The lookout tower was erected in the mid 1930s as an aid to battlefield tourism. Courtesy Steven L. Warren.

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Figure 29. The Elkhorn Tavern in March 1960, still serving as a historical museum. Pea Ridge National Military Park.



Figure 30. The Elkhorn Tavern undergoing historic restoration. Pea Ridge National Military Park.

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Figure 31. View up Huntsville Road to the Elkhorn Tavern. The bare trees appear as they would have looked around the time of the battle. NPS photo.



Figure 32. East Overlook. Besides giving an outstanding view over the park, the East Overlook reflects the Modernist design principles of the Mission 66 era of national park development. NPS photo.

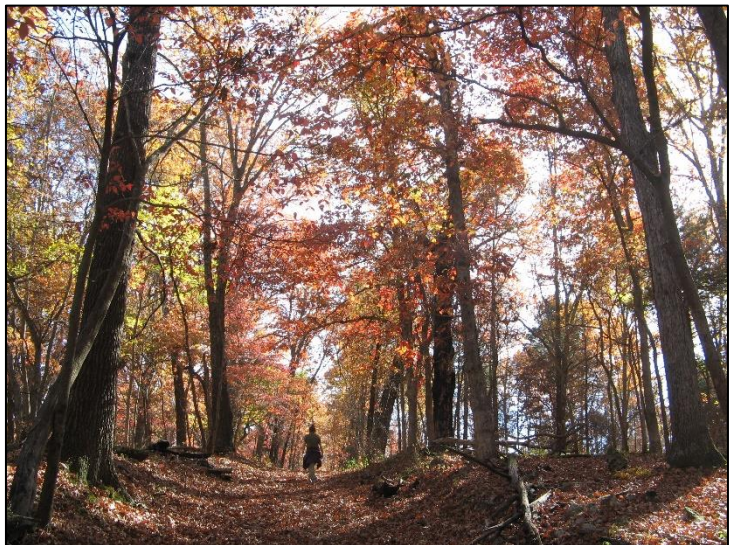


Figure 33. Morgan's Woods. The modern park visitor gains an appreciation for the confused fighting that happened here even though the forest of today differs from the forest of 1862 when cattle and hogs ranged through the area. Author photo.

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Figure 34. Worm fences are an important visual element in recreating the historic scene. Precise replications of historic fences are not possible, however, so these are “non-contributing” elements in the National Register of Historic Places property listing. Author photo.



Figure 35. Artillery pieces are interpretive props, not historic resources. This gun points across Oberson’s Field where Confederate Gen. McCulloch was killed by a Union sharpshooter. Author photo.



Figure 36. The Elkhorn Tavern before sunset. June 2021. Author photo.

Chapter Six

The Black Experience from Slavery to Freedom

The Collapse of Slavery

How slavery ended is still an unsettled historical question. For a century after the Civil War the prevailing view was that Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation was the key instrument in the demise of slavery, and that the conquering Union armies liberated the slaves. The black scholar W. E. B. DuBois put forward a dissenting view that the slaves themselves broke slavery from within by undertaking a "general strike" or mass movement toward resistance and flight as the Civil War went on. Revisionist historians in the 1960s and 1970s supported DuBois's claim, and the question became: to what extent did slaves "self-emancipate" even before they were liberated by Union victory and the final surrender of the Confederacy? Since the 1970s, some historians have cautioned against exaggerating the number and impact of freedom-seeking blacks, noting that to do so is to diminish Lincoln's role as "The Great Emancipator." Recent studies have attempted to provide a more nuanced understanding of the collapse of slavery, offering a measured appraisal of how self-emancipation played into slavery's downfall.¹

Complicating the matter, the emphasis on *agency* in this debate puts a sensitive spotlight on individual enslaved persons' actions around the time of their emancipation. If resistance or flight are viewed as acts of self-emancipation, what do we make of enslaved persons' choice to do neither? For generations following the Civil War, white Southerners noted how frequently ex-slaves stayed put when they were emancipated, and they unfairly interpreted that behavior as evidence of the ex-slaves' "loyalty" to their former masters. The perceived pattern of black rootedness was taken up as a central part of the myth of the Lost Cause. The supposed loyalty of ex-slaves to their enslavers was held up as proof that Southern slavery was benign, that slaveowners treated their slaves well, and that the slaves loved their masters in return. Clearly, enslaved persons had many reasons other than loyalty to their enslaver to stay put when they were emancipated. Yet for a century after the Civil War Southern whites perpetrated the myth, and stories accumulated of ex-slaves' professed or demonstrated "loyalty" to their former masters. Indeed, the WPA slave narratives carry many statements about masters' kind treatment of their slaves, and they contain many sentimental stories of long-enduring associations between ex-slaves and former masters after the war. Historians have long recognized that the WPA slave narratives are an imperfect record because every

¹ Ryan M. Poe, "The Contours of Emancipation: Freedom Comes to Southwest Arkansas," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 70, no. 2 (Summer 2011), 109-10.

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interview conformed to the myth of the Lost Cause to some extent, teasing out the stories that the white majority society expected to hear. Whether the stories of black rootedness and loyalty were preserved through the WPA slave narratives or newspaper accounts or family history, they must all be treated with care: at best they are an oversimplification of an ex-slave’s choices and motivations, and at worst they are an egregious mischaracterization of the black experience aimed at whitewashing the evil of slavery.

Historian Ryan M. Poe examined the experience of emancipation for blacks in southwestern Arkansas. He found there was no wholesale self-emancipation or mass flight from the plantations, nor was there much evidence of widespread slave resistance to forced labor which might constitute a so-called “general strike.” Most slaves in the region, Poe states, were liberated by the arrival of Union soldiers on the plantation at war’s end. However, Poe goes on to analyze, from the slave’s point of view, why flight or resistance would have been a rare choice. The desire to keep families together, the need for subsistence and security, and the danger from guerrillas were all powerful reasons for an enslaved person to stay put, avoid trouble, and await developments. Even after the war was over, the desire to stay in one’s familiar surroundings and to accept whatever subsistence and security were offered by the master-turned-employer were powerful incentives that operated against an ex-slave’s moving away and severing ties.²

There is anecdotal or fragmentary evidence to suggest that some of the enslaved persons in the Pea Ridge community remained in the area or returned to the area for a time after the war. The case of “Old Tony” and “Aunt Sil,” former slaves of the Patterson family, was remembered by the Patterson family. The story that was handed down through the white family was that “when the Patterson slaves were freed, they chose to stay with the Pattersons. Three of them in the years to come, were buried in the southwest corner of the Patterson Cemetery.” Not much in the way of Tony’s and Sil’s circumstances or motivations can be gleaned from this anecdote. Mainly what it reflects is the Patterson family’s claim that their former slaves were loyal.³

An obituary for Sam Shelton of Bentonville, who died in 1897, offers anecdotal evidence of another ex-slave who remained on Pea Ridge for some time after the war. Shelton reportedly looked after his former mistress for twenty years after he was emancipated. Apparently, Shelton then moved to Bentonville where he became known in the town as “Uncle Sam,” a good Christian, and a decent man. But Shelton’s fairly lengthy obituary in the *Benton County Democrat* reveals less about the man than it does about the mythmaking around the faithful ex-slave. The name of Shelton’s enslaver was not recorded, which makes it difficult to locate Shelton in other records or corroborate the obituary with other sources. Shelton does not appear in the U.S. census for Benton County. The writer of the obituary believed that Shelton was born into slavery in

² Poe, “The Contours of Emancipation,” 113, 121-22.

³ Benton County Heritage Committee, *History of Benton County, Arkansas*, 692.

Kentucky and was brought to Pea Ridge by way of Missouri in the 1840s. Shelton was taken south during the war. When the war ended, “Uncle Sam returned to the old homestead to find it not as he left it. Only a charred and crumbling chimney marked the place where ‘old Massa and Missus and de chillun’ used to stay.” At this point in Shelton’s story, the obituary digresses into a lurid description of the cold-blooded killing of “old ‘Massa’” by the enemy. It then returns to its subject: “Uncle Sam was no longer a slave – the great emancipation proclamation had made him free – free to do as he willed, and be it said to his credit and to the credit of his race, he then and there resolved that his life task should be in caring and providing for the widow and orphans, and without delay he set about his task.” He helped them rebuild, and he built a cabin for himself nearby, and he remained there until the children were grown and married off and his former mistress was dead and buried beside his former master. After praising Shelton’s personal qualities in old age, the obituary concluded on a final note of white supremacy by referring to Shelton once more as a slave. “He was a type of slave respected and appreciated all over the South and now almost extinct. His whole life was full of good works.”⁴ Even if this obituary for Sam Shelton is accepted as basically true in outline, its description of his response to emancipation and his decades-long loyalty to his former owner must be seen as a piece of white-supremacist mythmaking, which leaves Shelton’s real motivations unknown.

What Became of the Emancipated Blacks at Elkhorn Tavern

Local historian Elsa Vaught, writing in the late 1950s, stated in her history of Elkhorn Tavern that “slaves helped Mr. Cox operate the tavern,” and that “after the war, although free, these people still lived with the Cox family and were taken care of by them.” She implied that her source for that information was the 94-year-old Malinda Frances Scott, granddaughter of Jesse and Polly Cox. Vaught stated further, “later these two families were established on parcels of nearby land and we found them listed in the 1870 census, as William Cox and Samuel Cox, each with two or three children.” However, that statement is false; no such individuals were listed in the 1870 census in the Sugar Creek Township. What is more puzzling, Vaught wrote that she asked Mrs. Scott about the two black men, and “she said, ‘Oh yes, that would be Uncle Billy and Sammy who belonged to my grandfather!’” In the 1860 slave schedule, there were no grown men in Cox’s slaveholding.⁵

⁴ “Shelton, Sam,” *Benton County Democrat*, February 11, 1897, reproduced in Barbara P. Easley and Verla P. McAnelly, eds., *Obituaries of Benton County, Arkansas, Vol. 1* (Bowie, MD: Heritage Books, 2000), 349-50.

⁵ Elsa Vaught, “Notes on the Jesse C. Cox family with a partial genealogy of his four sons who lived in Benton County, Arkansas,” typescript, no date, at Pea Ridge NMP, history files.

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It is hard to know what to make of this. One assumes it is not pure fabrication but rather a gross misstatement of facts. One should probably assume that, according to Cox family tradition, there indeed were enslaved black men who worked at Elkhorn Tavern before the Civil War. It can be inferred from the 1860 slave schedule that those men were not owned by Jesse Cox; rather, they were hired out to him by neighboring slaveholders. One should probably assume, too, that the granddaughter Scott was basically truthful and correct in recalling that two freedmen who had worked there before the war returned with their families for a time after the war. Other details in this account sound suspiciously misleading – warped by white-supremacist mythmaking. While many freedmen took the surname of their former owners, it would be odd for these two men who were not Cox’s slaves to have taken the Cox name.⁶ Also, one should note the subtle but insidious phrasing when Vaught wrote that these families “were established on parcels of nearby land.” It implies a helping hand from the Cox family, a holdover from the benevolent paternalism that supposedly characterized American slavery. That particular element of mythmaking would crop up all over where black families acquired a landholding adjoining the former master’s plantation or farm, and often the notion that the land was gifted to the black family would become embedded in the white family tradition when in fact the black family paid for the land with hard-earned cash.⁷ Finally, Vaught’s contention that “we found them listed in the 1870 census” appears to ground the story in objective fact, so it is jarring that she got that wrong. How does one explain the fact that the two families were *not* recorded in the 1870 census? One family might have been missed by the census taker, but both? More likely, the two black families did not remain long in the neighborhood but moved away sometime before 1870.

Black Households in Leetown in 1870

In Leetown, there were eight unnamed enslaved persons enumerated in the 1860 census in the slaveholding of C. W. Rice and four unnamed enslaved persons in the slaveholding of S. H. Mayfield. In the 1870 census, there were two households of blacks enumerated next to the Rice and Mayfield households. The household next to the Rice household was the family of Isaac and Margaret Knox and three teenage boys. Isaac and Margaret Knox were still there in the census of 1880. The household next to the Mayfield household listed Robert Buccanon, age twenty-six, Mary Buccanon, age sixteen, and Mura Thompson, age twenty-eight. Those three did not appear in the census of 1880. One may guess that the two black households were ex-slaves of Rice or Mayfield but the case is far from certain.

⁶ The 1860 slave schedule lists a man age forty as the slave of William Cox, a son of Jesse Cox. Possibly that man was also named William and took the name “Cox.”

⁷ For a case in South Carolina with parallels to the white and black “Cox” families, see “Shared History: A film about families connected by slavery,” at <https://sharedhistory.org/>.

Rice presumably took his slaves with him when he fled to Fayetteville in the latter part of the war. Mayfield is thought to have taken his slaves with him to Dardanelle on the Arkansas River around 1863. In a statement after the war he said that he went there with his “family” – possibly referring to his wife and four slaves since his children no longer lived at home. An 1864 letter from William Patton to a member of the Rice family carried news of Pea Ridge. Patton stated that “Mr. Mayfield has gone back to Benton. They have not lost any of their Negroes. They have them all at home.”⁸

The four people owned by Mayfield in 1860 were a male age twenty-one, a female age eighteen, a female age eleven, and a male age ten. Of these, the only one who was plausibly one of the people recorded at Leetown in the next census ten years later is the eighteen-year-old female – perhaps the twenty-eight-year-old Mura Thompton in 1870.

Rice’s eight slaves in 1860 consisted of a female age sixty-five, a female age fifty-five, a male age thirty, a female age twenty seven, a male age twenty-four, a male age sixteen, a male age twelve, and a female age seven. It is possible that the sixteen-year-old male in this group was Robert Buccanon and the seven-year-old female was Mary Buccanon in 1870. It is also possible that the male and female who were listed as thirty and twenty-seven in 1860 were Isaac and Margaret Knox, whose ages were recorded as forty-five and forty-two in 1870 (and who were both listed as fifty years old in 1880 – ages recorded by the census taker were often approximations.) However, in the case of the Knox family, it may be noted that there were no young boys present in 1860 who were of teen age in 1870. There is another possibility: the nearby slaveholding of Granville Midling, consisting of nine people in 1860, included a man, a woman, and children. While the ages of some of the children in 1860 are consistent with the ages of the Knox children in 1870, their sexes do not all match up. Unfortunately, no more information about the Knox family is known. As this example illustrates, attempting to correlate the enumerated black citizens in the 1870 population with the nameless groupings of persons recorded in the 1860 slave schedule is problematic (Table 2). Perhaps the main thing that can be concluded from a comparison of the 1860 and 1870 censuses for the Leetown area is that a majority of emancipated blacks left the area. Rice, Mayfield, and Midling owned twenty-one people between them and at most just eight were still present in 1870.

There are only a handful of extant first-person accounts of the black experience with war and emancipation in Benton and Washington counties. Five personal stories are summarized below. The first comes from a person who was a small child around the time of emancipation and who became a lifelong resident of Bentonville. Three come from the WPA slave narratives. The last one comes from a freedman in Washington County who

⁸ Greg Mayfield, conversation with author, January 26, 2024; William F. Patton to I. T. Rice, February 25, 1864, Rogers Museum, Battle of Pea Ridge vertical file.

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filed a claim with the Southern Claims Commission. Apart from the fact that four of the five accounts reflect a child’s point of view, there is nothing else in these stories to suggest they were atypical or unrepresentative of the black experience in the area.

Table 2. Possible Linkages between 1860 and 1870 Censuses

1860				1870				
Slave Schedule				Population Schedule				
slaveholding	age	sex	color	Household	Name	age	sex	color
S. H. Mayfield	21	m	m	115-116	Buccanon, Robert	26	m	b
	18	f	b		-Mary	16	f	b
	11	f	b		-Thompton, Mura	28	f	b
	10	m	b					
C. W. Rice	65	f	b	138-139	Knox, Isaac	45	m	b
	55	f	b		-Margaret	42	f	b
	30	m	b		-Porter Brown	18	m	b
	27	f	b		-Samuel	15	m	b
	24	m	b		-George	13	m	b
	16	m	b					
	12	m	b					
7	f	b						
Granville Midling	60	f	b					
	30	m	b					
	25	f	b					
	15	m	b					
	10	m	b					
	8	m	b					
	6	f	b					
4	f	b						
	1	f	b					

Mary Ann Womac Gilbert's Story

Mary Ann Womac Gilbert was born in Benton County a few years before the start of the Civil War and lived to the age of ninety-eight. She was interviewed at her Bentonville home by Will Plank in 1955. She gave a first-hand account of her personal story, but it was then filtered through Plank's write-up of the interview for the *Benton County Pioneer* two years later. Recently, local historian Monte Harris researched her story further for an exhibit on untold Civil War stories at the Rogers Museum.

At the time of the Civil War, Mary Ann lived with her mother Clara, her uncle Robert, and a younger sister Issi-Bell, and they were owned by Dawson and Nancy Jane Jackson, who had five small children. Mary Ann's earliest childhood memories included playing with the children of "Uncle Doss," as she called her master, and sometimes napping with the other children in the trundle beds.⁹

When the war came, her uncle Robert went away with one Mr. Basham, who was either a friend or relation of the Jacksons, when Mr. Basham joined the Confederate army. Her uncle Robert served as Basham's body servant and returned at the end of the war after his emancipation. As Mary Ann explained this arrangement many years later, sending Robert away with Basham was done as a precaution "to prevent his being taken by the Federals as 'contraband.'"¹⁰

In the winter of 1862, Dawson and Nancy Jackson took their children and their three remaining slaves and fled south. They went to live with the Basham family at Frog Bayou north of Van Buren. Mary Ann Gilbert was about four years old at the time. She remembered the trip by wagon. She recalled seeing a steamboat on the Arkansas River and exclaiming to her Uncle Doss, "thar's a big house comin' at us on the water." She recounted a frightening episode when a party of soldiers or guerrillas came to the Basham place to forage. This foraging party had been tipped off by a neighbor woman to the fact that the Basham family kept a supply of corn hidden above the ceiling over the long front porch. The foraging party pried open the trapdoor and discovered the hidden cache of corn, but they did not immediately detect that there were four rifles stashed under the corn. While these men left briefly to fetch a wagon, the women hastily retrieved the four rifles and hid them in some tall grass. When the men returned, the women pleaded with them to leave some corn so they would not starve. Fortunately, the women had some other food caches on the place that remained undiscovered.¹¹

⁹ Will Plank, "Memories of Aunt Mary Ann Gilbert," *Benton County Pioneer* 3, no. 1 (November 1957), 20; "Civil War in Benton County: Untold Stories," Rogers Historical Museum exhibit in 2022.

¹⁰ Plank, "Memories of Aunt Mary Ann Gilbert," 20. Research in the Gerdes Arkansas Civil War Home Page website disclosed that Dawson H. Jackson enlisted on August 15, 1862 at Bentonville in Company H, 4th Arkansas Cavalry, while a Dawson W. Jackson enlisted on July 23, 1863 at Bentonville in the same company.

¹¹ Plank, "Memories of Aunt Mary Ann Gilbert," 20-21.

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When the war was over, the Jacksons returned to Bentonville and Mary Ann Womac’s family accompanied them. The black family continued to reside with the white family for several years after the Civil War. As Mary Ann grew a little older, she was employed taking care of other white children and later she worked at farmsteads on Pea Ridge, picking seed from cotton, extracting burrs from wool, and hunting for calves that strayed into the woods. Plank’s short article based on his interview with Mary Ann Womac Gilbert ended on a note that once again advanced the white-supremacist myth that American slavery was benign and ex-slaves were often loyal to their former masters. “Life was more simple when she returned to Bentonville, but she found that emancipation meant comparatively little to her,” Plank wrote. “Slavery had not been bondage; she had received the same treatment as other children of the master’s family, as they had been instructed not to strike or threaten her, but to play and live together. She was never mistreated by either children or adults.” Even if it is true that Mary Ann Womac was never struck or threatened, Plank’s statement that “emancipation meant comparatively little to her” can only be read as a horrible misrepresentation of the black experience in acquiring freedom.¹²

Mary Myhand’s Story

Mary Myhand was born in Tennessee about 1852 and came to northwest Arkansas shortly before the Civil War. She was interviewed at her home in Clarksville, Arkansas at the approximate age of eighty-five. During the war, her enslavers took her to Texas, which was a common experience for blacks in Arkansas. The interview transcript is short, so the relevant part is quoted here in full:

My mammie died when I was a little girl. She had three children and our white folks took us in their house and raised us. Two of us had fever and would have died if they hadn’t got us a good doctor. The doctor they had first was a quack and we were getting worse until they called the other doctor, then we commence to get well. I don’t know how old I am. Our birthdays was down in the mistress’ Bible and when the old war come up, the house was burned and lost everything but I know I am at least 83 or 84 years old. Our white folks was so good to us. They never whipped us, and we eat what they eat and when they eat. I was born in White County, Tennessee and moved to Missouri but the folks did not like it there so we come to Benton County, Arkansas. One side of the road was Benton County and the other side was Washington County but we always had to go to Bentonville, the county seat, to tend to business. I was a little

¹² Plank, “Memories of Aunt Mary Ann Gilbert,” 21.

tod of a girl when the war come up. One day word come that the “Feds” were coming through and kill all of the old men and take all the boys with them, so master took my brother and grandson of his and started South. I was so scared. I followed them about a half mile before they found me and I begged so hard they took me with them. We went to Texas and was there about one year when the Feds gave the women on our place [back in Arkansas] orders to leave their home. Said they owned it now. They had just got to Texas where we was when the South surrendered and we all come back home.

We stayed with our white folks for about twenty years after the war. They shore was good to me. I worked for them in the house but never worked in the field. I come across the mountain to Clarksville with a Methodist preacher and his family and married here. My husband worked in a livery stable until he died, then I worked for the white folks until I fell and hurt my knee and got too old. I draws my old age pension.¹³

There is a lesson to be drawn from Myhand’s account. It is another example of how a slaveholding family and their slaves became refugees in the war, which is a common story. Returning to the important question of agency in the collapse of slavery, Myhand’s account reminds us that the personal stories of white flight with slaves in tow must be read carefully. On the surface, the white families were purportedly getting themselves and their valuable property out of harm’s way. In subtext, one may infer that the enslaved blacks were restive, perceived by their masters as an ever greater flight risk, or worse, an ever more threatening danger to the white family. That so many slaveholding families found it necessary to become refugees was, in its totality, an enormous added strain on the Confederacy. So, stories such as Myhand’s actually reinforce the view that slavery began to crumble under its own weight once the South seceded.

“Gate-Eye” Fisher’s Story

“Gate-Eye” Fisher of Washington County, Arkansas was just past infancy at the start of the Civil War. He was interviewed when he was in his late seventies. His mother Caroline belonged to a Mr. Dave Moore of Cane Hill, south of Fayetteville. His father, Harrison Fisher, was the slave overseer on the place and a white man. Since Fisher was so young in Civil War times, his account must be read as a remembrance of stories he

¹³ Mary Myhand interview quoted in George E. Lankford, ed., *Bearing Witness: Memories of Arkansas Slavery, Narratives from the 1930s WPA Collections*, 2nd edition (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2006), 45.

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was told by his parents. As such it is still a valuable account, distinctive in the fact that his father was a slave overseer married to a slave.

During the war, the slaveowner Moore took his family and his livestock to Texas. Although Fisher did not say so in the interview, it would seem that Moore took most of his slaves with him to Texas also. What Fisher did recollect in the interview was that Moore left his father and mother behind “to take care of the place.”

At the end of the war, Moore and his wife and family returned to Cane Hill. Moore and his wife called a meeting with Fisher’s father and mother. Fisher was not clear on this point, but it seems that other former slaves of Moore’s were called to the meeting as well. One imagines that the other former slaves had returned with Moore from Texas, but it is possible that some or all of them had remained at Cane Hill through the conflict. It is likewise not clear from Fisher’s account whether Moore acknowledged at this meeting that the blacks were now free or if that announcement had already occurred prior to the meeting. In any case, this is how Fisher related his mother’s (and white father’s) experience as they went from slavery to freedom:

After the War Ole Mister and Ole Missey called in my ma and pa and asked them if they wanted to still stay on the place or go somewhere. ‘Bout ten of us stayed. Then a while after Mister Moore asked my pa if he wanted to go up on the Tilley place – 600 acres and farm it for what he could make. We, my pa and my ma and my sister Mandy, stayed there a long time. Then Mister Moore sold off a little here and a little there and we moved up on the mountain with my sister and her husband, Peter Doss, where my ma died. Then I went down to Mister Oscar Moore’s place – he was my Missey’s boy.¹⁴

For all that is regrettably missing in Gate-Eye Fisher’s interview, it is exceptional in its rendering of the emotional scene when his mother’s former owner asked her to make a big decision for herself as a free woman. What comes through in the story is how this mixed-race Fisher family stayed together as it transitioned from slavery to freedom.

Adeline Blakely’s Story

Adeline Blakely was born around 1848 or 1850 in Tennessee and came to northwest Arkansas when she was about one year old.¹⁵ Her parents John and Leanna

¹⁴ Federal Writers Project, *Slave Narratives, Vol. 2, Arkansas*, “Gate-Eye” Fisher interview.

¹⁵ Adeline Blakely stated her birth year as 1848; but she also stated she was fifteen years old in 1865 and ninety years old in 1940. Her birth year is given as 1850 in Ancestry.com.

were both in the slaveholding of John P. A. Parks from the year 1840, and it was Parks who brought Blakely's family to Arkansas. When Blakely was interviewed in the late 1930s she remarked that she had lived long enough to be a slave or servant to five generations of the Parks family.

John Parks acquired a place on the Fayetteville to Springfield Road that served as a stage stop. As Blakely recalled, travelers would stay with them for several days in the "big house" waiting for the next stage. This stage stop, Blakely said, was the "Old Kidd place." According to a genealogist's post on the Find-a-Grave website for John Parks, the place was located south of Hogeye, which was southwest of Fayetteville.¹⁶ Blakely's uncle served as a coachman and took the Parks family to church every Sunday. Her aunt served as a cook. Blakely did not say what became of her father. Blakely was separated from her mother when she was eleven, around the time that the war began. She did not explain the circumstances of the mother-and-daughter separation other than to say that her mother went to Missouri and they lost contact.

Blakely recounted an early childhood memory associated with the Old Kidd place. She was playing with the master's daughter who was about a year older than her. They had a playhouse behind the chimney. They did not have many toys, perhaps a doll made from a corn cob with a dress made from scraps of fabric. They were playing church and singing a song. Travelers wanted to watch them play, and the girls were scared off, but then they were coaxed into returning and singing the song again, for which the travelers gave them each a dime. That was her first earned money.¹⁷

Blakely in her old age still had vivid memories of the Civil War. She recalled that a crazed Confederate soldier burned down the courthouse in Fayetteville. The old men in the town, intuiting that the young man was shell-shocked or affected by post-traumatic stress disorder and could not help himself, had the man put in jail so that he could not commit more arson. Then they organized families to take turns bringing him meals and changing his bedding. One morning when Adeline took him his breakfast, she found that he had ripped open his featherbed and crawled into it to get warm.

During the war, John Parks took all his slaves and livestock south to Louisiana. By this time Parks had given away the young Adeline Blakely as a dowery in the marriage of his daughter, so she remained in Fayetteville in the home of her mistress, Elizabeth Parks Blakely. At the end of the war, John Parks offered money to each of his former slaves if they would return to Washington County with him and work for him as

¹⁶ "John Perry Parks," at <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/35024567/john-perry-parks>. Note that there was a Kidd buried in this small cemetery, corroborating Blakely's memory that the property was then called the "Old Kidd place."

¹⁷ Federal Writers Project, *Slave Narratives, Vol. 2, Arkansas*, Adeline Blakely interview.

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employees. Some did, including Adeline Blakely’s uncle, who eventually saved up enough wage earnings to acquire a forty-acre mountain farm.

Adeline Blakely was fifteen when the war ended. She recounted in old age that Federal soldiers made repeated calls on her mistress Elizabeth Blakely to insist that she free the fifteen-year-old girl whom she was treating as her servant. Adeline Blakely told these soldiers that she knew she was free but she did not want to go anywhere, that she wanted to stay in the only home she had ever known.

Many years after the war, Adeline Blakely learned through a random conversation that her mother was living in Joplin, Missouri. She got in touch with her and the two corresponded with the help of people who could read and write, but they never saw each other before her mother died.

On the surface, Adeline Blakely’s interview might appear to support the myth of the loyal ex-slave. She was gracious toward the memory of the Parks family – all five generations whom she had served – and uncomplaining about her own family’s heritage in slavery. “I can remember the days of slavery as happy ones,” she said. But Adeline Blakely did make some remarks that, benign though they might have sounded to some listeners, still managed to expose the bitter truth of her experience:

I had always been told from the time I was a small child that I was a Negro of African stock. That it was no disgrace to be a Negro and had it not been for the white folks who brought us over here from Africa as slaves, we would never have been here and would have been much better [worse?] off.

We colored folk were not allowed to be taught to read or write. It was against the law. My master’s folks always treated me well. I had good clothes. Sometimes I was whipped for things I should not have done just as the white children were.

Wesley Dodson’s Story

Wesley Dodson was born about 1822 in Virginia. Enslaved by John Dodson, he was brought to Arkansas in the 1840s. A few years later John Dodson died and Wesley became one of eleven enslaved persons owned by the widow, Miriam Dodson. Wesley lived on the Dodson farm about twelve miles south of Fayetteville. At the beginning of the Civil War, Wesley was nearly forty years of age. Wesley Dodson was recorded in the 1880 census as living in Mountain, Washington County. He was then fifty-eight years

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old, married to Cloah Dodson, age forty-six, and they had five children ranging in age from sixteen down to three.¹⁸

Though Dodson never learned to write, he related some of his first-hand experiences in the war to enter a claim before the Southern Claims Commission. (The claim was made for a horse that Dodson bought with his own money after fleeing to the Union army and that was later taken from him. White witnesses testified that Dodson was of good character and his claim was allowed for \$140.) Thanks to the claim, Dodson left behind a rare first-hand account of a middle-aged black man in northwest Arkansas moving from slavery to freedom.¹⁹

Near the beginning of the war, when the first Confederate volunteer enlistments were happening, the widow Miriam Dodson gathered her slaves and told them they were all free; they could stay or go as each one chose. She was a strong Unionist. She believed the rebellion would soon be crushed and slavery would be ended. Wesley, for his part, was a little less sanguine: “When the fighting commenced,” he later said, “I knowed if the Rebels won: the Blacks would not get free, and I said (& knowed it) that the poor whites would be no better off than the niggers. I knew if the Union army won the day I would remain a free man.” Though he was free, Wesley chose to stay on the Dodson farm because he had been heavily involved in managing the business since the death of John Dodson more than a decade earlier. Indeed, he had already been moving toward freedom before the war, as his mistress had allowed him “privileges” such as stocking his own cattle and hogs. Now, as a free person, he began renting and sharecropping, an arrangement that he and his former mistress continued through the fall of 1864. He also worked for another farmer by the name of Lack in the winter of 1862-63.

But by staying on the Dodson farm that did not mean Wesley Dodson was staying neutral in the conflict. As the Federal armies came into the area, Wesley Dodson carried information to them on multiple occasions. He brought provisions and news to Unionists who were hiding out from Rebel guerrillas. One night he took a Union soldier who had become separated from his unit on his nag to Fayetteville.

In the last year of the war things got hotter for Wesley Dodson. Soldiers came to the farm, seized him, and led him away. He thought they were Confederates. Looking for his chance, he escaped and fled to Union-controlled Fayetteville. There he was informed that the soldiers whom he had taken to be Confederates were actually Union soldiers sent to liberate him. Though his wife was back at the farm with their infant son, he decided to

¹⁸ *Records of the Commission of Claims (Southern Claims Commission), 1871-1880*, Wesley Dodson claim 19121; U.S. Census, 1880, Arkansas, Washington County, population schedule; Bunny Shumate Freeman, “Washington County 1850 Slave Schedule page 2,” at <https://www.argenweb.net/washington/Census/1850SlaveSchedule/1850SlaveSchpt2.htm>.

¹⁹ *Records of the Commission of Claims (Southern Claims Commission), 1871-1880*, Wesley Dodson claim 19121.

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stay with the Union army. He went to work for the post sutler. He drove a team and hauled goods between Fayetteville and Springfield or Rolla. It was around this time he acquired a horse that was later requisitioned.

Late in the war he was in a very close scrape. Somehow he must have been reunited with his wife as they now had a one-year-old boy and an infant and when bushwhackers ambushed him he had both these children in his possession. The bushwhackers took Wesley and his children captive (and probably his wife, too, though it is not clear) with the threat of running them south to be traded. The bushwhackers began their trek by taking them across the border to the Cherokee Nation. This captivity lasted two days and three nights. On the third night, Wesley escaped with the older child but had to leave the infant and probably his wife, too, in the enemy’s hands. Fortunately, they were reunited soon after the war ended.

In Wesley Dodson’s story, all the elements of resistance, flight, reluctance to leave one’s home, and loyalty to family – and perhaps some loyalty to the former mistress, too – are wrapped into one bondsman’s experience. Dodson’s story shows how complicated and dangerous it was for enslaved persons to resist slavery from within, break free of it, or stay with the master and await the Confederate surrender. No choice was the obvious safe one, and none was simple.

Black Migration after Slavery

How many blacks stayed in the Pea Ridge vicinity or in Benton County after emancipation? How many left? How many moved in from elsewhere? The answers to these questions are unknowable. The 1870 census has fairly good data on the black population in 1870 because people were counted and identified by race in each township. But the 1860 census counted enslaved blacks without recording their personal names (because Southern senators demanded that it be so – to diminish each slave’s personhood). Whites were counted in one way in the *population* schedule, and blacks were counted another way in the *slave* schedule. As a result, the researcher can correlate the 1860 and 1870 censuses for white people but not for black people. The researcher can identify and quantify white families and individuals who remained in the same place from 1860 to 1870 while the same cannot be done for black families and individuals.²⁰

²⁰ The U.S. Census in 1870 was far from being a perfect record of who was present; people were missed, names were misspelled, ages were estimated, and even the sex and race of individuals were sometimes recorded erroneously. In 1918, the Bureau of the Census found that the turmoil of the Civil War caused a serious undercounting in the South in 1870. It estimated that 2 percent of whites and 10 percent of blacks in the South were missed by the 1870 census. See Gene W. Boyett, “The Black Experience in the First Decade of Reconstruction in Pope County, Arkansas,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 51, no. 2 (Summer 1992), 120.

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The total black population in Sugar Creek Township in 1860 and in 1870 is known. There were forty blacks counted in the slave schedule for Sugar Creek Township in 1860. Add the single free black counted in the population schedule, and that makes forty-one in total. This small population of forty-one shrank to eight in 1870.

The total black population in all of Benton County dropped by half in the Civil War decade, and it kept on shrinking in the following decades. Relative to the county's total population, it shrank even more.

Table 3. Black Population in Benton County, 1860-1930

	Blacks	Total Population	Percentage
1860	382	9,306	4.1
1870	182	13,831	1.3
1880	128	20,328	0.6
1890	92	27,716	0.3
1900	112	31,611	0.4
1910	110	33,389	0.3
1920	102	36,253	0.3
1930	88	35,253	0.2

The black population decline in Benton County contrasted with the black population increase in the state of Arkansas. More than 200,000 blacks moved to Arkansas between 1870 and 1910. Arkansas attracted more black migration after the Civil War than any other state. Blacks were drawn to Arkansas from other Southern states by the availability of cheap land, the relatively high wages, and – surprisingly – the promise of equality. Although the promise of equality faded by the end of the nineteenth century, it was strong in the era of Reconstruction as the Republican Party in the state defended black voting rights and promoted black migration, and the power of black voters grew during the 1870s and 1880s. Even as repression of the black vote increased across the South in the 1880s, the number of black state legislators in Arkansas grew in that decade from four in 1880 to twelve in 1890. For a period of years, Arkansas held promise as “the great Negro state of the country,” a land of opportunity for blacks.²¹

²¹ Story Matkin-Rawn, “‘The Great Negro State of the Country’: Arkansas’s Reconstruction and the Other Great Migration,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 72, no. 1 (Spring 2013), 1-3, 31, 35.

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Black migration after emancipation was one way in which blacks exercised their new freedom. Black migration to Arkansas after 1865 followed decades of involuntary migration to Arkansas under slavery. Historian Story Matkin-Rawn has called the black migration after emancipation “the other great migration,” comparing it to the mass movement of blacks from the rural South to Northern cities from about 1910 to 1950. About one in ten Southern blacks migrated out of state in the earlier period, compared with one in eight in the latter great migration. The emigrants in the post-Civil War era generally moved to the “Old Southwest” states of Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas, Texas, and Oklahoma, with Arkansas receiving the most emigration.²²

Many emigrants came to Arkansas with the dream of acquiring their own land and becoming independent farmers. Congress enacted the Southern Homestead Act in 1866, enabling any homesteader who had been loyal to the Union to claim eighty acres of public domain. In Arkansas, nine million acres of land were opened to homesteading under the law. However, most of the land in Arkansas that was not already settled was too rugged or swampy to support homesteading, and in spite of promotion by the Freedmen’s Bureau the initiative was plagued by misinformation and corruption. Just 1,000 blacks filed applications for homesteads from 1866 to 1869, and just one in four of those applications went to patent.²³

Many blacks made the trek on foot. Some traveled by water or rail. The black migration to Arkansas included organized parties of emigrants as well as individuals and families who made their way west, some pausing in their migration to obtain work and replenish their financial resources before continuing onward.

Most of the black emigration to Arkansas ended in those lowland counties across the southeast half of the state where substantial numbers of blacks already resided. Historian Randy Finley observes that “blacks wanted to be with other blacks.” They felt some safety in numbers while also being drawn to the “richness and diversity of larger communities.” Besides joining the rural black populations in counties where blacks made up a quarter or more of the population, the newcomers also went to towns where large black enclaves could be found. Finley examined the 1870 census and recorded that black populations of several hundred or over a thousand made up more than a third of the population in the towns of Camden, Pine Bluff, and Van Buren, and half the population in Helena, and a quarter of the population in Fort Smith. In Arkansas’s principal city of Little Rock there were 5,274 blacks who accounted for 43 percent of the population.²⁴

²² Matkin-Rawn, ““The Great Negro State of the Country,”” 2.

²³ *Ibid*, 13-15.

²⁴ Randy Finley, *From Slavery to Uncertain Freedom: The Freedmen’s Bureau in Arkansas, 1865-1869* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1996), 24-25.

Meanwhile, when the town of Bentonville incorporated in 1873, it had a black population of perhaps thirty in a total population of around three hundred.²⁵

Most of Bentonville's blacks were clustered in an enclave of four households (households 101 through 104 in the 1870 census). Two of the four households consisted of a single family and two had more than one family. The largest household, which had six adults and four children, comprised a family of six together with two single men and a mother and daughter. The four black households formed the nucleus of a black enclave that would survive in Bentonville well into the twentieth century. Known as the Clique, reputedly the population was made up mostly of former slaves who came from around the county rather than emigrants who came from out of state, though it may have attracted a few of those newcomers as well.²⁶

Despite the significant black emigration to Arkansas after the Civil War, the fact remains that Benton County's black population dropped by more than half from 1860 to 1870. There is no way of knowing where most of those people went. Even if all thirty or so blacks who lived in Bentonville in 1873 moved in from surrounding farms in Benton County, they would constitute only about 10 percent of former slaves in the county. A reasonable estimate might be that one in ten of Benton County's emancipated blacks moved to Bentonville, four in ten remained on farms, and five in ten left the county.

Kimsey Lambeth was one former Benton County slave who stayed on the farm and eventually acquired his own land. He came to Arkansas in 1851 as the property of Cynthia Ann (Lambeth) Kindley. Then known as Kimsey (or Kinsey), as a freedman he took the last name of his former owner and Cynthia's father, Amos Lambeth. On August 15, 1867, Lambeth exercised another right as a free person: he entered into legal marriage, taking Sarah Wight as his legal wife. Lambeth was recorded in the 1880 census as a farmer, forty-eight years of age, born in North Carolina, married to Sarah, with a thirteen-year-old son Samuel. He patented 160 acres under the Homestead Act in 1891. The land was located near the farm of Cyrus and Cynthia Ann Kindley. Lambeth died in 1909. An obituary observed that he had lived in the community for more than fifty years and was known by almost everyone. In the racist and patronizing terms that were practically obligatory for black person's obituaries in that time and place, it stated: "Like

²⁵ Based on the 1870 census of Osage Township in Benton County.

²⁶ 1870 U.S. Census, Benton County, Arkansas, population schedule, Osage Township; Marjorie Rosen, *Boomtown: How Wal-Mart Transformed an All-American Town into an International Community* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2009), 25. Two individuals listed among the four households in 1870 were property owners in the black enclave as recorded in Benton County, *Real Estate Tax Book 1890*, p. 255, Benton County Archive.

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most of the old time slave darkies, he was always kind and courteous to all white people and accommodating to all his neighbors. In fact he was a good darkey.”²⁷

The Freedmen’s Bureau

To help blacks make their way from slavery to freedom, Congress established the Freedmen’s Bureau. The full name of the agency was the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands. It had more than the welfare of the black population in its purview. In practice, however, it was involved primarily with dispensing aid and assistance to freed persons in former slave states. It provided aid and assistance in three main arenas: health care, education, and labor relations.

The Freedmen’s Bureau had limited resources and was stretched thin across the South. It had a central office in the nation’s capital, state offices in most Southern state capitals, and numerous field agencies where most of the actual aid to individual blacks was dispensed. In Arkansas, field agencies were concentrated in those lowland counties where most of the black population was located. Benton County blacks were a long ways from help. Although there were about twenty-five field agencies in Arkansas in 1867, the nearest one to Benton County was located in Fort Smith. Ostensibly, the agent in Fort Smith served the small population of blacks in Benton, Washington, and Madison counties but in reality the people who came to the agent for help were nearly all residents of Sebastian County who lived around Fort Smith and a few more people who came from Crawford and Franklin counties. The operations of the Freedmen’s Bureau had some overall effect on the welfare of blacks in the years after the Civil War, but it gave little if any direct assistance to blacks in Benton County.²⁸

The historical view of the Freedmen’s Bureau has changed markedly over time. The Dunning School of Southern history, which held sway in the American historical academy from the late nineteenth century well into the twentieth century, and which characterized the Reconstruction governments as misguided and corrupt, took a dim view of the Freedmen’s Bureau. The Dunning School made the Freedmen’s Bureau into the minion of corrupt Republican Party politicians and a symbol of Radical Republican government overreach. (Radical Republicans were the dominant wing of the Republican Party during Reconstruction that tried to insist on meaningful reform of race relations and protection of equal rights.) The early twentieth century black scholar W. E. B. DuBois provided a contrary view to that of the Dunning School, contending that the Freedmen’s

²⁷ 1880 U.S. Census, Benton County, Arkansas, population schedule, Osage Township; *Marriage Records, Benton Co., 1860-1895, Book “A,”* p. 59, at Shiloh Museum of Ozark History; “Kimsey Lambeth (1829-1909),” WikiTree, at <https://www.wikitree.com/wiki/Lambeth-304>.

²⁸ Finley, *From Slavery to Uncertain Freedom*, 9-11, William L. Richter, ““A Dear Little Job’: Second Lieutenant Hiram F. Willis, Freedmen Bureau’s Agent in Southwestern Arkansas, 1866-1868,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 50, no. 2 (Summer 1991), 161-63.

Bureau did valiant things even though it was ultimately overwhelmed by the forces of reaction led by the Ku Klux Klan. Revisionist historians in the 1960s and 1970s again found much merit in what DuBois had written more than a half century before, but they stressed that the Freedmen's Bureau, far from being a heavy-handed tool of Reconstruction, was pathetically underfunded and ineffective despite good intentions. More recent revisionist historians have tended to give the Freedmen's Bureau greater respect, finding that it provided an important lifeline to blacks. Even if relatively few blacks received direct aid from it, the Freedmen's Bureau helped to set down markers for racial equality.²⁹ In this light, it is worth considering what went on in the nearest field agency to Benton County in Fort Smith even if no Benton County blacks ever made their way to Fort Smith to get help.

The Freedmen's Bureau's agency at Fort Smith was part of an evolving network of field agencies in a bureaucracy run by the War Department. The Freedmen's Bureau was established in March 1865, taking over myriad functions that the Northern occupying forces had performed during the last two years of the war. In the Trans-Mississippi West, the Freedmen's Bureau initially established an office in St. Louis to oversee operations in Arkansas, Missouri, Kansas, and the Indian Territory. This office was headed by Brevet Maj. Gen. John Sprague. In July 1865, Sprague established a subordinate command with headquarters in Little Rock to oversee operations in Arkansas and the Indian Territory, appointing Maj. William G. Sergeant in charge. In October 1865, the Missouri and Kansas district was downgraded and Sprague moved his headquarters to Little Rock, absorbing Sergeant's command. Through the year 1866, Sprague began to extend the bureau's operations to the general populace by way of a half dozen field agencies that were tied to troop dispositions across the state. Early in 1867, Brevet Maj. Gen. E. O. C. Ord replaced Sprague and expanded the number of field agencies. At the same time, he replaced civilian agents with military officers who reported directly to him. A field agency was operational in Fort Smith by October 1865 and was under three different civilian superintendents from then until August 1866. Capt. Charles Banzhaf served as superintendent of the agency at Fort Smith from August 1866 to May 1867. Capt. Elihu G. Barker replaced Banzhaf for June, July, and August, after which Banzhaf returned to the post and Barker transferred to the agency in Marion, Crittenden County, Arkansas. These men were overwhelmed with problems and often faced threats of violence from noncompliant Southerners. Although they could call on the strong arm of Federal occupation forces if they needed protection or enforcement, their jobs were nonetheless hazardous. Barker was shot and wounded as he sat by a window at his second post in

²⁹ Mary Farmer-Kaiser, *Freedwomen and the Freedmen's Bureau: Race, Gender, and Public Policy in the Age of Emancipation* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010), 1-13.

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Marion. Two other Freedmen’s Bureau agents in Arkansas were murdered in two widely separate incidents, one in Fulton County and the other in Sevier County.³⁰

One of the greatest needs among blacks soon after emancipation was medical care. Late in the war, refugee and freedmen’s camps formed alongside the camps of the Northern army. When the war ended, the people in these camps were destitute and vulnerable to outbreaks of disease. At the freedmen’s camp in Fort Smith there was an outbreak of cholera. Each agency ran a hospital, but hospitals in that period were more in the nature of an almshouse where rations and medicines were dispensed. The few medical staff who were employed had little professional training and received poor pay. In August 1866, the agent at Fort Smith reported that his agency supplied 330 refugees and 83 freedmen with rations and 105 refugees and 169 freedmen with medical treatment. The total number of rations came to 4,141 for a total cost that month of \$527.97¾, which was no little concern to the cash-strapped bureau. A similar amount of direct assistance was made in the next month and the next. While the medical treatment was sometimes of dubious benefit, the rations no doubt provided a vital need.³¹

The Freedmen’s Bureau established the first schools for black children in the former slave states. In April 1867, two teachers, a man and a woman, were sent to the Fort Smith agency by the bureau’s superintendent of education in Arkansas, William M. Colby. The man was tasked with starting a school for boys in Fort Smith, and the woman with starting a school for girls in Van Buren. How this particular effort went is not known, but in general the early strides made in education for blacks was one of the Freedmen’s Bureau’s more significant contributions.³²

Blacks hoped to obtain their own land after emancipation. The rumored promise of “forty acres and a mule” for every freedman proved to be illusory, as did a proposal urged by Gen. Ord to turn a significant portion of plantation lands into homesteads. But the Freedmen’s Bureau did provide limited aid to blacks in acquiring unclaimed lands for themselves under the Homestead Laws. During the spring of 1867, a group from Georgia established a colony near Fort Smith. Initially organized in the fall of 1866, the group may have numbered upward of a thousand people at one time. It sent three scouts to Fort Smith around the first of March 1867. The Freedmen’s Bureau assisted the colony with land survey. The colonists claimed lands under the Southern Homestead Act. Each individual had to pay \$5 to cover the administrative cost of filing and getting an eighty-

³⁰ Brooks Blevins, “Reconstruction in the Ozarks: Simpson Mason, William Monks, and the War that Refused to End,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 77, no. 3 (Autumn 2018), 183; Richter, ““A Dear Little Job,”” 197.

³¹ *Records of the Superintendent of Education for the State of Arkansas, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1871*, M-980, Roll 5; Randy Finley, “In War’s Wake: Health Care and Arkansas’s Freedmen, 1863-1868,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 51, no. 2 (Summer 1992), 153.

³² *Records of the Superintendent of Education for the State of Arkansas, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1871*, M-980, Roll 4; Finley, *From Slavery to Uncertain Freedom*, 140.

acre parcel surveyed. Several months later, the agency at Fort Smith provided the colonists with farm implements: eighteen sets of harness, steel hoes, and plows with spare parts, all amounting to an aid package worth \$369. The colony was established in Franklin County. One of the organizers of this colony was Abram Colby, who remained in Georgia and later served in the Georgia House of Representatives. The colonists' other leaders were E. E. Powell, George Sanders, and Charles Martin.³³

Across the South, the Freedmen's Bureau put most of its energy toward remaking the South's labor relations. As historian Mary Farmer-Kaiser observes, free labor was central to the ideology of the Republican Party, and replacing slave labor with an orderly system of free labor lay at the heart of Reconstruction. The labor contract became the basic tool used by the Freedmen's Bureau to remake labor relations, because the labor contract spelled out labor terms in crisp detail and it had the force of law. The goal of the bureau was to get every freed person with a white employer under a labor contract for the protection of the freed person and for the purpose of reorganizing and mobilizing the South's black labor force. The standard labor contract stated terms of employment such as the pay rate as well as any other employment benefits such as provision of clothing or medical care. Employers were required to file a labor contract for every freed person they employed and each field agency was supposed to keep those contracts on file by name of employer and to respond to complaints. While the labor contract was supposed to be compulsory, the Freedmen's Bureau did not have the resources to ensure that labor contracts were made and registered with the bureau in every instance, or to take effective action when there was a breach of contract.³⁴ In districts where blacks made up most of the labor force, Freedmen's Bureau agents spent more time on labor contracts than on any other matter. For the agents at Fort Smith, however, labor contracts were not a dominating concern. Blacks did not compose the main labor force in northwest Arkansas, so the labor contract had only a weak purchase in those counties. Some labor contracts in Sebastian, Scott, and Franklin counties were registered at the Fort Smith agency, but not one in Benton County was registered with the agency. Superintendents sometimes mediated labor disputes that occurred close to Fort Smith, but none in faraway Bentonville or Pea Ridge.³⁵

Blacks occasionally appealed for help from the Freedmen's Bureau in family matters. Some sought help in finding lost children, parents, or marriage partners who had

³³ *Records of the Superintendent of Education for the State of Arkansas, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1871*, M-980, Roll 4. See also "Georgia Freedman to the Freedmen's Bureau Commissioner," *Freedmen and Southern Society Project*, at <http://www.freedmen.umd.edu/Greene%20Co.html>. A list of 145 names of colonists was included in the correspondence on Roll 4. The subsequent history of this colony is not known. The author made an attempt to locate the colony by looking up homestead patents issued by the Clarksville land office in BLM GLO records but was not successful.

³⁴ Farmer-Kaiser, *Freedwomen and the Freedmen's Bureau*, 25.

³⁵ *Records of the Superintendent of Education for the State of Arkansas, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1871*, M-980, Roll 4.

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been separated from them under slavery. Others sought assistance related to kidnappings during the Civil War. There was a case involving a father in Jefferson, Missouri who was in search of five children, four of them siblings, who had been seized by bushwhackers and reputedly stolen away to Arkansas. Another case involved a fourteen-year-old boy who had been brought to Arkansas from Missouri shortly after the war ended. The boy claimed he had been forcibly taken from his mother, whereas the white man who claimed to be his guardian stated that it was the boy’s mother who had been forcibly carried off, leaving the boy uncared for. In October 1867, more than two years after the mother and child were separated, the boy brought his story to the Freedmen’s Bureau, hoping federal officials could reunite him with his parents in Missouri.³⁶

Sometimes abused freedwomen sought help from the Freedmen’s Bureau. As Farmer-Kaiser observes in her book on freedwomen and the Freedmen’s Bureau, many field agents thought blacks needed help and instruction in family matters to overcome the devastation to the family structure wrought by slavery. These agents preached Victorian marriage ideals, including obedience of the wife to the husband and benevolent guardianship by the husband over the wife; indeed, they saw the marriage contract as an important corollary to the labor contract in producing an orderly, fruitful society. They encouraged blacks who were already in de facto marriages in slavery to make them legal and binding now that the couple was emancipated. They aimed to teach black women to value and protect their chastity, and to teach black men and women to marry when the time was right, when they could support one another.³⁷

The Freedmen’s Bureau faced gradual defunding and had waning influence after 1868. Most of the schools that the bureau established for blacks in Arkansas were turned over to the State Board of Education by 1870. All the while that the Freedmen’s Bureau was striving to remake labor relations in the South, to aid blacks in their quest for land, to provide dislocated blacks with medical care and subsistence, to initiate public education for blacks, and to support families by facilitating marriages and aiding in the search for loved ones who had been separated in slavery, the agency operated in an atmosphere of growing racial violence. All this time, freedmen and their white allies were in a struggle for power with former Confederates for control of state government, and to many it seemed that the Civil War never completely ended.

The End of Reconstruction and the Rise of Jim Crow

Reconstruction in Arkansas began under President Lincoln’s plan before the war was over. Lincoln’s plan was that when 10 percent of voters in the 1860 election took an

³⁶ *Records of the Superintendent of Education for the State of Arkansas, Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands, 1865-1871*, M-980, Roll 4.

³⁷ Farmer-Kaiser, *Freedwomen and the Freedmen’s Bureau*, 26-27.

oath of loyalty to the U.S. constitution, those citizens would be able to form a new state government that the president would recognize. Unionists in northwest Arkansas duly came together and formed a new state government in Union-controlled Little Rock in the spring of 1864. Lincoln's lenient plan for Reconstruction was continued after he was assassinated, but the slain president's successor, Andrew Johnson of Tennessee, was even more solicitous of the defeated South and quickly lost the support of Radical Republicans in Congress. Furthermore, the return of Confederate soldiers after the war changed the electorate and overwhelmed the Unionist voter bloc empowered in 1864, with the result that the state legislature changed hands in November 1866 and soon thereafter passed laws that denied blacks the right to vote, hold office, serve on juries, marry whites, or have access to public schools. Around this time the Democratic Party became a viable political party in the South once again, and it became the political home for conservative whites who by and large had supported the Confederate cause and who wanted to preserve white supremacy despite emancipation.³⁸

As similar political reverses occurred across the South, the Radical Republicans in Congress took charge and passed the Military Reconstruction Act, which grouped the former Confederate states into five military districts, deposed the Democratic governors in nearly every state, and reinstated Federal military rule. Arkansas was placed with Mississippi in the Fourth Military District. Under military Reconstruction, army officers in each district were to protect the rights of freedmen. Military tribunals were to take the place of civil courts where necessary. New state constitutions were to be drafted, approved by the state's voters, and accepted by Congress, and each state legislature had to ratify the Fourteenth Amendment. Meanwhile, the vote was restricted to black men and white men who could prove they had not supported the rebellion. A follow-up act of Congress gave military officers the responsibility to register voters. Another act gave military officers the authority to replace state or local officials who were deemed obstructionist.³⁹

A coalition of three voter groups formed to uphold Republican Party control of the government in Arkansas and in other former Confederate states. One group was composed of Northerners who relocated to the South after the war. These people moved to Arkansas for the political and economic opportunities that Reconstruction afforded them as well as for the cause of administering black freedom and reunion. Despite their mix of venal and high-minded motives, this group was universally tarred by conservative whites as a pack of crass, self-serving opportunists. They became known by the pejorative label "carpetbaggers." Another group consisted of native white Southerners who had been loyal to the Union in the secession crisis or who had turned Unionist in the

³⁸ Whyne, et al., *Arkansas: A Narrative History*, 227-30.

³⁹ Whyne, et al., *Arkansas: A Narrative History*, 235; Kenneth C. Barnes, "'It Ain't Over Till It's Over': Political Violence in Reconstruction Arkansas, 1865-1892," *A Confused and Confusing Affair: Arkansas and Reconstruction*, edited by Mark K. Christ (Little Rock, AR: Butler Center Books, 2018), 173.

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war or after. Conservative whites condemned them all as traitors who had abandoned the Confederate cause, and gave them the dirty name “scalawags.” The third group was composed of blacks, most of whom had been emancipated from slavery. Blacks were intent on exercising and protecting their right to vote, as well as advancing the welfare of their whole community. Even though the black vote was not large in most places, it was a pillar of strength for Republican office holders and therefore an obstacle to conservative whites bent on restoring Democratic Party rule.⁴⁰

While the Republican Party in Benton County contained all three groups, native whites were the principal group and blacks made up only a tiny part of the electorate. Throughout the Ozarks, native whites who voted Republican sought to prevent their pro-Confederate neighbors from taking back control of local government after the war. Some joined Union Leagues and other organizations that used violence and intimidation to maintain local Republican control.⁴¹ As a result, conservative whites in Benton County and throughout the Ozarks directed their ire mainly at the native white contingent in the Republican Party coalition. Despite the fact that a large share of voters in Benton County and other northwest Arkansas counties had been Unionist in 1861, this substantial population did not escape vilification by conservative or pro-Confederate whites in the Reconstruction period and after. As recently as 1990, a local historian offered her opinion for the Benton County Heritage Committee’s *History of Benton County, Arkansas* that “carpetbaggers...and scalawags completely overran the South causing havoc everywhere they went. These people were not interested in the welfare of the citizens of the states which had seceded. They were intent upon ‘feathering their own nests’ by getting political jobs.”⁴² This was the caricature perpetrated by the Dunning School of Southern history, and it still held a strong grip on the popular view of Reconstruction only a generation ago.

Following the advent of military Reconstruction in 1867, disenfranchised pro-Confederate white Southerners increasingly backed the Democratic Party as the party of home rule or Southern “redemption,” and many accepted terror against blacks and assassination of office holders as a way to subvert Republican rule. The shadowy Ku Klux Klan briefly rose up as their standard bearer. Founded in Tennessee in December 1865, the Klan took root across the South during 1867 and 1868. Local organizations appeared in various parts of Arkansas, striking at blacks and a few white office holders. In this first incarnation of the white supremacist organization the Klan did not appear in Benton County though it did in Fulton County in the eastern Ozarks. When violence spread in 1868, Federal troops and Unionist militias went after the Klan and the organization retreated into the shadows. Some believed that at the height of activity the

⁴⁰ Wayne, et al., *Arkansas: A Narrative History*, 236.

⁴¹ Blevins, *A History of the Ozarks, Vol. 2: The Conflicted Ozarks*, 157-61.

⁴² Benton County Heritage Committee, *History of Benton County, Arkansas*, 7.

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Klan was preparing for an all-out assault on the state government in Little Rock, but it remained unknown how numerous or well-led the Klansmen were. What did become clear was that the Klan was suppressed more vigorously and effectively in Arkansas than in other Southern states, where the Klan's terror campaign against blacks persisted into the 1870s. The suppression of the Klan in Arkansas gave support to Republican Party claims that Arkansas was a good place for freedmen to settle, and in the view of historian Matkin-Rawn that was one factor that drove black migration to Arkansas over the next two decades.⁴³

Historians generally agree that race relations in Arkansas in the 1870s and 1880s were somewhat better than in much of the South. "African Americans exercised a degree of political, social, and economic autonomy that would have been unthinkable in 1860," the authors of *Arkansas: A Narrative History* contend. "Under Republican rule, blacks played prominent roles in state politics. African Americans served as delegates to the constitutional conventions of 1868 and 1874, were represented in every general assembly between 1868 and 1893, and particularly in areas with heavy black populations, held numerous offices at the county and local level."⁴⁴ So, the question arises: how and why did the relatively promising situation for blacks in Arkansas erode toward the end of the nineteenth century? And how did the situation across the state play out for blacks in Benton County?

Racial segregation took root early in the state after the Civil War. The "Rebel" state legislature of 1866-67 excluded black children from the public school system. Under military Reconstruction, a system of separate schools for blacks was promulgated. Blacks basically accepted racial segregation in public education as a preferable alternative to exclusion. Blacks established their own churches, meanwhile, as they were eager to create their own social spaces away from white racial prejudice and to develop their own leadership capabilities. But if churches offered a potential sanctuary, blacks had to integrate with the white majority in the labor force and in most other public arenas such as hotels, theaters, and saloons. Under military Reconstruction, blacks secured a civil rights law that purported to protect blacks' equal access to public accommodations and transportation. Enforcement of the law was imperfect and a more sweeping measure was passed in 1873. Yet that law, too, did not fully protect blacks from growing instances of segregation and the gradual imposition of a racial caste system on the society.⁴⁵

⁴³ David M. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The First Century of the Ku Klux Klan 1865-1965* (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1965), 8-21; Charles Morrow Wilson, *The Bodacious Ozarks: True Tales of the Backhills* (New York: Hastings House Publishers, 1959), 135; Wayne, et al., *Arkansas: A Narrative History*, 241-49, 257-58; Blevins, *A History of the Ozarks, Vol. 2: The Conflicted Ozarks*, 161-68; Blevins, "Reconstruction in the Ozarks," 193-99; Barnes, "'It Ain't Over Till It's Over,'" 185-90; Matkin-Rawn, "'The Great Negro State of the Country,'" 5, 16-17, 23-25.

⁴⁴ Wayne, et al., *Arkansas: A Narrative History*, 258.

⁴⁵ John William Graves, "Jim Crow in Arkansas: A Reconsideration of Race Relations in the Post-Reconstruction South," *Journal of Southern History* 55, no. 3 (August 1989), 421-26.

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As historian John William Graves points out, the separation of the races and the contest over segregated facilities was most visible in cities and towns. In Graves' view, when blacks formed communities within cities and towns it gave them more political clout and economic opportunity. But as a new black middle class emerged in those places, it inspired white resentment. White resentment of black success was strongest in rural Arkansas, where white Southerners sensed they were losing ground relative to other sections of American society. The Democratic Party in Arkansas and elsewhere in the South faced defections from farmer and labor groups who were attracted to third party movements such as the Union Labor and Populist organizations. In the 1890s, the Democratic Party in Arkansas began to advocate racial segregation as a way to bolster support among its base in rural white counties. It found a fighting cause in a law to segregate street cars. Ironically, the law found little support among the urban population in Little Rock that it most directly affected. The law was offensive to urban blacks and it did not please most urban whites either. Yet its real aim was to rally rural whites around white supremacy and bring them back into the Democratic Party fold. The streetcar law succeeded in its purpose, with blacks reporting from all over the state that they experienced an upswing in racial prejudice in the early 1890s around the time that the law was passed.⁴⁶

By 1893, the town of Bentonville had a population of around 4,000 people including about 150 African Americans. The black community was centered in the Curtis Addition directly northeast of the town square. Members attended an African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church located a block and a half northeast of the town square on land adjoining the property of William and Bettie Trout, who were prominent members of the community. The children attended what was called the Bentonville Colored School, which was located on Curtis Avenue (today's Northeast B Street) about a block from the town square.⁴⁷

A Bentonville correspondent for the *Freeman* in Indianapolis, Indiana described the proud success and pleasant prospects for this community in a dispatch in 1893:

The two races get along as agreeably as anywhere in the North. The labor is principally given to the coloreds instead of the whites. Charley Claypool and James Finney are regular employees at the mill and have the confidence of their employer. Messrs. William Troutt and W. T. Fowler are regular employees of the leading contractors here and have been for many years. Messrs. Milton Sanford, Childs Finney, and Robert Jackson, Rev. Derricks,

⁴⁶ Graves, “Jim Crow in Arkansas,” 436-48; Willard B. Gatewood, Jr., “Arkansas Negroes in the 1890s: Documents,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 73, no. 4 (Winter 1974), 296-97.

⁴⁷ Property maps at Benton County Archives.

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Grant Levi, and Monk Black are owners of good substantial property. Bud Dickerson is a regular employee of the firm of McHen & Bryant and has been for several years [on] a good salary. Messrs. Sanders, Lewis, Dickson and Van Winkle are our good farmers. They own their own farms and farm upon a large scale. General Gilbert is also one of our leading enterprising young men and is a cooper by trade. Alfred F. Yates, one of our progressive young men, has taken unto himself a better half and [is] doing well. Miss Josie Black will spend the holidays in the windy city by the Lake. Miss Jennie Elliot will visit friends at Pierce, Mo. China wedding at Wm. Van Winkle's.⁴⁸

Some additional information was developed from newspapers and the U.S. census on a few of the individuals named in the above report. These biographical vignettes, though fragmentary, offer more insight into the black experience in Benton County in the late nineteenth century.

Childs Finney

Childs Finney was born in Virginia about 1834. The circumstances around his moving to Arkansas are not known. In 1860 he was enslaved by one Hill Finney, who owned four slaves and had a farm in the southeast corner of Benton County near Cross Hollow. In 1870, Childs Finney had a home on the White River with a post office address at Cross Hollows where he worked as a mill operator. He was then thirty-six years old, married to a woman named Mary, and they had three children.⁴⁹

At some point after 1870, Childs Finney moved to Bentonville with his family and worked as a laborer. He saved a part of his wage earnings and invested in real estate. By the 1890s, he owned three lots in the Lincoln and Rice Addition of Bentonville. By the 1910 census, Childs and his wife Mary were both in their seventies and their children were all grown. They had one grandchild living with them. Mary died in 1912, and the local newspaper obituary stated she was one of the "old time darkies," implying that she had long roots in the area.⁵⁰

Within the small black community in Benton County there were others with the last name of Finney. They may have been related or they may have coincidentally taken their last name from the same slaveholder, Hill Finney. There was a black man named Hillery Finney who lived in Bentonville and was known as "a fine musician," playing his

⁴⁸ Gatewood, "Arkansas Negroes in the 1890s," 315-16.

⁴⁹ 1860 U.S. Census, Benton County, Arkansas, slave schedule, Big Springs Township; 1870 U.S. Census, Benton County, Arkansas, population schedule, Osage Township.

⁵⁰ 1910 U.S. Census, Benton County, Arkansas, population schedule, Osage Township; *Benton County Obituaries*, Vol. 3.

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instrument at receptions and balls around the area. There was a Harriet Finney (or Fenin – the handwriting by the census taker is not clear) who was a housekeeper in the Bentonville home of Joseph Rutherford. And there was a James Finney – probably the son of Childs and Mary Finney – who married Cora Dickerson in 1892.⁵¹

Charley Claypool

Charley Claypool was born about 1855 in Texas. His parents were born either in Kentucky or Tennessee according to what Claypool told census takers many years later, but it appears that he was separated from his parents as well as any siblings he may have had by the age of five when he was recorded in the 1860 slave schedule. Claypool’s enslaver was a Kentuckian named Josiah Claypool. This man and his wife Mary had six children, five born before the Civil War and one during the war, the first three in Kentucky and the last three in Texas. In 1860, Josiah Claypool owned four slaves and 12,200 acres. In 1865, the family moved into the town of Dallas, Texas. In 1868, Josiah Claypool sold his land in Texas and moved to Bentonville, taking the young Charley Claypool with him.⁵²

Charley Claypool was about ten years old when he was emancipated in Texas and he was about thirteen years old when he accompanied the Claypool family to Bentonville. He was not counted in the Josiah Claypool household in the 1870 census. How he made his own way at this time is not known. According to what he told census takers later in life, he did not attend school and he never learned to read and write.⁵³

One may surmise that Charley Claypool’s feelings about the white family who enslaved him were not all bad, for he took the name Claypool as his own surname and chose to reside with the Claypool children when he and they were all young adults. Indeed, the multi-family household in Bentonville in 1880 offers a unique glimpse into race relations at that place and time. The putative head of household was James Rice, age twenty-nine, an attorney at law. His young wife was a Claypool daughter, Lucie. They shared the house with three Claypool siblings: Georgie, a sister; Sam, a brother; and Sarah, the oldest of the Claypool siblings, and her husband David Woods, as well as Charley Claypool, the lone black person in the household. David Woods was a merchant,

⁵¹ *Benton County Obituaries, Vol. 3.*

⁵² Information about Charley Claypool is from 1880 and 1930 U.S. Census, Benton County, Arkansas, population schedules, Osage Township. Information about Josiah Claypool is from 1860 U.S. Census, Dallas County, Texas, population schedule and slave schedule, Precinct 5, and “Sarah E. Claypool Woods,” at <https://arkansasgravestones.org/view.php?id=899435>; Connie J. Miller, National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form for State-Thomas Historic District, 1984, at <https://dallascityhall.com/departments/sustainabledevelopment/historicpreservation/HP%20Documents/Districts%20Page/State%20Thomas%20National%20Register%20Form.pdf>.

⁵³ 1870 U.S. Census, Benton County, Arkansas, population schedule, Osage Township; 1930 U.S. Census, Benton County, Arkansas, Osage Township.

Sam Claypool was a clerk in a store, and Charley Claypool was listed in the census as a “servant.” The two married sisters were listed as “wife, home keeper,” while Georgie was listed as “company.”⁵⁴

In the following decade, Charley Claypool finally emancipated himself from the white Claypool family. He acquired a good wage earning job at the local mill. He invested some of his wage earnings in real estate. He married a black woman named Mary Yates and the couple had their first child, Rena Miss, in 1893. They had a second child, William Hobart, in 1897. Claypool’s wife died in 1909. The son William Hobart Claypool married in 1917 and served in the army in World War I. Charley Claypool remained a resident of Bentonville until his death in 1935. He was still working in 1930 at about seventy-five. In his final years he was blind and was cared for by two adult grandchildren. An obituary stated that he died in a fire that destroyed his home. It seemed that he tried to make a fire in the cookstove after his adult grandchildren went to work. The fire spread and when he tried to extinguish it his clothes caught on fire. Neighbors pulled him from the blaze but he died from his burns.⁵⁵

Milt Sanford

In the 1860 slave schedule John H. Patterson owned a boy who was reportedly fourteen years old. In a story passed down by the Patterson family, during the battle of Pea Ridge John Patterson took his twelve-year-old son Bone and a slave named “Milt” and went to have a look at what was happening. These three found themselves in greater danger than anticipated, and when a shell burst over their heads they all ran for their lives. It seems to be a reasonable guess that the youngster Milt in this story was the Milt Sanford who was known to the people of Bentonville from about 1871 until his death in 1901. One year before his death, Milt Sanford reported to the census taker that he was born about 1845, which would have made him about sixteen or seventeen years old at the time of the Battle of Pea Ridge.⁵⁶

Nothing is known about Milt Sanford’s relations with the Patterson family after emancipation. In 1872, Milt Sanford married a woman named Clarasa and they had two children together. Milt and Clarasa Sanford remained in Bentonville throughout their nearly thirty years of marriage. Milt Sanford’s obituary in the *Benton County Democrat* was as patronizing as every other obituary in that newspaper for people of his race. It stated that “‘Uncle’ Milt Sanford, an old colored man well known to every citizen of

⁵⁴ 1880 U.S. Census, Benton County, Arkansas, Osage Township.

⁵⁵ 1930 U.S. Census, Bentonville, Arkansas, population schedule, Osage Township; “Obituaries,” in *Backtracker* 1, no. 3 (July 1972), 15.

⁵⁶ 1860 U.S. Census, Benton County, Arkansas, slave schedule, Sugar Creek Township; Benton County Historical Society, ed., *100th Anniversary Battle of Pea Ridge* (1962, reprint; Bentonville: Benton County Historical Society, 1992), 22.

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Bentonville,” died from grippe complicated by heart disease at the age of about 64. (The year of his death was 1901 and he was probably nearer to fifty-six.) The obituary further stated that Milt Sanford was “a faithful, honest and industrious man, one who could be relied upon and in all of his 30 years residence in Benton County had never given the police officers one moment of trouble.”⁵⁷

In the 1900 census, Milt and Clarasa Sanford lived with their son William, their daughter Ellen, and their grandson Robert. A day laborer, Milt Sanford was unemployed for the last seven months of his life. Despite his limited earning power as a day laborer, he was able to accumulate enough savings to own his home and hold some investment property in Bentonville.⁵⁸

William Trout

Born in slavery in Arkansas about 1856, the circumstances of Trout’s life before the Civil War are not known. His father came from Georgia and his mother from Tennessee. He may have taken his last name from the slaveowner J. L. Trout, who lived in Osage Township in Benton County in 1860 and who then owned a boy age five – about the age that William would have been in that year. This slaveowner was listed in the 1860 slave schedule as the owner of five blacks, possibly a mother and her four children. If this was indeed William’s family of origin, then it is not known what became of the rest of the family.⁵⁹

In 1870, William was thirteen years old and lived in a large white household in Bentonville in company with one Brooks Trout, who was seven years younger than him and possibly a brother. There was also a Jane Trout, the same age as William, who lived with another white family nearby. One might imagine that William and Jane were twins, but the 1860 slave schedule does not bear that out. The white family was that of Joseph Robinson Rutherford, a distinguished resident of Bentonville who served the Union army in the war and briefly published a liberal Republican newspaper around 1870. Also in the household were Robinson’s second wife and nine children, and a black servant woman named Harriet Finney or Fenin.⁶⁰

By 1880, William Trout married Bettie, a woman four years older than him who was also born in slavery in Arkansas. They had at least five children together, at least two of whom died as young adults around the turn of the century. An obituary for their grown son Oscar, who died of illness in 1905, stated that William and Bettie’s “many friends,

⁵⁷ *Benton County Obituaries, Vol. 2.*

⁵⁸ 1900 U.S. Census, Benton County, Arkansas, population schedule, Osage Township.

⁵⁹ 1860 U.S. Census, Benton County, Arkansas, slave schedule, Osage Township.

⁶⁰ 1870 U.S. Census, Benton County, Arkansas, population schedule, Osage Township. In the 1870 census Jane Trout, a black female age thirteen, lived in the household of Dr. Charles Dickson Taliaferro.

both white and colored, sympathize with them in their trouble.” Oscar Trout, evidently a member of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, a fraternal organization, was buried in the I. O. O. F. cemetery in Bentonville.⁶¹ William Trout died in 1923.

As the examples of Childs Finney, Charley Claypool, and William Trout show, the black community in Bentonville sustained numerous black families for two or three or more generations. These families demonstrated resilience in the face of adversity. They rose from slavery and gradually acquired economic independence and security through steady employment and shrewd property investments. They acquired a measure of social acceptance as free citizens in the society, but they were constantly demeaned as members of a lower caste. Pressed to attend their own church and school, they were made to accept an undignified system of racial segregation. Despite these families’ individual success stories, the black population of Benton County dwindled, and in the middle decades of the twentieth century it nearly disappeared.

Black Exodus

As the prominent Southern historian C. Vann Woodward showed in his seminal work *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, white oppression of blacks worsened in the 1890s and 1900s – more than two decades after blacks won freedom from slavery. Following a period of relative fluidity and experimentation in race relations in the 1870s and 1880s, whites grew more racist and insistent about drawing a “color line” between whites and blacks. State and local laws and ordinances instituted racial segregation in many public spaces, while the U.S. Supreme Court legitimated the “separate but equal” doctrine in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896). Blacks in the South were obstructed from voting. A wave of white mob lynchings of blacks occurred across the United States, primarily in the South, with the largest number of incidents occurring in Texas, Mississippi, and Georgia. Lynchings often revolved around accusations of sexual assaults or transgressions by black men against white women. The wave of lynchings terrorized blacks and served to enforce separation between the races. Lynchings sometimes erupted into violent pogroms aimed at driving away whole black communities.

The downturn in race relations in the South occurred as part of a broad pattern of social conflicts arising in all parts of the United States. It paralleled a contentious turn in labor relations as the nation experienced an industrial revolution. It mirrored a rise in nativism in the North in response to the new immigration from southern and eastern Europe. It coincided with America’s becoming an imperial power with dominion over nonwhite peoples in the Philippines and the Caribbean. It followed a wave of Chinese exclusion that was centered in California, where white vigilantism and lynchings of Chinese prefigured the wave of racial violence in the South. All these developments

⁶¹ *Benton County Obituaries*, Vol. 2, 70.

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created a climate of racism and intolerance in the United States that fed white oppression of blacks in the South.⁶²

The racial oppression drove more blacks in the South to pull up stakes and go in search of a better life elsewhere. Blacks fled to Kansas, the Far West, and Liberia. Many blacks in the Gulf States fled to Arkansas in the belief that race relations were better there than in other Southern states, but as race relations in Arkansas deteriorated in the 1890s the state saw a countervailing out-migration of blacks. While the in-migration remained heavy in the lowland parts of Arkansas, the out-migration drained away the relatively small population of blacks in the upland counties of northwest Arkansas.⁶³

Wherever black populations were small, they were vulnerable to expulsion because they were not essential workers for the local economy. Whereas the agricultural interests in the southeastern half of the state needed and wanted blacks for their labor supply, white farmers in the northwestern half of the state had no such concern. When blacks moved to northwest Arkansas in search of job opportunity, working-class whites viewed them as unwanted competitors for those jobs. Where new high-wage laboring jobs arose around railroad construction or mining operations, whites aimed to restrict those good wage-earning jobs to white labor only. Sometimes black transient labor moved into the area only to be driven out again in a practice known as “white-capping.” Sometimes the instigators of white-capping used trumped-up charges of sexual misconduct by a black man to incite a mob. The charges could lead to a lynching or the torching of black homes. These actions were generally perpetrated by lower class whites. The modern term for white-capping would be racial cleansing.⁶⁴

Lynchings or race riots occurred in several towns in the Ozarks including Harrison, Arkansas; Springfield, Missouri; and Joplin, Missouri.⁶⁵ Harrison had 115 blacks living in the town in 1900, which was about 10 percent of the population. In two race riots in 1905 and 1909, practically the whole black population was driven out. The riots occurred in the context of a railroad construction boom when several single black male construction workers joined the small community of black families who already resided there. The first riot started over a charge of unlawful entry against one of the single black men. The second one was triggered over a charge of rape. After the second

⁶² James W. Loewen, *Sundown Towns: A Hidden Dimension of American Racism* (New York: The New Press, 2005), 31-33.

⁶³ See Story Matkin-Rawn, “‘Send Forth More Laborers into the Vineyard’: Understanding the African American Exodus to Arkansas,” in *Race and Ethnicity in Arkansas: New Perspectives*, edited by John A. Kirk (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2014), and Matkin-Rawn, “‘The Great Negro State of the Country.’”

⁶⁴ Guy Lancaster, “Sundown Towns: Racial Cleansing in the Arkansas Delta,” in *Race and Ethnicity in Arkansas: New Perspectives*, edited by John A. Kirk (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2014); Kimberly Harper, *White Man’s Heaven: The Lynching and Expulsion of Blacks in the Southern Ozarks, 1894-1909* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2010), xix.

⁶⁵ See Harper, *White Man’s Heaven* for a detailed narrative and analysis of those events.

riot only one black person remained in the town. Everyone else fled. No significant black population returned to Harrison for seventy years after the riots. No black children attended school in Harrison until the 1980s.⁶⁶

A resurgent Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s added to the turmoil for blacks but by the time the Klan arose the black population in the Ozarks was already mostly departed. The Klan had a strong presence in Little Rock by 1922, and it sent organizers to Benton County in 1923. A Klan rally in Bentonville drew more than 2,000 people. However, neither Bentonville nor Rogers would allow a local chapter to form in the town. Elsewhere in the Ozarks the Klan became more active, but the Klan's clandestine operations – the “night-riding” that gave it such mystique among its large following – were directed primarily against bootleggers and moonshiners, not the tiny number of blacks who were still present in the region. The Klan in the 1920s harkened back to the earlier Klan of the Reconstruction era, but it was really a very different organization. Anti-Catholic and anti-Semite as well as anti-black, it appealed to a small town business class of whites who worked on electing politicians aligned with the Klan's twisted, exclusive view of “100 percent Americanism.” Its center of strength became the lower Midwest and its local chapters reached all the way to the Pacific Coast. Yet for its role in pushing blacks out of the Ozark region, the Klan rates little more than a footnote. The black exodus from the Ozarks occurred without the Klan's help. The push factor was much more sweeping than that.⁶⁷

Many Ozark towns drove out the few black residents by overt intimidation and racial hostility. A term arose to describe those towns where blacks were not welcome to live and work. The places were called “sundown towns.” Many of these towns had signs at the edge of town warning blacks not to be there after sundown. The town of Rogers in Benton County had signs posted at the city limits, the bus station, and the railroad terminal squarely addressed to blacks (using the offensive racial epithet): “... You Better Not Let the Sun Set on You in Rogers.”⁶⁸

In a broad study of sundown towns, sociologist James W. Loewen finds that the phenomenon of the sundown town was – and still is – far more prevalent than was once thought or admitted. Sundown towns were most prevalent in the Upper South and lower Midwest where black populations were small and vulnerable and white racism was

⁶⁶ Jacqueline Froelich and David Zimmermann, “Total Eclipse: The Destruction of the African American Community of Harrison, Arkansas, in 1905 and 1909,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 58, no. 2 (Summer 1999), 131, 134-36, 141, 150, 158.

⁶⁷ Kenneth C. Barnes, “Another Look Behind the Masks: The Ku Klux Klan in Bentonville, Arkansas, 1922-1926,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 76, no. 3 (Autumn 2017), 204-05; Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, 56-58; Rosen, *Boomtown*, 24-26.

⁶⁸ Loewen, *Sundown Towns*, 205.

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virulent. Sundown towns were long associated with the Ozarks and Appalachia, but Loewen’s book pushed awareness that they in fact exist all over the United States.⁶⁹

Bentonville was one town in the Ozarks that did not drive out its black community. Apparently the black community was strongly enough ensconced to discourage it. The black residents of Bentonville remained secure in their homes and neighborhood, but they had to live with segregation. By the early twentieth century there were three black churches including the AME Church and a Colored Baptist Church. The black community had its own fraternal organization, the United Brothers of Friendship, and its own women’s organization, the Sisters of Mysterious Tens. These groups met in the upstairs of one of the church buildings. The Bentonville Colored School taught kindergarten through eighth grade. There was no opportunity for black kids to go on to high school. Restaurants in Bentonville became segregated with the rise of Jim Crow, and Bentonville’s blacks acquiesced in it. Despite their separate social lives, blacks worked in the same workplaces with whites and they owned some downtown businesses. Whites attended singing and other programs put on by the Bentonville Colored School.⁷⁰

Outside of Bentonville, the black population in Benton County all but vanished in the early decades of the twentieth century. The 1920 census recorded that only one farm in the county was still operated by a black farmer. This farmer owned his farm. The 1930 census recorded not one black living in the “rural-farm” setting in Benton County. An agricultural census made in 1935 reported that the number of black-operated farms in Benton County had risen to three; it did not state if they were owner or tenant operated or how many people were resident on the farms. The total number of farms in Benton County stood at just over 5,000 in 1920 and rose to nearly 6,000 in 1935 with about two-thirds being owner-operated.⁷¹

The black population in Benton County fell to eighty-eight in 1930, eighty of whom lived in Bentonville. Four blacks were counted in Colville Township, three in Wallace Township, and one in Sulphur Springs Township. No blacks were counted in Sugar Creek Township or any township east of Bentonville and Rogers.⁷²

Among the eighty-eight blacks in Benton County in 1930, twenty-eight were adult males, twenty-three were adult females, and thirty-five were under the age of twenty-one

⁶⁹ Loewen, *Sundown Towns*, vii-ix.

⁷⁰ Marjorie Rosen, *Boomtown: How Wal-Mart Transformed an All-American Town into an International Community* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2009), 24-26.

⁷¹ U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920, Vol. 6, Part 2, Agriculture* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1922), 560; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *United States Census of Agriculture: 1935, Vol. 1: Reports for States with Statistics for Counties and a Summary for the United States* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1936), 670.

⁷² U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930, Vol. 3, Part 1 Population* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1932), 212.

THE BLACK EXPERIENCE FROM SLAVERY TO FREEDOM

(Table 4). Thirty black males and sixteen black females in Benton County were enumerated as “gainful workers.” Along with the whites in Benton County, each black person’s source of employment was recorded. The census in 1930 recorded zero blacks in Benton County working in the agricultural sector either as farmers or farm laborers. Among the 12,000 whites who were gainfully employed in Benton County, nearly 7,000 worked on farms. Another 1,000 worked in wholesale and retail trade, and another 600 worked in “other professional and semiprofessional services.”⁷³

Arthur and Cinco Crawley Dickerson were longtime black residents of Bentonville who witnessed the gradual erosion of the black community there. Arthur Dickerson was born in Bentonville in 1896. His parents were also natives of Bentonville. Arthur Dickerson, affectionately known as “Rabbit,” attended the Bentonville Colored School through the eighth grade. In 1924, he bought a shoeshine parlor from fellow black resident James “Sonny” Finney. Cinco Crawley, meanwhile, was born and raised in Fort Smith and came to Bentonville in 1920 to teach at the Bentonville Colored School. Arthur and Cinco were married in 1922.⁷⁴

Table 4. Occupations of all blacks in Benton County in 1930		
Occupation	Male	Female
Steam railroads	3	
Other transportation and communication	4	
Wholesale and retail trade, except automobiles	3	
Other professional and semiprofessional service	1	2
Hotels, restaurants, boarding houses, etc.	5	1
Other domestic and personal service	9	13
Industry not specified	5	

Arthur Dickerson’s shoeshine parlor was originally located in a small frame building on the east side of the town square. When the courthouse was to be built on that location, Dickerson moved his business to the old Royal Theater building. Later, he

⁷³ U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930, Vol. 3, Part 1 Population*, 199.

⁷⁴ Laura Lindsey, “1975 story honored well-known Bentonville citizen,” undated newspaper clipping in Rogers Museum, Colored School vertical file.

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moved his shop to the old Meteor Theater building, and finally to a building at 206 North Main Street. Arthur Dickerson continued to run the shop in 1975 at the age of seventy nine. Cinco taught at the school for twenty years until 1940 when it ran out of students and closed. As the black community shrank and the school wound down, Cinco took a second job as housekeeper at the Southwestern Bell Telephone office. She worked that job for thirty years and then retired.⁷⁵

Cinco Dickerson taught one last pupil privately in the early 1950s. He was Carl Stewart, whose mother had attended the Bentonville Colored School a generation earlier. In 1955, in the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, Carl Stewart was admitted into the Bentonville public school.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Laura Lindsey, “1975 story honored well-known Bentonville citizen,” undated newspaper clipping in Rogers Museum, Colored School vertical file.

⁷⁶ Rosen, *Boomtown*, 26.

Chapter Seven

Pea Ridge in the New South

The Road to Recovery

After the Civil War, residents of Pea Ridge and vicinity had to rebuild destroyed homes, replenish depleted livestock herds, restore neglected roads, and develop a new economy with the help of Northern capital. The coming of railroads to the region was decisive. The first railroad through Benton County was built in 1881. This was the St. Louis, Arkansas, and Texas Railway, which later became the St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad, or Frisco. The line crossed Little Sugar Creek just south of the battlefield. The town of Rogers sprang up. Other new towns along the line included Garfield and Avoca near the battlefield and Lowell south of Rogers. Bentonville was not on this line, but a spur was soon built connecting with it.

With the railroad connection, more resource development in Benton County soon followed. The lumber industry in the county, which centered around Van Winkle's Mill and which had already grown to support the reconstruction of homes destroyed in the war, expanded as lumber products were now shipped out on the railroad. Farm produce increased as well. Some farmers grew cereals, others went into tobacco, cotton, or hemp production. In the 1890s, apple orchards began to take hold. Through the first two decades of the twentieth century, fruit growing came to dominate Benton County's agricultural production. Many fruit processing businesses developed to support fruit growers. Apple vinegar and dehydration plants came to dot the county. Agriculture in Benton County was transformed by industrialization and mechanization of agricultural practices that were then sweeping the country.

In the 1880s, the town of Pea Ridge developed as a center of education. Old Pea Ridge College became the Pea Ridge Academy and then the Pea Ridge Normal School. This decade also saw the first Civil War veterans reunion take place at the battlefield.

After the War, Before the Railroad

The years right after the war were a time of rebuilding. Numerous Benton County residents who had become refugees in the war came home to find their cabins reduced to ashes. Tradition holds that Joseph and Lucinda Cox returned to the site of the destroyed Elkhorn Tavern in 1865 and immediately rebuilt.¹ They found the stone chimneys still

¹ Dwight E. Stinson, Jr. "Historic Buildings and Structures Report, Part 1, for Elkhorn Tavern, Pea Ridge National Military Park," May 1963, Pea Ridge NMP; Vaught, "A history of the building that has been

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standing and built a cabin on the footprint of the original log structure. Their story of rebuilding was a common one. As soon as homes were rebuilt, other strenuous tasks followed. Farmers had to rebuild fences, clean up wells and springs, recover wasted fields, and commence replenishing their ruined livestock herds. The people joined together in clearing roads and restoring bridges. New mills had to be built to replace the many mills destroyed in the war.

Undaunted by how the place was ravaged by war, more new settlers came to Benton County in the late 1860s. The population of the county grew from 9,306 in 1860 to 13,831 in 1870. That was nearly a 50 percent increase through the 1860s, far lower than the 150 percent increase during the 1850s, but still a considerable rate of population growth that came mostly from in-migration near the end of the decade. The population of the county would grow by another 50 percent in the 1880s, by which time the land was mostly taken up in farms. The growth rate would finally fall off in the 1890s and beyond as in-migration and out-migration balanced out.

Northwest Arkansas continued to attract settlers from the southern Appalachians. As one example, the Freeman party of several families came in a wagon train from Fannin County, Georgia in 1869. Their county on the Georgia-Tennessee line had been devastated by the war just as Benton County had been. According to a Freeman family history the emigrants were destitute. “There was nothing left and they wanted to leave. They’d heard many glowing tales about Arkansas with plenty of water, grass, trees, and land to homestead.” Their wagons were pulled by teams of oxen and the trip took three months. Most of the people in the party walked the whole way, as the wagons were filled with their meager possessions and provisions.² Wagon trains continued to stream into the Ozarks through the 1870s.³

It was years before the numbers of livestock in Benton County recovered to pre-war levels. In 1870, the numbers of cattle and sheep were just two thirds of what they had been ten years earlier. The semi-feral hogs survived the war better than horses, cattle, and sheep, and their rate of reproduction was greater, too. Even so, Benton County had about 24,000 hogs in 1870 compared with about 22,000 hogs before the war.⁴

The amount of grain grown in Benton County did not recover to prewar levels until sometime after 1870. The county’s total grain production in 1870 was 18 percent below what it was in 1860. Part of the reason for the slow recovery in grain production

known for more than one hundred years as Elkhorn Tavern,” 6; Caroline Clark, “She Brings History to Life,” *Arkansas Gazette*, September 25, 1949.

² Kathryn Freeman Clausen, “J. Whittenton Freeman Family History,” *Benton County Pioneer* 36, no. 1 (Spring 1999), 9.

³ Robert B. Walz, “Migration in Arkansas, 1820-1880: Incentives and Means of Travel,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 17, no. 4 (Winter 1958), 309-24.

⁴ Howard, “Civil War Unionists and Their Legacy in the Arkansas Ozarks.” 128.

may have had to do with the shortage of gristmills. With no railroad connections, Benton County farmers could not easily export wheat or corn to commercial markets, either.⁵

In the years leading up to the Civil War the people of northwest Arkansas had reason to expect that they would soon be connected by railroad to other parts of the nation. By 1860, new railroads began to radiate westward from St. Louis. A railroad was completed from St. Louis to Rolla, Missouri on January 1, 1861, and there were plans to extend the line southwestward by way of Springfield to Jasper County, Missouri. Another railroad was under construction from Memphis to Little Rock. The Butterfield Stage route, which opened in 1858, might have been a precursor to a railroad in Benton County soon thereafter if the Civil War had been averted. The war brought railroad construction to a halt, and after the war there was no rush to resume those projects where they had left off.⁶

Railroad building required heavy capital investment. Tracklaying cost \$20,000 to \$50,000 per mile, while the financial outlays for rolling stock, yards, and stations rose into the millions. Railroad investors relied on national, state, and local aid to subsidize their enterprises, and after the war all of those public treasuries were exhausted. The company with the line to Rolla went bankrupt soon after the war. John C. Frémont and a team of eastern investors purchased that line in 1866 but their enterprise soon folded as well. Another company formed and extended the line to Springfield in 1870. But another decade would pass before Northern investors became interested in building another line southward through Benton County.⁷

While Benton County waited for a railroad connection, its network of farm roads gradually became more extensive. The roads mostly went from stream to stream, or spring to spring, wherever there was a hamlet or a mill, as water sources were the lifeblood of the pioneer settlements. Indeed, it was said that “most roads were just Indian paths from one stream to another, the designation to the water being made by bending down a sapling with the top pointing toward the water, and held down by a rock.” Some of those old waymarks could still be found in the 1970s, according to local historian Vera Key.⁸

From Subsistence to General Farming

Even without a railroad connection, Benton County farmers began to shift from subsistence to general farming. General farming involved growing a diversity of crops

⁵ Howard, “Civil War Unionists and Their Legacy in the Arkansas Ozarks,” 129.

⁶ Rafferty, *The Ozarks: Land and Life*, 98-99.

⁷ Rafferty, *The Ozarks: Land and Life*, 99; Blevins, *A History of the Ozarks, Vol. 2: The Conflicted Ozarks*, 191-92.

⁸ Vera Key, “Some of the Early Business Men of Rogers,” *Benton County Pioneer* 18, no. 4 (Fall 1973), 6.

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including different grains, vegetables, and fruits, as well as tobacco and cotton, with reduced emphasis on raising cattle and hogs and the staple corn crop. Before the war, farmers still followed the traditional pattern of “field-forest farming” that was seen across the highland South. They burned over the prairies and woodlands each spring to provide good grazing for free-range livestock, and moved their patch of corn to a new forest clearing or an old fallow field every few years. Those agricultural practices had to be abandoned when the land became more thickly settled. There were changes in the land as the annual burning ceased. Underbrush grew up in the forest understory while the amount of woodland gradually diminished as more land was put under cultivation each year.⁹

Population growth was not the only factor that led to the adoption of general farming. Even before the war, farmers were drawn to producing cash crops for the market and integrating their home economy with the cash economy. That trend continued and deepened with the development of railroads in Missouri and improved transportation to market towns and railheads after the war.

Benton County farmers experimented with a variety of new crops in the late 1860s and 1870s. Early on, tobacco held much promise. By 1870, Benton County was the leading producer of tobacco in the state. Benton County farmers grew Virginia golden leaf, white burley, yellow pryor, and Hico wrapper leaf. In 1879, Benton County farmers paid an average of \$43.50 for seed and labor to raise an acre of tobacco, and made a profit of \$28 to \$100 per acre depending on the quality of the crop. High-end varieties of tobacco went for as much as forty cents a pound while cheaper varieties brought from five to twelve cents a pound.¹⁰

Most of Benton County’s tobacco crop was shipped out of the county. Tobacco companies in St. Louis, Neosho, and Pierce City, Missouri became interested in Benton County’s tobacco production. They sent buyers to the county for many years. Several small tobacco companies sprang up in Bentonville as well, manufacturing cigars, smoking tobacco, plug and twist. Benton County’s tobacco farming and manufacturing reached its heyday in the 1880s when it was said that one of the plants in Bentonville was the busiest place in town with about thirty men and boys on the payroll. The company’s salesmen traveled over a seven-state area.¹¹

Tobacco production in Benton County practically disappeared in the 1890s. Tobacco producers insisted that Benton County had the right climate and soil for growing tobacco; the only problem was that farmers turned to growing other crops instead, especially apples.¹²

⁹ Rafferty, *The Ozarks: Land and Life*, 150; Catton, *Life, Leisure, and Hardship along the Buffalo*, 122.

¹⁰ Howard, “Civil War Unionists and Their Legacy in the Arkansas Ozarks,” 130; Black, *History of Benton County*, 76.

¹¹ Black, *History of Benton County*, 79-83.

¹² *Ibid*, 82.

While it lasted, tobacco farming made an impression on the landscape around Pea Ridge as numerous two-story drying barns went up throughout the county. A man named Ollie Anderson of Vaughn (southwest of Bentonville) said he helped raise ten tobacco barns in ten days within three miles of his home.¹³

Benton County farmers experimented with other crops in the 1870s that, like tobacco, faded away in the 1890s. They grew cotton for the market, expanding upon the small cotton crops grown for domestic use in earlier times. They sold their cotton crop to a cotton gin at Eldorado, a town near Maysville at the western edge of the county. They grew hemp. They tried cultivating grapes and producing wine. Farming in Benton County yielded a small sorghum molasses crop of 55,120 gallons in 1880. Farmers also made a start growing apples and poultry by 1880, two kinds of farm produce that would prove to be a great success later on.¹⁴

The Coming of the Railroad

At last in 1880, railroad investors chartered the St. Louis, Arkansas and Texas Railway with the intention of building a railroad from Plymouth, Missouri to Dallas, Texas. The railroad would intersect the old Butterfield Stage route at Little Sugar Creek, continue southward to Fort Smith, and pass through a section of the Indian Territory before entering Texas. Railroad surveyors were in Benton County in 1878. Construction began in 1880 and the railroad reached the Missouri-Arkansas state line at Gateway in November. It was built as far as Rogers in May 1881, and reached Fayetteville on July 4, 1882.¹⁵

The railroad traversed Pea Ridge east of the battlefield. It crossed Little Sugar Creek just a few hundred feet from the Federal trenches nearly at the same place where the Telegraph Road once forded the creek. According to the late park historian Troy Banzhaf, the making of the railroad through the area in 1882 impacted the physical remains of the Federal earthworks. Naturally, no thought was given to historic preservation at the time of construction. By then, twenty years had passed since the Battle of Pea Ridge, so the Federal earthworks were probably concealed under vegetation and mostly forgotten. Railroad construction impacted the area in two ways. First, rock was quarried for use in building the railroad grade and the quarry itself obliterated a central section of the Federal line. Second, a large amount of fill was deposited at the north end

¹³ Black, *History of Benton County*, 79.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, 76-77.

¹⁵ Lester C. Harlow, "A Short History of Railroads in Benton County, Arkansas," *Benton County Pioneer* 16, no. 2 (Spring 1971), 42.

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of the trestle across the creek, possibly covering up features in that key constricted area of the Federal line.¹⁶

The railroad built stations and laid out towns along its path. The new towns included Garfield and Avoca, located a few miles east and southwest of today’s national military park, respectively, and Rogers and Lowell. When the town of Rogers was started in 1881, nothing was there but a single log cabin occupied by Benjamin F. Sikes. Sikes was postmaster for Cross Hollows. The railroad executives used the mail service there, and they got along well with Sikes, so they selected the place to be a town and named it Rogers for one of the company vice presidents. Sikes knew what the railroad connection would mean for the area and gladly facilitated the forming of a town by platting his extensive land holdings. The town was incorporated on June 6, 1881, practically before it had any residents.¹⁷

Nearly everyone recognized that the coming of the railroad would lead to big changes in Benton County. As local historian Vera Key remembered from firsthand stories she once heard from old-timers, “In August, 1881, the first passenger train went through Rogers. The early settlers said that people came from miles away to see it. They couldn’t imagine anything rolling along without some animal pulling it, or how it could stop or start. The mules and the horses were very frightened of it. After the railroad came through, people began moving in like flies.”¹⁸

Key’s reminiscence continued: “My great-uncle, J. A. C. Blackburn had married one of the Peter Van Winkle’s daughters, and had bought Mr. Van Winkle’s sawmill and 15,000 acres near War Eagle. This mill supplied a great part of the finished lumber for the first homes in Rogers. All down First Street from Walnut to Cherry, soon built up with frame buildings.”

The new row of houses was soon replaced by another, Key stated. “The voluntary fire department was housed in the livery stable, and most of the first merchants belonged to this fire hose brigade. These merchants were quite prosperous, and soon the frame buildings were torn down and the big brick buildings were put in.”

The fortunate and quick-thinking Benjamin Sikes had been a resident of the area since 1873, though he had visited Benton County in the 1850s. He was the older brother of James Wade Sikes. Both brothers were former school teachers and now in 1881 they were distinguished citizens of Benton County. James Wade Sikes was revered as a Confederate veteran who lost an arm in action in Alabama after his involvement in the Battle of Pea Ridge. He was elected county clerk and recorder in 1866. He moved to Rogers in 1881, becoming the town’s first mayor. Meanwhile, his older brother Benjamin

¹⁶ Troy Banzhaf consultation (guided battlefield tour), September 6, 2022.

¹⁷ Key, “Some of the Early Business Men of Rogers,” 6.

¹⁸ Key, “As I Remember It,” 15.

became wealthy from sales of his property as the town quickly grew up around his old cabin (which was located on Arkansas Street between Elm and Poplar).¹⁹

Rogers grew quickly and became for a while the “Queen City” of Benton County as it eclipsed Bentonville, the county seat. The people of Bentonville had assumed that the railroad line would go through their town but they were mistaken. Bentonville was bypassed and left high and dry six miles west of the line. It might have been a calamity for the town, but the townspeople of Bentonville acted promptly to save their situation. Business leaders got together to form a railway company and build a connecting line over to Rogers. The six-mile Bentonville Railroad was completed in 1885. The company had one locomotive, one freight car, one passenger car, and one baggage car. The operation had enough business to produce a small revenue, so that both the railway company and the town survived.²⁰

The St. Louis, Arkansas, and Texas Railway was soon popularly known as the Frisco. That was the nickname given to the St. Louis and San Francisco Railway, the parent company of the St. Louis, Arkansas, and Texas Railway. In 1898, the parent company absorbed the subsidiary company, but locals already referred to the line as the Frisco well before the merger.²¹

After the Frisco line was completed to Texas, several other railroads were built in Benton County. Altogether, twelve different railway companies built lines in Benton County over the next four decades. The trackage added up to 140 miles of line. Ten of the twelve companies eventually went bankrupt and sold or abandoned their lines, leaving just sixty-four miles of track in use. The two surviving lines were the Frisco, traversing the east side of the county from north to south, and the Kansas City Southern, traversing the west side of the county from north to south.²²

Lumbering

By the time the lumber industry came to the South in the 1880s and 1890s, the Pea Ridge area was well settled. The original forest was mostly cleared for farming or reduced to woodlots to be used by the resident farming population for fuelwood and fencing material. Lumbering operations on an industrial scale took place elsewhere. The rise of the timber industry in the region did have a significant effect on the regional

¹⁹ Edwin Funk, “B. F. Sikes, Postmaster at Cross Hollows, Handled Mail for Rogers,” *Rogers Daily News*, July 1, 1950, clipping at Rogers Museum, Sikes vertical file; “Rev. J. Wade Sikes: Rogers’ First Mayor was Pea Ridge Veteran,” *Rogers Daily News*, May 25, 1963, clipping at Shiloh Museum of Ozark History, Family History vertical files; Key, “As I Remember It,” 15.

²⁰ Joohn W. Nance, “Early Days in Rogers,” *Benton County Pioneer* 6, no. 4 (May 1961), 11; Harlow, “A Short History of Railroads in Benton County, Arkansas,” 42.

²¹ Harlow, “A Short History of Railroads in Benton County, Arkansas,” 42.

²² *Ibid.*, 42-51.

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economy, however. Many residents of Pea Ridge and the vicinity found work in the timber industry.

The expansion of railroads had an enormous influence on the nineteenth-century timber industry. Industrial-scale lumbering depended on powerful locomotive transport for getting heavy sawmill equipment into the forest and getting the sawn timber out. Before there were railroads, wagons pulled by oxen could carry virtually any heavy industrial sawmill part, but railroads made it easier. Likewise, in the absence of railroads, rivers were used to float sawlogs to market, but railroads made the transportation of forest products easier and less seasonal. Railroads also affected demand for the timber industry, as the railroads themselves consumed vast quantities of wood – for track ties and trestles, as well as the construction of rolling stock and buildings.

In the railroad age, the lumber industry developed a distinctive pattern of moving from region to region as the expansion of railroads created new opportunity for the industry. Timber companies ruthlessly exploited the timber resources in a given place until the timber supply was exhausted or until the prospects for “getting out the cut” appeared brighter somewhere else. The whole timber industry became migratory, competitively positioned to pull up stakes and move to a new region as the changing circumstances of railroad transport warranted. Before the Civil War, the timber industry centered in New England and then western New York. It migrated to Pennsylvania in the 1860s and the Great Lakes states as well as southern Missouri in the 1870s. It moved into the southern Ozarks as well as the Gulf States in the 1880s and 1890s, before moving out west in the early twentieth century.²³

Railroad logging began in the Ozarks in 1882 from three directions at once: on the west side by the appearance of the Frisco Line; on the north by the Frisco’s construction of a branch line from Springfield southward into Christian County, Missouri; and on the east by a railhead at Batesville, Arkansas. The Hobart-Lee Tie and Timber Company immediately followed the railroad into Christian County and established a base of operations at a place called Chadwick. Hundreds of farm workers moved to Chadwick to work in the woods cutting down white oak or to take jobs in the sawmill producing railroad cross-ties. Practically all of them made more cash money in the timber industry jobs than they had ever had before, and boardinghouses, saloons, and gambling joints flourished, giving rise to the boomtown’s nickname, “Hell’s Half Acre.” Over in Batesville, meanwhile, an entrepreneur named Charles Robertson Handford built a cedar yard and sawmill in 1884, and announced that he would buy cedar logs at the bank of the White River where it flowed past the town. The White River was already used for transporting log rafts to market. Now Handford planned to buy the product and turn the logs into telegraph poles, railway piling, fence posts, and shingles for shipment out on the

²³ Rafferty, *The Ozarks: Land and Life*, 172; Lela Cole, “The Early Tie Industry along the Niangua River,” *Missouri Historical Review* 48, no. 3 (April 1954), 264-72.

railroad. Handford's enterprise further stimulated logging activity throughout the White River valley.²⁴

On the west side of the Ozarks in Benton and Washington counties, the long-established lumbering company of Peter Van Winkle opened a lumberyard and mill in Rogers as soon as the town was founded in 1881 so as to position itself to take advantage of the new railroad connection. Van Winkle died in 1882, and his son-in-law, James Cameron Austin Blackburn succeeded him as head of the business. The enterprise at that time already controlled several thousand acres of pine and oak timber land in Benton and Washington counties. When those resources were depleted, Blackburn began buying sawlogs for his sawmill operation in Rogers from suppliers in the South. Blackburn became known as the lumber king of Benton County.²⁵

Van Winkle's sawmill operation in southeast Benton County was exceptional because it predated the railroad era in the Ozarks by three decades. Van Winkle had a farm about three miles west of Fayetteville in the 1840s. He made his start in lumbering and woodworking by building wagons, hacks, and plows. He sold a few of his wagons to gold seekers who were leaving Arkansas for California in the gold rush. In 1851, Van Winkle gave up farming and moved to the well-timbered White River area in southeast Benton County to found his own lumbering business. His first sawmill operation was powered by oxen. In 1858, he built a new sawmill powered by a steam engine. Van Winkle brought in a machinist from Baltimore to get the steam engine installed and working. At the same time, Van Winkle scaled up his logging operation: at first logs were dragged to the mill with an ox team and a two-wheeled cart; by 1860, the logs were hauled on heavy wagons drawn by six draft horses.²⁶

In the 1860s, Van Winkle began acquiring timber land. He purchased 160 acres north of what is now Springdale in 1860. He bought another 1,040 acres in War Eagle Township in 1861, and another 360 acres in 1868. In the 1870s, he expanded his holdings to include timber lands in Washington and Carroll counties.²⁷

By the 1870s Van Winkle had an industrial complex called Van Winkle Mills. It included a sawmill, a flour mill, a planing and shingle machine, a door and window factory, a cabinet shop as well as other equipment. The powerplant featured a 150-horsepower engine with three boilers occupying a two-story building ninety feet long by seventy feet wide with a smokestack sixty feet tall. Van Winkle Mills was recognized as the largest lumber plant in Arkansas. It may not have been large compared with the

²⁴ Blevins, *A History of the Ozarks, Vol. 2, The Conflicted Ozarks*, 222; Rafferty, *The Ozarks: Land and Life*, 173; Kenneth L. Smith, *Buffalo River Handbook*. Little Rock: Ozark Society Foundation, 2004), 97.

²⁵ Rothrock, "Peter Manelis Van Winkle," 96; Benton County Heritage Committee, *History of Benton County, Arkansas*, 123-24; Randy McCrory, "Blackburns helped shape NWA with mill at War Eagle," *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*, June 1, 2023.

²⁶ Rothrock, "Peter Manelis Van Winkle," 91.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 92.

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onslaught of timber industries that moved into the Ozarks and the South with the coming of the railroads in the 1880s. Yet it was a big sawmill operation for the region in the era of the Civil War and Reconstruction.²⁸

The presence of the sawmill in southeast Benton County affected pioneer life at Pea Ridge and Benton County, supplying the frontier community with finished lumber and other products earlier than in other parts of the Ozarks. Farm houses on Pea Ridge were covered with wood siding and improved with sawn lumber floors at a relatively early time, when the cash economy had barely begun to make inroads. A short biography of Van Winkle states that “on autumn days, farmers brought produce from rich bottom lands to the Van Winkle Mills to barter for lumber, shingles, sashes and doors. At times, traders gathered in such numbers that business took on the flavor of a homecoming or a reunion. Instances are known, though, where ‘much corn and hay’ was sold for cash.”²⁹

While Van Winkle Mills was a notable presence in Benton County in its own time, the timber industry only came to provide a large new job base in the Ozarks after 1880. Across the region thousands of men worked as lumbermen, raftsmen, and woodchoppers around the turn of the century. The 1910 census of occupations counted 5,448 men in these jobs across the state out of a total of 510,410 male workers. In related occupations, it counted 13,981 laborers working in saw and planing mills, 2,238 semi-skilled operatives working in the same mills, 1,373 sawyers, and 7,439 carpenters. Together with the thousands of laboring jobs in the railroad industry, the combined effect of the timber and railroad industries was to create a bonanza of good-paying wage jobs in a region where nearly everyone had been a subsistence farmer just a generation earlier.³⁰

Ultimately the timber industry had another effect on the region and its way of life that was regrettable. The destruction of the forest caused environmental degradation across the region. When the forest cover was removed, the land became desiccated. The shallow soils that covered the hills were eroded faster than they were replenished. Without the cover of leaf litter and organic matter from natural forest decay, the soils did not hold as much moisture. Hard rains resulted in rapid runoff and further soil depletion. When the region was deforested, many springs dried up. Springs had once been so plentiful few settlers had to dig wells; they could carry water from nearby springs. The loss of the forest also meant the loss of habitat for many species of wildlife. Combined with overhunting, deforestation decimated the populations of deer, bear, and other wild game species that were once an integral part of the Ozark farmer’s subsistence.³¹

²⁸ Rothrock, “Peter Manelis Van Winkle,” 94.

²⁹ Ibid, 94.

³⁰ Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Thirteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1910, Vol. 4: Population 1910 Occupation Statistics* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1914), 436-37; Blevins, *A History of the Ozarks, Vol. 2: The Conflicted Ozarks*, 221; Whayne et al., *Arkansas, A Narrative History*, 264-66.

³¹ Rafferty, *The Ozarks: Land and Life*, 186.

When the major lumbering companies prepared to relocate to new timberlands out west, they converted their local operations into land selling businesses and sold their cutover lands as prospective farmland. Many attempts at farming these lands failed, and much of the cutover land in the Ozarks east of Benton County eventually went into the Ozark National Forest. Historical geographer Milton D. Rafferty noted that environmental degradation from forest removal was compounded by overpopulation in the lumbering era's aftermath. "The timber boom resulted in a seriously depleted resource base and a greatly increased population, which, in order to sustain itself, continued to strain the natural resources of the area," he wrote. "Because many of the people who came to exploit the timber had established close ties in their neighborhoods, they were reluctant to move away when the timber was gone. Many of them remained, purchased cutover tracts, and began farming."³² Such hardscrabble farms would come to characterize the steep hill country just east of Pea Ridge if not Pea Ridge itself.

Town Building

As the population and general wealth of the country grew, hamlets grew into small towns with stores, schools, and a smattering of professional services and offices. The town of Brightwater was an example of this development. The hamlet in this case was started by Enoch Trott, who settled about 1840 and established a grocery store and tavern that was locally known as Trott's Stand. It was located on the Fayetteville to Springfield Road, or the Telegraph Road or Old Wire Road as it became known after the Civil War. Trott's Stand was burned to the ground in the Civil War. It was rebuilt by a new landowner, Albert Peel, about 1889. The railroad gave the place the new name of Brightwater. Soon there was a grocery store, a drug store, a general store, a blacksmith shop, and a fruit evaporator in the town. Two of the town residents, Thomas M. Rice and Rufus S. Rice, both sons of Charles W. and Julia C. Rice, gave up farming in the 1880s and became licensed to practice medicine. They owned the drug store.³³

In another example of town development, the town of Garfield sprang from the hamlet of Blansett. The hamlet was named for Archibald Blansett, who had a general store and ran a post office starting in 1874. The name changed to Crowell in 1881, after a Mr. Crowell opened a second general store and took over as postmaster. The name changed again to Garfield in 1883, after the Frisco built a train station there. It was named for the late President James Garfield who was assassinated in 1881. It is said that the name was submitted by local farmer Andrew Jackson Wilks, along with other name submissions, and the selected name was drawn from a hat. The railroads named so many

³² Rafferty, *The Ozarks: Land and Life*, 184-85.

³³ A. W. Hurley, "A Good Country," *Benton County Pioneer* 3, no. 3 (March 1958), 19-20; Ruth Varnell Peak, "The Rice Family," *Backtracker* 30, no. 1 (February 2001), 17.

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new towns in this era that they were often rather cavalier in their methods of choosing a name. Yet the name – any new name – demarcated a transition from hamlet to town. Towns became clusters of businesses that served the wider farming community. The new class of townsmen were not farmers; they made a living from their businesses and professional services or as wage earners.³⁴

By 1888, Garfield had several business establishments. Albert Peel owned a general store and Archibald Blansett owned another. L. Ellison had a hardware store. J. W. Conduff had a confectionary. A. J. Wilks ran a hotel. J. N. Wilks had a drug store and jewelry shop. There were two blacksmith shops and a barber shop. A. L. Rickets had a lumber yard. D. D. Ames had a fruit evaporator. Peter McKinley owned the Arkansas Lime Works. Most of these businesses employed wage workers, some full time and others part time or seasonally. The lime works employed about seventy-five men. The train depot employed several men as well.³⁵

Around the turn of the century, before the rise of the automobile effectively shortened the distance between towns and cities, a town’s general store could serve as a rural sort of city department store. Hira C. Baker opened a third general store in Garfield in an impressive three-story building. On the first floor he sold such large items as wagons, buggies, and harness. On the second floor there was a wide variety of merchandise including diamond rings. The third floor featured women’s clothes and accessories and was run by Mr. Baker’s wife. Mrs. Baker had a sideline dyeing and trimming women’s hats.³⁶

Town of Pea Ridge

The town of Pea Ridge was not on the railroad like Brightwater and Garfield, and its growth from hamlet to town happened more gradually. Some sixteen families homesteaded in or around the area where the town grew up. The surnames were Buttram, Foster, Hardy, Hammock, Harris, Lasater, Miser, Morrison, Patterson, Patton, Pickens, Price, Walker, Wardlow, Webb, and Wood. Churches and schools appeared early, and were an important impetus to the formation of a town. In the early 1870s, Professor John Rains Roberts and his father purchased fifteen acres and began efforts to found the Pea Ridge Academy. By the time that Rogers, Brightwater, and Garfield became towns in the early 1880s, Pea Ridge was already known as a center of education.³⁷

³⁴ Benton County Heritage Committee, *History of Benton County, Arkansas*, 50.

³⁵ *Ibid*, 50.

³⁶ *Ibid*, 51.

³⁷ Benton County Heritage Committee, *History of Benton County, Arkansas*, 87; “Pea Ridge Academy,” in *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*, at <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/pea-ridge-academy-6519/>.

Professor Roberts opened the Pea Ridge Academy in 1874 in temporary quarters in the second floor of Buttram's Chapel. The Pea Ridge Academy closed for one year as construction of a large brick building was completed. It is believed that the bricks for the building were made in town from a clay deposit located near the corner of Bowen and Van Dorn streets. The brick building was two stories with a bell tower, contained seven classrooms, and was designed for a student enrollment of 250.³⁸

As the town began to take shape, a resident sent periodic news of the Pea Ridge community to the *Benton County Democrat* under the pen name "Fidelis." The short news reports described the town's business activity. In September 1888, Professor Roberts opened the Academy with some pupils and a new music teacher. A "portable butcher shop" – in fact, Mr. Banks's meat wagon – came to town selling choice meats for four and five cents per pound. The following month Fidelis wrote that the town's merchants were restocking their stores. William Hall of Hall Bros. went to St. Louis to see the fair and purchase his winter stock of goods. Later in October, Fidelis reported that the town businesses closed for three days while the first veterans' reunion was held at the battlefield.³⁹

Fidelis's reports from Pea Ridge turned to the town's social life. On November 10, 1888, the writer spoke of "dull times," with "some of the young folks" going to Rogers for entertainment. There was a modest respite from the monotony when two students at the Academy held a public debate on a Saturday evening on the tariff question. The next month, a "social at Mr. Ringo's" was the "highlight of the week." After 1888, Fidelis's reports became much more sporadic. On February 14, 1890, Fidelis reported that a tiff between teacher and students at the Academy was settled, and that a preacher preached his last sermon to an appreciative congregation. The anonymous correspondent's reports from Pea Ridge conveyed impressions of a community that was proudly church- and school-oriented but also somewhat bored with itself.⁴⁰

Pea Ridge Academy struggled financially but managed to draw students from around the state and across the state line in Missouri. The building included both an elementary school and a high school, but its main focus was in training students to be teachers. The school regularly advertised in the *Benton County Democrat*. In June 1888, it advertised that its second annual session would open on July 9 and run for four weeks. Lectures would be offered in school government, physiology, civil government, and penmanship. Tuition was \$3 and boarding was an additional \$2 to \$3 per week.⁴¹

The school went by several names. It became the Mount Vernon Academy, then the Pea Ridge Normal School, and then the Pea Ridge Masonic Academy. Roberts left in

³⁸ Jines, *Benton County Schools That Were*, Vol. 1, 53-54.

³⁹ *Benton County Democrat*, September 8, October 6, and October 27, 1888.

⁴⁰ *Benton County Democrat*, November 10 and December 8, 1888, and February 14, 1890.

⁴¹ *Benton County Democrat*, June 16, 1888.

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1894 when it hit upon especially hard times but it came back and survived until 1916, when the college closed and the property was deeded to the public school system. The building was torn down in 1929.⁴²

Pea Ridge’s commercial business district slowly grew from the 1880s through the 1920s. The town was platted with named streets and numbered blocks and lots some time before 1890. The street names were of singular interest. North-south streets were named for Union commanders in the Battle of Pea Ridge, while east-west streets were named for Confederate commanders. The street names included Curtis, Van Dorn, McCulloch, McIntosh, Asboth, Davis, Carr, Dodge, Watie, and Patton (the last for local hero Capt. William Patton). By literally lacing the town with warrior names from both sides in the conflict, the street names reflected the keen interest at that time in affecting a national reconciliation over the bitter experience of the Civil War.⁴³

The town incorporated in the early 1900s. By then it had many stores and other businesses. In the next decade, commercial buildings made of concrete block or brick replaced or superseded earlier wooden structures. Pea Ridge got its first commercial bank in 1911. Several commercial buildings were constructed along Curtis Avenue and Pickens Street from 1910 to 1930, which now form a historic district listed on the National Register of Historic Places.⁴⁴

The Good Roads Movement

Benton County’s new railroad connection made almost instant towns out of Rogers, Brightwater, and Garfield by drawing commerce to those places. Meanwhile, the older system of “farm-to-market” roads sustained other towns such as Bentonville and Pea Ridge as commerce continued to move along those pathways as well. Farmers continued to use the farm-to-market roads to carry wagons loaded with corn to the gristmill, or wagons loaded with baled cotton to the cotton gin, or other produce that farmers wanted to sell to the market. The roads also served as livestock driveways for farmers taking their cattle and hogs to market. The farm-to-market roads formed a diffuse and happenstance network as farms and mills were scattered throughout the area. There was no hierarchical system of federal, state, and county roads then as we know it today.

At the end of the nineteenth century a nationwide “good roads” movement arose calling for the improvement of those farm-to-market roads. The push for “good roads” started with bicyclists in the cities. As bicycles became a practical mode of transport on

⁴² “Pea Ridge Academy,” in *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*, at <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/pea-ridge-academy-6519/>.

⁴³ Barbara A. Smart, “Pea Ridge Commercial Historic District,” National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, 2007, at https://www.arkansasheritage.com/docs/default-source/national-registry/be3172-pdf.pdf?sfvrsn=6b7c1db8_0.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

hard-surfaced city streets in the late nineteenth century, bicyclists were the first to complain about the primitive condition of rural roads. In Little Rock, a group of bicyclists enlisted the support of the *Arkansas Gazette* in calling for good roads, and Governor James P. Clarke held the state's first Good Roads Convention. In 1896, Little Rock citizens formed the Good Roads League. After bicyclists initiated the good roads movement, growing numbers of automobile enthusiasts took over the movement in the first decade of the twentieth century.⁴⁵

The Arkansas legislature responded to the good roads movement with modest measures that ultimately led to discord between townspeople and farmers. In 1907, it enacted a law that allowed counties to form local road improvement districts. Counties could form a district when a majority of landowners along a road wanted to do so. Then the county assessed taxes on the property lying adjacent to the road and contracted for the road improvement work. Numerous problems arose with this system. Without centralized planning, road improvements did not proceed in a rational order. Lack of supervision resulted in much expense for little improvement. In poor counties, most farmers were reluctant to form road districts for fear of incurring taxes they could not afford, so real progress was limited to a few wealthy counties. In 1913, the state legislature established the Arkansas Highway Commission, and in two years this new body was being audited for misuse and waste of state funds. In an effort to overhaul the system, the state legislature passed the Alexander Road Act in 1916, which liberalized the rules for road districts and public funding of road construction. But the Alexander Road Act only led to more problems. Many landowners were assessed taxes even though the improved roads did not reach their property. Some became saddled with property taxes equal to or exceeding the value of their total farm income. In more than a few cases, landowners were required to pay taxes to two different road districts where district boundaries overlapped.⁴⁶

Such abuses led many Arkansas farmers to oppose road improvements not just at the ballot box but through independent action. When the Ku Klux Klan tried to build a base of support in Benton County, it appealed to farmers' indignation over the new road tax levied on landowners. In some parts of the Arkansas Ozarks, disgruntled farmers blew up road machinery with dynamite.⁴⁷

With inadequate means of public funding for road improvements, Arkansas fell behind other states in developing a state highway system. A survey of public road mileages in each state by the U.S. Office of Public Roads found that Arkansas had by far

⁴⁵ Christie McLaren, *Arkansas Highway History and Architecture, 1910-1965* (Little Rock: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, 1999), 4.

⁴⁶ McLaren, *Arkansas Highway History and Architecture, 1910-1965*, 9.

⁴⁷ Barnes, "Another Look Behind the Mask," 195; McInturff, "The Evolution of Searcy County's Economy."

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the lowest percentage of surfaced roads of any state in the South. A county by county inventory revealed that Benton County, with its 800 miles of roads, ranked eighteenth out of seventy-five counties in total miles of road, but a miniscule three miles of those roads were surfaced.⁴⁸ Carl Sauer, a geographer, noted in 1920 that the rugged Ozarks were served by two almost separate road systems: one followed the ridge tops and the other traced the valley bottoms. The two systems were tenuously joined by “rough and often badly washed side roads.”⁴⁹

Federal highway legislation in 1916 and 1921 provided federal funding assistance for improving rural post roads and highways, but Arkansas was slow to avail itself of these resources.⁵⁰ The good roads movement in Arkansas finally turned a corner in 1923. After the federal government threatened to withhold these funds unless Arkansas revamped its state highway department, Governor Thomas McRae called a special session of the General Assembly and got it to pass the necessary legislation. In addition to reconstituting the Arkansas Highway Commission, the Harrelson Road Act of 1923 shifted some of the tax burden for road improvements from rural property owners to road users. Another law in 1927 went further, relieving the property owners of these costs altogether.⁵¹

Starting in the mid-1920s, the state began to make steady progress in improving its road system. As roads were improved, a few roads were realigned and a few were abandoned. The Old Wire Road where it descended from Pea Ridge into Little Sugar Creek was moved one gully to the west. A few connecting roads in the area between Pea Ridge and the battlefield were abandoned. The present Wilkerson Road that runs along the park’s west boundary in Section 33 was improved without changing its alignment, but a secondary road that ran east and west across the middle of Section 33 was abandoned.⁵²

While the public cost of road improvements tended to heighten divisions between town and country, rural people nonetheless rejoiced over the many advantages that better transportation entailed for daily life. Better roads enabled people to get better health care and to enjoy more frequent trips to town. As rural school buses came into use, children were able to attend schools for longer. Even before the good roads movement of the turn of the century or the rise of the automobile in the 1920s, however, primitive farm-to-

⁴⁸ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Public Roads, *Public Road Mileage and Revenues in the Southern States, 1914*, 7, xlviii.

⁴⁹ Carl O. Sauer, “The Economic Problem of the Ozark Highland,” *Scientific Monthly* 11 (September 1920), 224.

⁵⁰ George Brown Tindall, *The Emergence of the New South, 1913-1945* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1967), 256-257.

⁵¹ McLaren, *Arkansas Highway History and Architecture, 1910-1965*, 9-10.

⁵² “Township 21 North, Range 29 West,” map, not dated, on file at Rogers Museum; Benton County, Arkansas – Section Township and Range Map, at <https://www.randymajors.org/township-range-on-google-maps?x=-94.0529490&y=36.4623563&cx=-94.0673401&cy=36.4494312&zoom=15&fips=05007&labels=show&counties=show>

market roads served to bring the rural population together. The road network formed a crucial underpinning of community development.

Rural Schools

The first major effort to reform the state's education system occurred during Reconstruction. In 1866, Governor Isaac Murphy called for a tax-supported free public school system. A former teacher himself, Murphy had supported education reform when he served in the state legislature before the Civil War. During the 1866-67 session the legislature responded to Murphy's plea by enacting a common school law that provided for free public schools for whites only. This law was rendered unconstitutional when Arkansas adopted a new state constitution in 1868, and in the following legislative session a law was enacted making free public education available to whites and blacks. However, the 1868 law also formed the basis for segregated schools in Arkansas, a blight that would not be remedied for nearly a century.⁵³

Tax revenues were too modest to pay for all the schools that Arkansas needed. Indeed, new school construction was financed out of the county treasury, not the state treasury, and counties could only vote levies up to five mills, so it generally took two or three years of mill levies to raise enough money for a new school.⁵⁴ In 1870, Arkansas had 1,744 public schools – less than a third the number in neighboring Missouri. In 1880, the state had 2,768 schools, but it had fallen further behind Missouri which now had four times as many. Meanwhile, the percentage of school-age children in Arkansas who were enrolled in school fell from 44 percent in 1870 to 41 percent in 1880.⁵⁵ During the 1890s, school construction accelerated with a few hundred new schools built each year. In 1894, the number of public schools in Arkansas stood at 3,866.⁵⁶ By 1900, Benton County may have had as many as 167 public schools according to one researcher's list.⁵⁷

Central School was built near the Winton Spring in 1889. It is the only known public school built within the present area of the national military park. Some of Central School's first students previously attended the subscription school at Buttram Chapel. The students who attended Central School came from farms located on and around the battlefield. Local historian Billie Jines asked one former student, Gladys Patton Mann, if she remembered any recognition on the part of the school's teachers or students that the

⁵³ Shinn, *History of Education in Arkansas*, 36-44, 116.

⁵⁴ Herrington, *Tomahawk Tales*, 10.

⁵⁵ Elliott West, *Growing Up with the Country: Childhood on the Far Western Frontier* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989), 190-91.

⁵⁶ Shinn, *History of Education in Arkansas*, 50, 60-61.

⁵⁷ "Benton County School Districts," undated typescript, Rogers Museum, Schools vertical file.

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school stood on a battlefield. Mann replied no, they thought nothing about it, and, indeed, there was no special focus on the battle in their studies.⁵⁸

Mann recalled that the students carried water to the school from Winton Spring in a large galvanized bucket. The water was poured into a metal fountain with a spigot and each student had a personal cup. Sometimes at afternoon recess the students drank the fountain dry. Mann remembered the schoolhouse as being filled with students, some of whom sat at factory-built desks with seats attached, while others were assigned to plain desks and had to sit four abreast on homemade benches.⁵⁹

The schoolhouse served the community for a variety of needs. There were social gatherings and official proceedings, Mann remembered. If the schoolhouse was used for such an event on a Saturday, it was cleaned up on Saturday night for Sunday school or a church meeting or both. Various denominations held church services, and once a year there was a big revival meeting.⁶⁰

Central School was probably typical of the rural schools in Benton County. Many schools lacked toilets or plumbing or adequate seating for the students. There was high turnover of teachers. The length of school terms varied from district to district.

In 1909, the Arkansas state legislature enacted another landmark education reform law. Its three major provisions were compulsory attendance for all children from age eight to sixteen, new agricultural schools, and consolidation of rural school districts. Still, progress was measured. The law exempted 43 out of 74 counties from the compulsory attendance rule. Even in those counties where the rule applied, the standard was for each child to attend not less than one-half of the public school term, and the length of term was not stipulated. Meanwhile, the effort toward consolidation (an education reform movement to raise the quality of schools by having fewer, larger ones) was slow to gain traction. The law allowed citizens of any rural territory to petition the county court for the creation of a school district with the same rights as schools in an incorporated town. Rather than improving the quality of education by concentrating resources in fewer districts, elected county school boards actually increased the number of school districts slightly over the next decade.⁶¹

Governor Thomas McRae was elected in 1920 with the promise of “good roads and good schools.” At that time, 25 percent of school children in Arkansas attended school less than 100 days a year. In most rural areas formal education ended after the

⁵⁸ Jines, *Benton County Schools That Were*, Vol. 3, 82.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 83.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 83.

⁶¹ Stephen B. Weeks, *History of Public School Education in Arkansas*, U.S. Bureau of Education, Bulletin No. 27 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1912), 82; Ben F. Johnson III, “‘All Thoughtful Citizens’: The Arkansas School Reform Movement 1921-1930,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, 46, no. 2 (Summer 1987): 105-32.

eighth grade. Total expenditures for public education were \$23 per capita in Arkansas compared to \$64 in Oklahoma and \$59 in Missouri. Under the McRae administration, Arkansas embarked on its most vigorous effort to improve public education yet. The governor's educational package included better funding, improved school curricula, and a more effective push for consolidation of rural districts. The governor's overarching goal was to bring rural schools into line with town and city schools – a progressive vision that mirrored school reform movements in other states in this period.⁶²

Although the 1920s saw significant change, the reform movement was blunted for two reasons. First, the raising of new state taxes for public education soon alienated the business sector, which complained that rural counties ought to carry more of the tax burden. Second, the reform movement was permeated by progressive ideology that tended to denigrate rural culture and values. Specifically, reformers wanted to make education more relevant to children in rural places and at the same time enable these children to “advance beyond the farm.” Many farm families took umbrage, believing that farm life was more virtuous than town and city life. Partly due to the sharp ideological divide that existed between town and country in the 1920s, many rural Arkansas families resisted the push toward consolidation and preferred to keep sending their children to nearby rural schools even though the rural schools were grossly inferior.⁶³

The consolidation movement culminated in the closure and abandonment of many rural one-room schoolhouses in the 1940s. The Central School, despite falling enrollments, held out until then. The Benton County School Board named twenty districts in 1931 that would be consolidated, but the Central School escaped listing. Later, a plan was put forward to eliminate the Central School District and send high school students to Pea Ridge, junior high school students to Garfield, and elementary school kids to the Pine Log District. It never happened. Finally, the state mandated closure of all school districts with fewer than 350 students. The Central School District was merged at that time with the Pea Ridge District. All that remains of the Central School today is a foundation and a well.⁶⁴

The Apple Boom

In the 1880s and 1890s, general farming gradually gave way to specialty farming. Apples became the premier specialty crop in Benton County over the few decades. In 1886, sixteen Benton County farmers in the Springdale area formed the Northwest Arkansas Horticultural Society to share information. The next year farmers in Washington County formed a similar group. In 1888, fruit farmers formed the Western

⁶² Johnson, “‘All Thoughtful Citizens’: The Arkansas School Reform Movement, 1921-1930,” 105.

⁶³ *Ibid*, 107.

⁶⁴ Jines, *Benton County Schools That Were*, Vol. 3, 84.

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Arkansas Fruit Growers’ and Shippers’ Cooperative Association in Springdale.⁶⁵ The *Benton County Democrat* boldly proclaimed in that year that the county had become “the richest field in the world for canning factories.”⁶⁶ These early developments laid the groundwork for a boom in orcharding some years later.

Which farm was first in producing apples for shipment out of Benton County is not known, though several stories were advanced after apple farming took hold. Since it took six years or more from when the apple seed was planted until the apple tree bore fruit, early efforts were experimental in nature. One story claimed that a farmer named George Stevenson took his daughter Ada’s suggestion and planted apple seed in a corn row on his farm west of Mason Valley. When Stevenson got his first crop of apples from the young trees, he was so impressed by their flavor and color that he named them Ada Reds. Another farmer, John Henry Keith, took some of Stevenson’s apple seed and planted an orchard of thirty acres on his farm near Hiwasse (in northwest Benton County). As this particular story goes, Keith’s crop marked the beginning of the apple boom. Ada Reds did become a prominent apple in Benton County, but there were other varieties and many such stories.⁶⁷

The year that apple farming took off is easier to pinpoint. The first big year in shipping apples out of the county was 1896. Starting that year, the *Rogers Democrat* kept records of fruit shipments from Rogers. The total apple shipments from Rogers in 1896 filled 287 train cars. Shipments of strawberries from Rogers filled another twenty-six cars. These were not totals for the whole county, which were significantly higher. However, the records kept by the *Rogers Democrat* were viewed as a good proxy for the ups and downs in the overall fruit production of Benton County. The banner year for apples was in 1901, when the county produced about 2.5 million bushels of apples. That year, the apple shipments from Rogers amounted to 187,000 bushels and another 1,625,000 million pounds of evaporated or dried apples.

The banner year of 1901 was a big stimulus to apple growing in Benton County. Due to a drought, other crops generally failed that year. The apple orchards pulled many farmers through what would have been a disastrous year. Interest in apple culture grew and the acreage in orchards significantly increased. By 1905, orchards of 500 to 2,000 trees, two and three years old, were common.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Brooks Blevins, *Hill Folks: A History of Arkansas Ozarkers and Their Image* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 42-44.

⁶⁶ Canning factories noted in *Benton County Democrat*, June 16, 1888.

⁶⁷ “Apples – once key produce,” *Rogers, Ark., Sunday News*, February 23, 1975, Rogers Museum, Fruit Industry vertical file. Another story claims Willis H. Austin, whose farm was also near Gravette, was the first bigtime apple grower in the county. “Willis H. Austin,” *Benton County Pioneer*, 11, no. 1 (January 1966), 93.

⁶⁸ Rafferty, *The Ozarks: Land and Life*, 156-57.

Coincidentally, a series of township and range maps were produced about the time of the apple boom, and the mapmakers decided to show the extent of apple orchards existing at that time (Map 3, next page.) The maps indicate that many Pea Ridge farmers had half or more of their cultivated area devoted to apple orchards. For example, R. H. Patterson, whose 117.5-acre property was located about halfway between the town of Pea Ridge and the battlefield, had an orchard covering about two-thirds of his land. J. H. Winton, who then owned 200 acres in the southwest quarter of Section 35 in Township 21 North, Range 29 West – a tract located about one half mile west of today’s park visitor center – had a large orchard covering about forty acres in an area that is now restored to open field and renamed Pratt’s Field. This early-twentieth-century township map depicted about a dozen apple orchards of similar size to Winton’s existing within the present boundaries of the national military park.⁶⁹

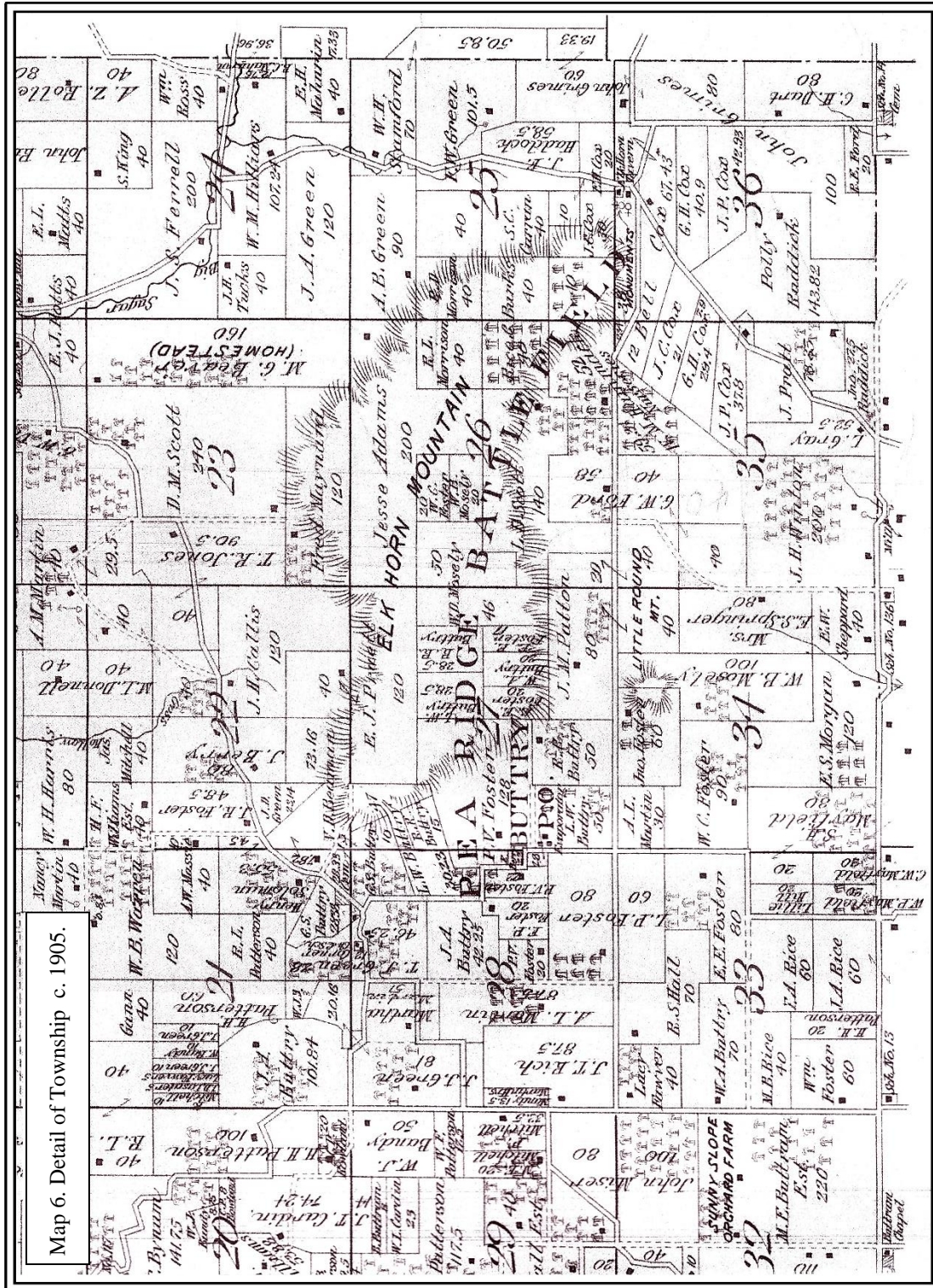
Along with the spread of apple orchards, numerous apple evaporators appeared in Benton County. The evaporators were big drying sheds where dozens of workers, often girls or young women, were seasonally employed in peeling and cutting up apples and placing the apple slices on the drying floor. There were two apple evaporators on Pea Ridge near the battlefield. L. W. Buttry had an evaporator on his fifty acres in the southwest quarter of Section 27, Township 21 North, Range 29 West – a tract located about a quarter mile west of the Leetown site in today’s national military park, probably just inside the park boundary. Fred Buttram had the second one, which was located in Section 32 of the same township, about a mile west of today’s park boundary.⁷⁰

In a short history of the town of Pea Ridge prepared for *History of Benton County, Arkansas*, Mrs. Bobbie G. Wilson described the two apple evaporators noted above together with a third one whose exact location is unclear:

About 1900 the apple orchards took over and for the next twenty-five years, the community was practically a solid apple orchard. There were numerous apple evaporators or apple driers in the community. The Fred Buttram and the Buttry evaporators were east of Pea Ridge. The apples were pared and sliced on the ground floor and dried on the slatted second floor by large ovens on each end of the building. In 1932 the evaporator on what became known as the Hart place, two miles east of Pea Ridge, was still standing. The two large

⁶⁹ “Township 21 North, Range 29 West,” map, not dated, on file at Rogers Museum.

⁷⁰ The evaporator of L. W. Buttry is shown on the township map. Also shown on the map is the Sunny Slope Orchard Farm on the M. F. Buttram estate. Michael Farmer Buttram, the former owner of that property, died in 1897 when a tree fell on him. His widow, Sarah Buttram, deeded sixty acres of the estate to her son Fred. She and her son Jim continued to manage the apple orchard on the remaining 160 acres of the estate. (Annette Beard, “Joe fends for himself at the tender age of 2,” *Pea Ridge Times*, July 1, 2020, at <https://prt.nwaonline.com/news/2020/jul/01/joe-fends-for-himself-at-the-tender-age-of-2/>.)



wood burning ovens were still erect and the large slatted scoops, used for turning the apples, were still in the loft.⁷¹

At the height of the apple boom, evaporators were present at virtually every crossroads in the county. Company orchards also became common. A large vinegar plant appeared in Rogers. Some of the short-lived branch railroads built in Benton County in the early 1900s were built primarily to ship the produce. For a time, Benton County became the leading apple-producing county in the nation.⁷²

The apple boom inspired numerous fairs and festivals. People came to Benton County to see the apple blossom and to enjoy festivities. The towns held parades, banquets, and contests, all in celebration of the bountiful apple orchards.⁷³

Apple growers began to have difficulties in the 1920s as drought, frost, and blight each took a toll on the crops. Benton County apple growers also faced rising competition from apple growers in other parts of the country, such as eastern Washington. Blight and competition were ultimately the driving factors. As the local industry faltered, many Benton County farmers pulled back from apple growing and returned part or all of their land to other types of farm production. The number of apple trees in Benton County was reduced from an estimated 2.5 million trees in 1910 to 116,000 in 1950, or 95 percent. Even after the decline, Benton and Washington counties remained in the top 100 counties in the nation for apple production in 1950.⁷⁴

Early Tourism

Tourism came to Benton County on a small scale at first. Tourism did not have a significant effect on the local economy until the rise of mass tourism in northwest Arkansas around the 1960s. Early tourism did have some effect on the landscape and culture, and it laid the foundation for what would become a major industry. It is also pertinent to this study insofar as it formed some of the context for early battlefield preservation.

The beginnings of tourism in nineteenth-century America were strongly oriented to the upper class and upper-middle class, for it was only they who had the leisure and

⁷¹ Benton County Heritage Committee, *History of Benton County, Arkansas*, 87.

⁷² Clarence Roberts, "A Glimpse of the Land of Big Red Apples," *Oklahoma Farmer-Stockman*, November 25, 1920; "Apples – once key produce," *Rogers, Ark., Sunday News*, February 23, 1975, Rogers Museum Fruit Industry vertical file; "Farming and Agriculture in Northwest Arkansas," undated typescript, Rogers Museum, Farming vertical file.

⁷³ Erwin Funk, "Apple Fete State," clipping at Rogers Museum, Fruit Industry vertical file.

⁷⁴ "Farming and Agriculture in Northwest Arkansas," undated typescript, Rogers Museum, Farming vertical file.

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financial resources to take vacations and enjoy pleasure travel. From the mid-nineteenth century up through the First World War, tourism mostly meant traveling by railroad to destination resorts. Most vacation resorts in this era were designed to host summer-long sojourns. In the interest of providing an escape from summer heat they often featured a breezy seaside location or else a smorgasbord of lake- and lakeside recreation. The South's two mountain areas, the southern Appalachians and the Ozarks, were popular regions for the latter kind of development. Benton County featured two such summer resorts: Monte Ne and Bella Vista.

Monte Ne was the creation of William Hope “Coin” Harvey, a lawyer, writer, lecturer, populist, owner of a Colorado silver mine, and prominent advocate of silver coinage before taking his last turn as a resort developer. He came to Rogers in 1900 at the age of forty-nine and bought a 320-acre tract on a mountain stream east of the town. His plan for the resort included damming the stream to form a small lake, and he named his resort Monte Ne, a derivative of Spanish and American Indian languages meaning “Mountain Water.”⁷⁵

A product of Harvey's promotional talents and whimsical tastes, Monte Ne was a strange, eccentric extravaganza. Graceful stone arch bridges crossed the stream and led to a grand hotel, the Hotel Monte Ne. Harvey wanted a gravel road built from Rogers to Monte Ne, but when the county did not cooperate he had a spur railroad line built from Lowell instead. This railroad, completed in 1902, was operated with a single locomotive and passenger car leased from the Frisco. Hotel guests rode the short distance over the line and then transferred to water transportation – a gondola imported from Venice – for the final approach to the hotel.⁷⁶

Besides the original grand hotel, Harvey developed the resort with a heated swimming pool, a golf course, an auditorium, a bowling alley, a casino, a dance pavilion, and a bank – the Bank of Monte Ne. Harvey's vision included making Monte Ne the headquarters for his intended organization for currency reform, the World's Money Financial League. As time went on, Monte Ne became more tourist oriented. Two more luxury hotels were built. The last project involved the construction of a pyramid 140 feet tall and 60 square feet at the base, but it was not completed as the resort's amount of business fell off around the time of the First World War when tourism largely turned away from this kind of luxury destination resort.⁷⁷

The idea for the Bella Vista summer resort located just north of Bentonville was put forward by a Benton County Presbyterian minister, William S. Baker and his wife

⁷⁵ James F. Hales, “Remembering Rogers: The strange story of Coin Harvey,” *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, July 21, 2016.

⁷⁶ Harlow, “A Short History of Railroads in Benton County, Arkansas,” 43; Robert Riley, “Monte Ne Notes,” *Benton County Pioneer* 31, no. 2 (Summer 1986), 26.

⁷⁷ Riley, “Monte Ne Notes,” 26.

Mary in 1915. They envisioned damming Sugar Creek to form a lake, building tennis courts and golf links around the lake, and selling lots for summer homes at \$100 each. They could not make the business fly, but two years later they sold their land company to Linebarger Brothers Realty Company and under the new management the venture did succeed. By 1929, the Bella Vista resort featured a sixty-five room Sunset Hotel, golf course, swimming pool, and dance pavilion. By the 1930s, the summer resort included a wider variety of recreation and entertainment including tennis, horseback rides, fishing, camping, orchestra music, and a nightclub built inside a cave.⁷⁸

Health spas centering on mineral springs were also popular in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Eureka Springs was the preeminent health spa in the Ozarks, but there were smaller ones in Benton County. The best known was Esculapia Springs, located near the White River about five miles east of Rogers. It flourished for a brief time in the 1880s. Another was Electric Springs, located in the northwest corner of the modern-day Rogers city limits. In 1887, there was a hotel and sanitarium at this location. People came from as far away as Texas and the Midwest to experience the mineral waters' curing effects.⁷⁹

Local historian Erwin Funk, recalling the beginnings of tourism in Benton County, wrote that the year 1923 marked "the real beginning of the tourist industry." Funk was thinking of the automobile tourist and the rise of auto camps, motels, gas stations, and roadside cafes – all elements of a new form of tourism that created a significant, new sector in the state's economy. Auto tourism differed from the earlier destination resort type of tourism in that it drew broad middle-class participation. The tourist dollars were just a trickle at first, but they grew over the years into a substantial flow of money going into local businesses. In 1921, Rogers established a municipal autocamp for the so-called "tin-can" tourists who had begun to experiment with long-distance travel by automobile. The town registered each visitor who stayed at the autocamp, and Funk recalled visiting the autocamp one day in 1923, inspecting the register, and observing that the visitors came from no fewer than nineteen other states. Some visitors were visiting relatives or friends, while others were passing through on their way to points of interest. Funk noted that the travelers "were beginning to leave their dollars here in a quantity that interested our business men, who began to see great possibilities for the future."⁸⁰

In the early days of auto tourism some Benton County farmers saw that tourists could be a source of supplemental income or even a main source of income to replace

⁷⁸ John Spurgeon, "Bella Vista (Benton County)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*, at <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/bella-vista-benton-county-2856/>

⁷⁹ Madeline Spencer, "[Old?] Vacation Spas Long Before Beaver," *Rogers Sunday News*, February 25, 1973, at Rogers Museum, Esculapia Springs vertical file.

⁸⁰ Erwin Funk, "When the Tourist Trade was in its Infancy in this County," *Benton County Pioneer* 6, no. 1 (November 1960), 17.

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what they earned on their hardscrabble farms. Roadside businesses catering to the auto tourist began to appear, and these establishments grew in number through the Great Depression.

Roadside businesses aimed to provide essential services and amusements for the passing motorist; therefore, they were designed to attract attention and offer convenience for a transient customer clientele (Map 6). Roadside businesses generally featured large and prominent signage, expansive parking areas, and architecture that catered to the motorist such as drive-in restaurants and drive-through gas stations. Roadside businesses were not just limited to the open road but came to dominate the urban setting, too, as commercial strips became a ubiquitous feature in towns and cities. Increasingly, automobiles and highways and their attendant infrastructure transformed the American landscape along most road corridors. This process, occurring throughout the United States, was essentially homogenizing; roadside establishments along Arkansas’s highways and by-ways mirrored similar artifacts of car culture in other parts of the nation without displaying much regional distinctiveness.⁸¹

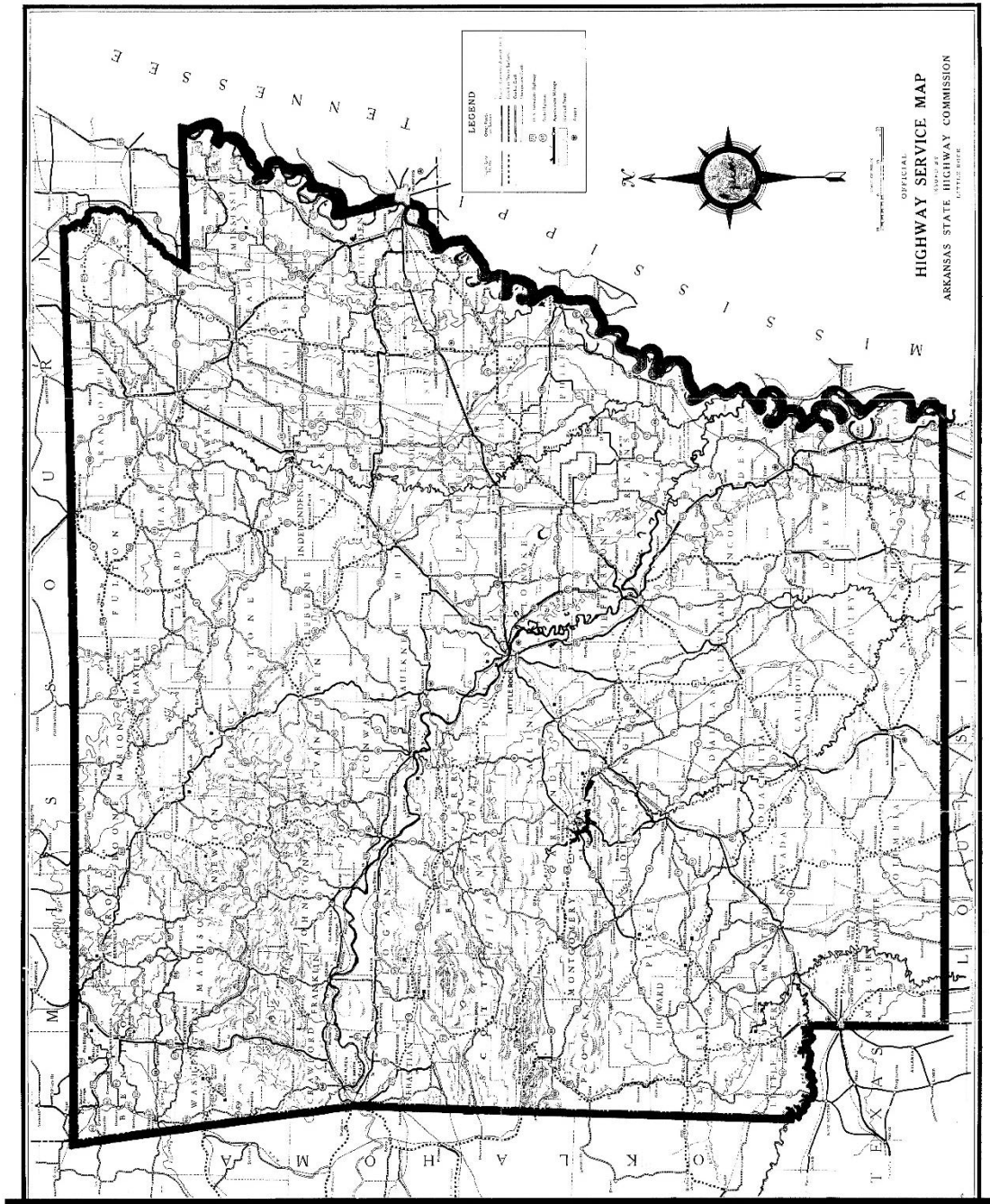
When local residents found themselves living adjacent to improved roads or highways, they sometimes converted their homes into country stores and filling stations. To advertise their businesses to passers-by, these roadside vendors often added exaggerated architectural touches to existing buildings or placed bizarre statuary or other attention-getting devices on the premises. Roadside establishments occasionally displayed regional or historic stereotypes, such as a log-cabin or Indian tepee motif, in order to attract tourists.⁸²

Local amateur history museums sprang up as part of this new tourism-related development. Stuffed with amateur collections of artifacts, the museums appealed to tourists who wanted to get a sense of the distinctive history of the area by seeing and touching physical objects from the past. At least two such museums popped up on or near the Pea Ridge battlefield. The first was established by Dick Rice near the Winton Springs farm in the 1930s. This museum was probably the same one known as the Castle. Another museum, known as Scott’s Museum, was run by Lottie Dokes and Walter Scott, siblings descended from the Coxes of Elkhorn Tavern. This museum was probably the same one that appears in photographs from the 1930s as occupying the historic Elkhorn Tavern itself. As described in Huggard’s administrative history of the park, Cox family descendants partnered with businessman M. B. “Pat” Ellis to create this museum and build an observation tower on Elkhorn Mountain. Ellis built a fairly successful enterprise based on Pea Ridge battlefield tourism. Besides the museum and the observation tower, he sold refreshments and employed five girls as “car hops” each summer. The enterprise

⁸¹ McLaren, *Arkansas Highway History and Architecture, 1910-1965*, 11-12.

⁸² *Ibid*, 12.

PEA RIDGE IN THE NEW SOUTH



Map 7. Highway map, 1935.

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lasted from the mid 1930s until World War II when wartime restrictions on pleasure travel brought an end to it.⁸³

The local amateur history museums collected not only artifacts but old photographs and family stories. Some of the latter got preserved in print in the *Benton County Pioneer*. Presumably many of the physical objects came from farmers who constantly plowed up Civil War items in their fields. Rice’s museum was said to contain a variety of objects discarded or lost during the battle such as “coins, shells, guns, saddles, and other equipment found on the battlefield.” Rice’s museum also displayed a mishmash of other items from other time periods – “typewriters, spinning wheels, early furniture, and arrowheads” – all purporting to reflect life at Pea Ridge through the ages.⁸⁴

Hard Times

Farmers in Benton County, like farmers throughout the United States, saw their income steadily decline after World War I. The problem for the agricultural sector of the nation’s economy was that growth in consumer demand for farm produce could not keep pace with the rapid growth of farm productivity as mechanization, fertilizers, and other improvements made farming more efficient. The result was a steady decline in market values for most farm products. The agricultural sector of the nation’s economy was already depressed for several years before the Great Depression began in 1929.

In the Arkansas Ozarks, there were also too many farmers on too little land area. Farmers who settled the area in the mid-nineteenth century often had five or six children or more. When the next generation grew to adulthood they mostly took up farms in the same area, sometimes on smaller parcels that were carved from the first generation’s original landholdings. The pattern was unsustainable as the land soon filled up – not only with the original settlers’ offspring but with newcomers as well. The many nonfarm jobs that became available in towns and lumber camps relieved the overpopulation somewhat, but those changes could not alleviate all of the difficulty. As more and more farms crowded in on one another, Ozark farmers experienced additional problems from soil exhaustion, growing competition for water, more animal disease, and a steadily rising cost of living relative to farm earnings.

The farmers’ growing list of challenges eventually drew various forms of government intervention at the county, state, and local level. Government intervention in the Arkansas Ozarks began as early as the late nineteenth century with state-sponsored programs to encourage diversified farming and soil conservation. In 1888, Arkansas

⁸³ “Stories from the Castle Battlefield Museum,” in *100th Anniversary Battle of Pea Ridge* (1962 reprint; Bentonville: Benton County Historical Society, 1992), 22; Huggard, *Pea Ridge National Military Park: An Administrative History*, 129.

⁸⁴ Huggard, *Pea Ridge National Military Park: An Administrative History*, 40.

founded an agricultural experiment station at Fayetteville's Arkansas Industrial University (later the University of Arkansas). State and county agricultural extension agents began working with farmers to form growers' associations for the purpose of sharing information. With the establishment of the Ozark National Forest in 1907, officers of the U.S. Forest Service began encouraging farmers to abide by Forest Service-issued grazing permits, to respect state fish and game laws, and to assist in the suppression of forest fires on the national forest.

Farmers welcomed some types of government intervention and resisted others. Government officials sometimes misread farmers' acts of resistance. For example, the Forest Service initially paid farmers by the day to help with forest fire suppression but stopped this practice when they perceived an increase in the number of fires. Officials assumed that farmers were setting fires to spur their own employment in putting the fires out. This may have been true in some cases, but farmers also set fires to improve grazing conditions for their livestock. Burning the woods was a traditional practice that farmers were loath to abandon, regardless of Forest Service aims.⁸⁵

Perhaps the most controversial instance of government intervention was the program to control Texas tick fever in cattle. This disease spread throughout the Southern cattle industry in the early twentieth century, causing the federal government to place several states, including Arkansas, under quarantine. The Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station together with the federal Bureau of Animal Industry initiated efforts in 1891 to eradicate the disease. They worked with farmers to form cattle growers' associations and to treat their animals in dipping vats built specifically for the program. Many Ozark farmers found this program unduly burdensome and resisted it by destroying vats and intimidating the government inspectors. But federal and state experts insisted that the program was succeeding. In 1914, eight counties in the Ozarks were released from quarantine; Benton and Washington counties remained in the program for another fifteen years.⁸⁶

The New South's system of sharecropping had an indirect but powerful effect on Ozark farmers, too. During the Civil War, some plantation owners and enslaved persons began to experiment with sharecropping to address their mutual interest in producing crops even as slavery headed toward collapse. At the end of the Civil War, plantation owners still had their land, but they no longer had slave labor to work the land. They were desperate for labor. Freedmen were desperate for a place to live and work. Sharecropping developed as a way to get the South's plantations back into production, or as agricultural historian David B. Danbom put it, to join landless labor with laborless

⁸⁵ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, *History of the Ozark and St. Francis National Forests* (Russellville, AR: U.S. Forest Service, 1962), 13.

⁸⁶ Blevins, *Hill Folks*, 95.

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land.⁸⁷ The practice of sharecropping spread quickly in the lowland counties of Arkansas – influenced, to some degree, by the Freedmen’s Bureau’s efforts to forge new labor relations under legally-binding labor contracts. Under the new, legally supported system of sharecropping, a sharecropper lived on the plantation owner’s property and worked on raising the plantation owner’s crop, receiving a share of the crop in lieu of both wages and rent. Sharecropping was far less common in the upland counties of Arkansas where small farms prevailed, though it did exist there. What is important is that sharecropping in the lowland counties affected systems of credit and exchange all across the state. In the farming sector, a crop lien system developed according to which cash-strapped farmers could secure fertilizer, seed, and equipment from a supplier in exchange for a lien on their crop, or crop share. Cash-strapped farmers could also rent all or part of their land to a tenant farm operator, thereby supplementing their meager farm income with rental income. Farmers might also mortgage their property to a bank and if necessary turn the farm operation over to a manager.⁸⁸

In Arkansas and across the South, the farm tenancy system formed an “agricultural ladder,” providing a path of upward mobility and therefore an incentive system for farm labor. Starting on the lowest rung, a farm laborer could aspire to ascend the ladder from cropper to renter to owner. In reality, there was mobility both up and down the ladder. Many indebted farmers lost their land and became tenant farmers. As early as the 1880s, agricultural economists began to pay close attention to farm tenancy rates to assess how farmers were doing. Rising farm tenancy rates were seen as an indication of slipping farm income and increasing farm debt. Moreover, studies showed that tenant-operated farms were not as productive as owner-operated farms over the long run, because tenant farmers had less incentive to practice soil conservation.⁸⁹

The rate of farm tenancy rose in Benton County in the first third of the twentieth century, but not as much as it did in some other northwest Arkansas counties (Table 5, next page). In 1910, three-quarters of Benton County farmers owned their farms, and two-thirds of those farm owners owned their farms free and clear, without a mortgage. The apple-growing bonanza buffered many Benton County farmers from going heavily into debt. But in the 1920s and 1930s, the agricultural depression caught up with them. Many former farm owners slipped into farm tenancy.

⁸⁷ David B. Danbom, *Born in the Country: A History of Rural America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 124.

⁸⁸ Erling D. Solberg, “The Legal Aspects of Farm Tenancy in Arkansas,” *Arkansas Experiment Station Bulletin 468* (Fayetteville, AR: U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1947), 13-14.

⁸⁹ Lee J. Alston and Kyle D. Kauffman, “Agricultural Chutes and Ladders: New Estimates of Sharecroppers and ‘True Tenants’ in the South, 1900-1920,” *Journal of Economic History* 57, no. 2 (June 1997), 465-75; Jeremy Atack, “Tenants and Yeoman in the Nineteenth Century,” *Agricultural History* 62, no. 3 (Summer 1988), 6-9; Thomas C. McCormick, “Recent Increases of Farm Tenancy in Arkansas,” *Southwestern Social Science Quarterly* 15, no. 1 (June 1934), 64-66.

Table 5. Benton County Farms Owned and Rented ⁹⁰

	1900	1910	1920	1930	1934
Total farms	4,428	4,640	5,094	5,005	5,920
Operated by owners	3,238	3,596	3,990	3,456	3,678
Operated by tenants	1,166	1,004	1,063	1,497	2,227
Operated by managers	24	40	41	52	15

The Great Depression

Natural disaster accompanied the onset of the Great Depression in Arkansas. The state suffered severe drought in 1930-31. The drought was accompanied by a heat wave that pushed summertime temperatures to 113 degrees in some Arkansas counties. Arkansas farmers lost 30 to 50 percent of their crops. Coming on the heels of catastrophic flooding in the Mississippi Valley in 1927 and tornadoes in 1929, the drought plunged Arkansas into its worst year in the depression decade. As famine stalked the land, desperate and angry mobs threatened to riot in Crawfordsville and Lepanto, Arkansas (near West Memphis and Jonesboro, respectively). A food riot broke out in the town of England, southeast of Little Rock. The economic crisis caused many people to lose faith in their local banks. With panicky citizens rushing to withdraw their savings before the money ran out, 130 banks failed across Arkansas in 1930. As some of these banks held state funds that were to be invested in road building, the bank failures fell hardest on rural counties where road construction jobs were an important source of supplemental income.⁹¹

The federal government was slow to respond to the emergency in Arkansas and the relief effort was mostly borne by the Red Cross. Both the Hoover administration and the Red Cross were concerned that in trying to get food and clothing to victims of the drought the aid would find its way instead into the hands of people who were simply out of work, creating expectations of a dole. Planters in Arkansas's Delta area actually obstructed the Red Cross's emergency relief effort in the fall of 1930, fearful that food rations would cause their work force to forego picking the parched and scraggy cotton crop. Once the cotton was harvested, however, planters joined with others in demanding

⁹⁰ Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Fourteenth Census of the United States Taken in the Year 1920, Vol. 6, Part 2, Agriculture* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1922), 560; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *United States Census of Agriculture: 1935, Vol. 1* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1936), 670.

⁹¹ "Stricken Arkansas," *Outlook* 157 (January 21, 1931), 85; Nan E. Woodruff, "The Failure of Relief During the Arkansas Drought of 1930-1931," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 39, no. 4 (Winter 1980), 304.

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aid for starving workers. By the time the Red Cross ended its emergency relief program in March 1931, it claimed it had provided food rations to 180,188 Arkansas families.⁹²

While the Red Cross relief effort centered in hardest-hit counties in the Mississippi Valley, volunteer relief workers fanned out into other parts of Arkansas as well. Charles Morrow Wilson reported on his experience serving drought-stricken farm families in the Ozarks in *Outlook* in April 1931. “I encountered hill men, normally of easy circumstances, struggling through the winter barefooted and without coats, but I saw no women who were coatless or unshod,” he wrote. “I visited a mountain family who had lived for six weeks on a sole ration of boiled corn rather than beg or accept charity.”⁹³

In 1931, Hoover modified his position on federal emergency aid and pushed an initiative through Congress to create the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC), a lending agency that would approve cheap federal loans to banks in hopes of reviving stalled capital investment project. The aim was to create jobs, relieve unemployment, and get local economies moving again. Midway through 1932, the RFC’s mandate was expanded so that it could also make federal loans to state and municipal governments for infrastructure projects. The RFC was supposed to work with a three-person committee appointed in each county whose task was to screen the federal loan applications and recommend the most promising projects for approval by the RFC. The perception in Benton County as in many other jurisdictions was that the federal liaison with local representatives became mired in favoritism and many good projects were passed over.⁹⁴

In the absence of meaningful federal support from the Hoover administration, the state of Arkansas took measures to provide economic relief to its citizens. The state began a construction program to build roads, levees, and public buildings at state colleges. By 1931, the number of unemployed was reduced from 230,000 to 120,000.⁹⁵ To complement the back-to-work programs, the state launched a “live-at-home” program aimed at making farm families self-sufficient. Led by the state’s Agricultural Extension Service, the program sought to make farms more diversified and sensitive to soil conservation. The live-at-home campaign promoted a ten-point program to make each Arkansas farm self-sufficient:

1. To raise enough grain and hay to feed all livestock.
2. To produce enough meat to feed the family.
3. To maintain at least one milk cow.
4. To maintain at least thirty laying hens.

⁹² Woodruff, “The Failure of Relief During the Arkansas Drought of 1930-1931,” 305-11.

⁹³ Charles Morrow Wilson, “Famine in Arkansas,” *Outlook* 157 (April 29, 1931), 595-96.

⁹⁴ Benton County Heritage Committee, *History of Benton County, Arkansas*, 9-10.

⁹⁵ Wilson, “Famine in Arkansas,” 596.

5. To provide health insurance by means of a garden plot.
6. To rebuild soil fertility by converting at least one third of cotton and corn acreage to legumes and pasture crops.
7. To reduce tilled acreage and to redirect saved labor to terracing and draining.
8. To beautify farm lawns by planting flowers, trees, and shrubs.
9. To plant small orchards that would produce fruit for the family.
10. To maintain a farm household budget.

Historian Pamela Webb remarked that the live-at-home program “stressed modern soil conservation practices and more efficient food production; yet, in another sense, it urged a return to earlier, simpler farming.”⁹⁶ By and large, farm families reverted to pioneer forms of farming – employing similar technology on fewer tilled acres – because they had no choice. For some Benton County hill farmers the live-at-home program was not so much a return to earlier forms as a continuation of traditional practices.’

The back-to-the-land movement of the early 1930s served to arrest out-migration from Benton County and the Arkansas Ozarks. Benton County experienced a 2.8 percent decrease in its population from 1920 to 1930, but it saw a 2.5 percent increase from 1930 to 1940. Some counties in the Arkansas Ozarks fell by as much as 24 percent in the 1920s and barely stayed even in the 1930s. A close study of population dynamics in the Arkansas Ozarks through the long agricultural depression found that the rate of out-migration fell to a little over one percent per year during the 1930s, while natural increase led to a slight net increase in the population overall.⁹⁷

The Hoover administration’s emphasis on self-help alienated many Americans and set the stage for an overwhelming Democratic political victory in the elections of 1932. By a wide margin Arkansans voted for Democratic candidate Franklin D. Roosevelt, who campaigned on a promise of a “New Deal” between the federal government and the American people. Roosevelt’s New Deal emerged over the following years as a sprawling array of federal programs aimed at restoring confidence in the economy. Components of the New Deal addressed agricultural adjustment, industrial recovery, regional planning, and economic relief. Conservation initiatives were threaded throughout the new programs and agencies: in the Agricultural Adjustment Administration’s mandate to promote sustained-yield forestry, in the Tennessee Valley Authority’s emphasis on watershed planning, and in the work of the Civilian Conservation Corps, to name a few examples. Perhaps the most important legacy of the New Deal in the Arkansas Ozarks was that it solidified the connection between

⁹⁶ Pamela Webb, “By the Sweat of the Brow: The Back-to-the-Land Movement in Depression Arkansas,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 42, no. 4 (Winter 1983), 338-39.

⁹⁷ J. L. Charlton, “Social Aspects of Farm Ownership and Tenancy in the Arkansas Ozarks,” *Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin 471* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas, 1947), 6.

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agricultural adjustment and environmental restoration. Beginning with efforts by the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA) to change what the farmer produced on the land, the New Deal pushed conservation at the same time that it promoted economic recovery.

The AAA took dramatic steps to reduce farm production and raise farm prices. During the fall and winter of 1933, the AAA paid farmers to plow up their fields and it employed agents to slaughter livestock that were regarded as inferior or simply surplus. Numerous Benton County farmers participated in the AAA program, taking federal subsidies to reduce their production.⁹⁸

The AAA's efforts were initially directed toward cotton farmers in the South and wheat and hog farmers in the Midwest. By the following summer, however, reduction of cattle herds in drought states, including Arkansas, also came under the AAA's purview. The Jones-Connally Act of April 7, 1934, together with the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of June 19, 1934, directed \$250 million toward government purchase of surplus cattle in drought-stricken areas. Fifty counties in Arkansas took advantage of the program. Healthy cattle were shipped by the Federal Surplus Relief Corporation to slaughterhouses or to non-drought states where they were put out to pasture again. A stockyard with twenty-seven pens was built in Harrison to serve as a transfer point for cattle shipments. Condemned cattle were destroyed on the farm or at nearby location.⁹⁹

Some Benton County farmers were sustained by the AAA and other New Deal programs, but others, unable to endure the drought and depression, were forced to abandon their homes. Like the Oklahoma farmers who lost everything in the Dust Bowl, these farmers traveled to California and other states in search of jobs. The authors of *History of Benton County, Arkansas* noted that most residents simply endured. “Times were hard but we did not go hungry,” is the way many remembered it. They stayed and “toughed it out,” believing that times would surely get better, and that the next growing season would be a good one. “It is the quality of this kind of optimism that characterizes the descendants of the hardy pioneers of Benton County,” stated the authors.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Blevins, *Hill Folks*, 113.

⁹⁹ Edwin G. Nourse, Joseph S. Davis, and John D. Black, *Three Years of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration* (New York: De Capo Press, 1971), 106; U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Adjustment Administration, *Agricultural Adjustment in 1934* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1935), 30-31; Blevins, *Hill Folks*, 113.

¹⁰⁰ Benton County Heritage Committee, *History of Benton County, Arkansas*, 10.

Chapter Eight

The New Prosperity

Benton County in World War II

U.S. involvement in World War II impacted Arkansas and Benton County as no other event since the Civil War. Indeed, the World War II era arguably led to more profound changes for Arkansas's economy and society than occurred in the Civil War era, as the economy broadly shifted from agriculture to manufacturing and the society once again fulsomely addressed the civil rights of blacks. For a host of reasons, the World War II period ushered the state of Arkansas into a time of greater prosperity.¹

Nearly 200,000 Arkansans served in the Armed Forces in World War II. One in ten citizens of Arkansas entered the military, while many more left the farm to work in war industries. A large number of blacks and young people left the state to find better-paying work in the industrial cities of the Midwest and Pacific Coast. Some 35,000 Arkansas women entered the workforce in Arkansas.²

Benton County, like other farm counties, contributed several thousand sons and daughters to the exodus. The gathering of military servicemen began as early as 1940 when Benton County men started registering for the draft, volunteering for the army and navy, and signing up for the National Guard. Benton County's first casualty of war was sailor Raymond "Bud" Harris of Bentonville, injured in the Japanese raid on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. In the course of the war, 120 Benton County men died in military service. Some of those on the honor roll bore the surnames of early settlers of Pea Ridge: Dale W. Roughton of Bentonville, age twenty-two, killed in an air raid over Tokyo; David L. Dunagin of Gravette, navigator in a B-17 that was shot down over Hamburg; Byron William Pratt of Garfield, a petty officer first class in the Navy who died on Christmas Day, 1944.³

The U.S. military buildup in World War II poured \$300 million into Arkansas for construction of military bases and war industries. The state's warm climate made it a

¹ Wayne et al., *Arkansas: A Narrative History*, 363; Benton County Heritage Committee, *History of Benton County, Arkansas*, 10-11; S. Charles Bolton, "Turning Point: World War II and the Economic Development of Arkansas," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (Summer 2002), 128-29.

² Benton County Heritage Committee, *History of Benton County, Arkansas*, 11.

³ Benton County Heritage Committee, *History of Benton County, Arkansas*, 11; "Dale Wesley Roughton," at <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/7245389/dale-wesley-roughton>; "David L. Dunagin," at <https://www.americanairmuseum.com/archive/person/david-l-dunagin>; "PO1 Byron W. Pratt," at <https://militaryhallofhonor.com/honoree-record.php?id=60458>.

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good place to locate all-season Army training camps. The state held certain strategic resources as well. Bauxite mining in Arkansas suddenly took off as the War Production Board sought to increase domestic production in case German U-Boats should cut off imports from Latin America. While no significant army bases or industries were located in Benton County, the general lift to the state’s economy did reach into the county. War production finally ended the depression. Farm prices recovered and most people in the workforce had paying jobs again.

Some parts of the Ozarks were a bee hive of national defense projects during World War II. The influx of people to these facilities created new markets for truck farming and other agricultural produce. In some parts of the Ozarks, farmers once again found supplemental wage work doing construction jobs related to war mobilization.⁴ Frederick Simpich, a staff writer for *National Geographic Magazine*, who knew the Ozarks from vacation trips to the region in his Illinois boyhood, did a story in 1943 on the transformation taking place. “Today, riding through this once easygoing, leisure-loving land, I sense a grim new spirit – an all-out effort to win the war,” he wrote. “Hill men who used to work for maybe \$1 a day now get \$1.25 an hour driving graders, scrapers, trucks, and bulldozers. Hundreds of these big yellow-painted road-making machines bore deep, straight trenches through the virgin hills, building yet more and more access roads to Army camps and new factory sites.”⁵

Dam Projects

The most significant of national defense projects in the Ozarks was Norfolk Dam on the White River in Baxter County. The nation needed cheap, abundant electricity with which to produce aluminum and other alloys needed for the manufacture of war materiel. Construction of the dam proceeded apace. In 1943, the Army engineers closed the gates on the White River and water began pooling behind the new dam. In June 1944, the reservoir was full and the dam began producing power. The big dam was 220 feet high and 2,700 feet long. The reservoir, named Norfolk Lake, covered 30,700 acres and had 510 miles of shoreline.⁶

After World War II, the Army Corps of Engineers proceeded to develop flood control projects in the White River basin that had been studied and put on hold before the war. With the success of Norfolk Dam’s power generating facility, two large multipurpose dams were added to those previously described in the Army Corps of Engineers’ Memphis District plan: Bull Shoals Dam near Mountain Home, Arkansas, and

⁴ Tindall, *The Emergence of the New South*, 694-697, 703-04.

⁵ Frederick Simpich, “Land of a Million Smiles,” *National Geographic Magazine*, 83 (May 1943), 589.

⁶ Mary Yeater Rathbun, *Castle on the Rock: The History of the Little Rock District, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 1881-1985* (Little Rock, AR: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers District, 1990), 58.

Table Rock Dam near Branson, Missouri. Bull Shoals Dam was completed in 1951. Bull Shoals Lake was approximately double the size of Norfolk Lake, covering 71,200 surface acres and rimmed by 1,050 miles of shoreline. Table Rock Dam was completed in 1958 and the reservoir began to fill that November. Table Rock Lake would have a surface area of 52,300 acres and 850 miles of shoreline.⁷ Two more dams were completed by the Army Corps of Engineers in 1964: Greers Ferry Dam on the Little Red River and Beaver Dam on the upper White. Beaver Dam created Beaver Lake in the southeast corner of Benton County. With its many fingers reaching up every tributary stream gully that once fed into the upper White River, the sprawling new lake had 483 miles of shoreline.

The creation of the lake signaled the beginning of enormous changes to the culture, economy, and natural landscape of the Ozarks in the postwar era. Many people who lived in the hills saw the Norfolk Dam and the five dams that came after it as a threat to their way of life, if not to their very homes. As each dam neared construction stage, the Corps bought out hundreds of old homesteads that were to be inundated by the reservoirs. Farmers might accept the government's offer and take the money, but that did not mollify their fears of how they would build a new life with just that small cash settlement in hand. Some farmers took the payment and bought another farm in the area on higher ground, while others moved to nearby towns and found a new line of work. Then there were many in the condemned valleys who did not want to relocate to the towns or the uplands – the “barrens” as the uplands were called traditionally – so they took their modest grubstake and left the region altogether.⁸

While some Ozark residents experienced loss by the water resource development projects, many benefited by them. The dams produced cheap electricity, which attracted industry to the area. The number of manufacturing jobs grew. County roads and schools were improved. Rural homes were connected to the power grid. The reservoirs were an unexpected boon to tourism, laying a foundation for a new tourism-based economy that would take hold in the 1960s. According to data compiled by the Corps' Little Rock District, the number of vacation resorts in the vicinity of Norfolk Lake rose from thirteen in 1945 to around 300 in 1971. As tourism grew, so did the number of people interested in having vacation or retirement homes in the area. The nearby town of Mountain Home saw a concomitant growth in the number of doctors and an upgrade in hospital facilities.⁹

The dams and reservoirs had profound effects on fish fauna and aquatic habitat in the White River Basin. Discharges of impounded water from the lake bottom lowered the river's temperature. Slack water and the rush of water through the dams altered oxygen saturation levels. Frequent small fluctuations in the river level changed the character of shoal areas, making them less productive food sources for fish. The dams also reduced

⁷ Rathbun, *Castle on the Rock*, 68, 72-73.

⁸ B. Asbell, “The Vanishing Hillbilly,” *Saturday Evening Post* 234 (September 23, 1961), 95.

⁹ Rathbun, *Castle on the Rock*, 70.

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the frequency and severity of floods, which led to more agricultural land use in the floodplain and more agricultural chemicals being flushed into the river, which could be toxic for fish. These environmental changes all but eliminated the commercial fishery on the White River downstream of the dams, and it was replaced with a sport fishery centered in the lakes.¹⁰

The Ozarks already had a small warm-water sport fishery and vacation resort in Lake Taneycomo before the big Corps lakes went in. Located near Branson, Missouri, Lake Taneycomo had been formed by construction of the Powersite Dam by the Empire District Electric Company in 1913. That first artificial lake was a snaking twenty miles in length and just 100 to 200 yards across – really a mere widening of the river. When the Table Rock Dam was completed just upstream from it and cold water from the bottom of the deep lake began to flow through the dam’s penstocks into Lake Taneycomo, the older lake’s warm waters were immediately chilled. Water recreationists swiftly abandoned the older narrow lake in favor of the warmer and more spacious surface waters of Table Rock Lake. Sport fishing for bass, crappie, catfish, and bluegill in the surface waters of Table Rock Lake was soon established. Meanwhile, the Missouri Department of Conservation built a fish hatchery immediately below the Table Rock Dam on land leased from the Corps and established a new cold-water fishery of rainbow trout in the artificially cold waters of Lake Taneycomo. The area became a favorite destination for sport fishing as warm-water fishing in Table Rock Lake existed in close proximity to cold-water fishing for trout on Lake Taneycomo.¹¹

The changes to the environment did not stop there. Demand for vacation and retirement homes put pressure on land values in the surrounding area. New subdivisions began forming all around the many-fingered Corps lakes. On Table Rock Lake alone, there were no fewer than 278 subdivision sites located around the lake’s 745 miles of shoreline by 1974. The largest, Kimberling Hills, was begun in the late 1950s and was incorporated in 1973 as Kimberling City. Another community, Shell Knob, began as a crossroads gas station and grocery store and mushroomed overnight into a shopping center and residential area. Real estate values around the lakeshore shot up from \$60 a linear foot in 1968 to \$450 a linear foot just three years later.

The real estate values around the lake affected outlying areas. Before there was a reservoir, farm lands sold for \$10 an acre; in 1974, the same lands listed for \$500 to \$1,000 an acre. Town lots in Branson, Missouri rose in value from around \$1,000 apiece before the reservoir to anywhere from \$4,000 to \$15,000 in 1974.¹² Prices for lots with

¹⁰ Bill Mathis, “The Rise and Decline of Commercial Fishing on the White River,” *Arkansas Game and Fish* 3, no. 1 (Spring 1970), 2-4.

¹¹ Seymour Reitman, “Project-induced changes produce an economic boom,” *Water Spectrum* 6, no. 1 (1974), 9-11.

¹² *Ibid.*, 13-14.

lake frontage rose the most, for waterfront property was in finite supply despite the many miles of lakeshore. When property values rose faster than the increase in local population, it meant that the local government was accruing additional property tax revenues ahead of rising demand for public services, which redounded to the benefit of the local economy.¹³

Dam and reservoir construction contributed to road and highway improvements. Clearing land for the reservoirs involved innumerable road and bridge abandonments where those facilities had to be relocated to higher ground. Road and bridge abandonments anguished the local population, but the anguish led to strong action by the Missouri and Arkansas state highway commissions in seeking new road alignments and replacement bridges built to a higher standard. The Corps did its part for mitigation, funneling project money to new road construction as part of its overall program of “relocations.” The dam projects effectively gave a big assist to modernization of federal, state, and county roads in the region, a process that had begun many years earlier with limited public moneys.¹⁴

The six Corps lakes in the White River Basin were completed over a twenty-three year span from 1943 to 1966.¹⁵ Notwithstanding the hardship wrought on the displaced population, the manmade lakes brought prosperity to a region that had once ranked among the poorest in the country. When it came to the subject of Beaver Lake, the Benton County Heritage Committee did not mince words in its *History of Benton County, Arkansas*. Stated the committee: “Without a doubt, the damming of White River and development of Beaver Lake has made the greatest impact of all times on Benton County and its economy.”¹⁶

Out-Migration

Population decline and replacement were phenomena affecting the whole rural South in the decades following World War II. Although the population trends were obvious they were difficult to measure because out-migration was largely compensated

¹³ E. J. L. David, “The Exploding Demand for Recreational Property,” *Land Economics* 45, no. 2 (May 1969), 217.

¹⁴ Hensley, “In the Shadow of Table Rock Dam,” 260-65; Reitman, “Project-induced changes produce an economic boom,” 17. See also the general discussion of relocations in “Relocations and Lands,” in Department of the Army, Corps of Engineers, *Report of the Chief of Engineers, U.S. Army, 1951*, vol. 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1952), 459-77.

¹⁵ The Corps plan for flood control in the White River Basin included three more dams that were never built because the projects ran up against opposition by the environmental movement. The most famous of the three, the Lone Rock Project, would have dammed the Buffalo River. The project was eventually killed and the river was preserved as a free-flowing stream for recreation in the Buffalo National River, established in 1972. (Hensley, “In the Shadow of Table Rock Dam,” 255; Catton, *Life, Leisure, and Hardship Along the Buffalo*, 261-66.

¹⁶ Benton County Heritage Committee, *History of Benton County, Arkansas*, 13.

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by natural population increase. The rural South was long identified as a region of exceptionally high birth rates – so high that it was sometimes called the “seedbed” of the nation. And while the South as a whole exhibited high birth rates compared to the rest of the nation, it was in the remote highland sections that birth rates were generally highest of all. Thus, when the farm population in these sections fell, it fell in the face of high birth rates among the population that stayed.¹⁷

Taking into account these factors, it can be seen that population census figures do not reveal the full extent of farm abandonment in the postwar era. Across the South, the population on farms peaked in the 1920s and declined every year thereafter through the 1950s with the exception of two years: 1932, when cities were in the grip of the worst year of the Depression, and 1946, when the conversion of war industries back to peacetime pursuits and the demobilization of the armed services sent thousands of people back to the farm. At the other extreme, the year that saw the single largest out-migration from Southern farms was 1942, when the lure of military service and wartime factory jobs caused an estimated 1,670,000 more people to leave farms than to arrive on them.¹⁸

The best index of farm population decline in Benton County comes from the *U.S. Census of Agriculture*, which counted the number of farms by county. Numbers for Madison and Newton counties are included with Benton County in Table 6 (opposite page) for comparison. While farm loss was pronounced in all three counties, the differences are also illuminating. The more rugged Newton County experienced the greatest overall decline with roughly three quarters of its farms disappearing from 1940 to 1974. Madison County ended the period with nearly two-thirds of its farms gone. Benton County lost the fewest farms in percentage terms, but it lost the most farms in sheer numbers: a whopping 3,362 farms were lost – more than Madison or Newton County had to start with.¹⁹

People left their farms because they found they could not make a decent living on them. While much of the nation enjoyed newfound prosperity after World War II, farmers did not share in the wealth as much. Farm commodity prices did not rise at the same rate as manufactures and services, and farm incomes remained abysmally low compared to non-farm incomes. By 1960, the median annual income of urban families in the United States stood at \$6,166. By comparison, the median annual income of rural farm families and rural non-farm families nationwide was just \$3,228 and \$4,750

¹⁷ Homer L. Hitt, “Population Movements in the Southern United States,” *Scientific Monthly*, 82 (May 1956): 241.

¹⁸ Hitt, “Population Movements in the Southern United States,” 242.

¹⁹ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Agriculture: 1945, Vol. 1, Part 23, Arkansas*, 19-31; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Agriculture: 1954, Vol. 1, Part 23, Arkansas*, 62-67; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Agriculture: 1959, Vol. 1, Counties, Part 34, Arkansas*, 139-43; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Agriculture: 1964, Vol. 1 Part 34, Arkansas*, 232-39; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Agriculture: 1974, Vol. 1, Part 4, Arkansas*, II-1-II-4.

respectively.²⁰ For Ozark residents the situation was still worse. In Benton County the median annual income of a family was \$2,265; in Madison County, \$1,928; in Newton County, \$1,666.²¹

Table 6: Number of Farms in Benton, Madison, and Newton Counties, 1940-1974

	Benton County	Madison County	Newton County	Total	Percent Change
1940	5,570	2,892	1,926	10,388	
1945	5,162	2,243	1,537	8,942	-13.9
1950	5,225	2,347	1400*	8972*	-
1954	4,492	1,918	1,261	7,671	
1959	3,619	1,471	958	6,048	-7.9
1964	3,217	1,392	823	5,432	-21.2
1969	2,650	1,057	475	4,182	-23.0
1974	2,208	1,036	466	3,710	-11.3

Ozark farmers fell behind their compatriots in other parts of the nation in other respects besides income. While the rapid adoption of the gas-powered tractor was revolutionizing agriculture in the Midwest, for example, few farmers in the Ozarks could afford one. Only 5 percent of Ozark farmers owned a tractor when the postwar era began, compared to a quarter of farmers nationwide. Besides cost, the small size of Ozark farms made the investment less compelling. Twenty years later, nearly half of all Ozark farmers did not own a tractor.²² Meanwhile, Ozark farmers adopted the automobile much more readily. In 1945, approximately half of the farms in Benton County had cars and one quarter had trucks. By the end of the 1950s, about three quarters of these farms had cars

²⁰ M. L. Upchurch, "Progress in Resolving the Problem of Rural Poverty," *Journal of Farm Economics*, 46 (May 1964): 429-36.

²¹ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population: 1960, Vol. 1, Characteristics of the Population, Part 5, Arkansas* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1963), 229-32.

²² Blevins, *Hill Folks*, 150.

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and two-thirds had trucks. Rates of car and truck ownership were lower in Madison and Newton counties.²³

Improvements in housing conditions, notably indoor plumbing and electrical service, also lagged in the Ozarks compared to most other parts of the nation. Only a small fraction of farm houses in the interior Ozarks were equipped with running water in 1945. A decade later, 22 percent of farm houses had running water, but in many cases this was limited to cold water running to a kitchen sink; it remained for the houses to be furnished with hot water, bathtub or shower, and an indoor toilet. Benton County farm households were somewhat better off but homes without hot water or indoor toilets were common, and houses with no running water were still counted in the thousands. In the 1950 U.S. census for housing, one fourth of Benton County’s 12,641 dwelling units did not have running water.²⁴

Such conditions appeared harsh to most outsiders. Drawing upon a wealth of comparative data collected in the U.S. Census for 1950 and 1960, rural sociologist Hughes H. Spurlock wrote in 1966 that rural housing conditions in the Ozarks were in many ways worse than tenement housing in urban ghettos, even though the latter had received much more attention. “Rural housing, though less clustered for all to see, is as poor in quality as urban housing and in some respects, such as plumbing facilities, rural housing is in much worse condition,” Spurlock observed.²⁵ It should be noted that even such seemingly objective criteria as number of people per room carried value judgments that did not always square with local attitudes and conditions. For example, in the region’s warm climate much of the household activity occurred on the porch or outside the house, a circumstance that was not directly comparable with urban housing units or with farm houses located in cooler climates. Ozark dwellers were of two minds about the national attention; on one hand it brought a helping hand while on the other it brought misplaced judgment by outsiders. Many Ozarkers felt pride in their humble abodes because they reflected old-time virtues of self-reliance and making the best of hard circumstance. “Life was family, home and work,” one local person wrote wistfully. “Residents were a kind of people who toiled with their hands and valued a job well done.”²⁶

Still, despite these virtues, many people left. The younger generation, especially, found reason to migrate. Generally they went in search of better living standards. Many

²³ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Agriculture: 1945*, 41-45; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Agriculture: 1959*, 173-75; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Agriculture: 1964*, 289-91.

²⁴ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Agriculture: 1945*, 41-45; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Agriculture: 1964*, 289-91; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Housing: 1950, Vol. 1, General Characteristics, Part 2, Alabama-Georgia* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1953) 4-39.

²⁵ Hughes H. Spurlock, *Rural Housing Conditions in the Arkansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma Ozarks*, Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station, Bulletin 736 (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas, 1966), 11.

²⁶ Helen Snow to Editor, *Mountain Wave* (Marshall, AR), July 28, 1984.

of these uprooted people moved into urban ghettos in numerous cities. By the early 1960s, it was estimated that Chicago had a revolving “hillbilly” population of perhaps 30,000. The internal migration increased awareness about the deep poverty still besetting isolated sections of the South.²⁷

Experts in farm policy wrestled with how to address the problem of rural poverty in the United States and rural poverty in the South in particular. It was recognized that the farmers’ plight stemmed from multiple sources and that often a farmer was burdened by two or more problems working in combination. Farmers lacked capital to invest in modern equipment; they lacked education to organize and manage their farm operations; they might be handicapped by cultural attitudes or motivational issues; and many were faced with physical limitations such as health problems or old age. Rejecting old panaceas such as protective tariffs or commodity price supports with which to buttress the ailing agricultural sector of the economy, farm policy experts came to assume that farmers must adapt to changing conditions by running their farms as businesses.²⁸ Those who did not adjust had little choice but to abandon their farms and seek wage jobs elsewhere.

Early in his administration, President John F. Kennedy sought and obtained legislation to invest federal funds in certain depressed areas of the nation. Under the Area Redevelopment Act, Kennedy formed the Area Redevelopment Administration in May 1961. The first federal grant under the program went to Marion and Baxter counties for construction of a water tank in connection with the establishment of a new textile factory. The factory was located in Mountain Home. Altogether the water tower and factory enterprise represented a \$1,195,000 investment aimed at holding families in the area that might otherwise have migrated out.²⁹

Government measures to ease the plight of poor farmers in the South helped somewhat to stem the tide of out-migration. The rate of farm abandonment in the Ozarks peaked in the 1960s and then began to fall. In Benton County, the number of farms stabilized at around 2,300. In neighboring Madison County, the number of farms stabilized at around 1,200. Probably of equal or more importance than the federal aid, however, was the Ozark farmers’ own resourcefulness in searching for new specialty crops. In the 1950s, they moved into cattle farming, using their small farms to grow hay, raise more livestock, and supplement beef production with dairy production. Benton County farmers initially followed that trend. The cash value of livestock sales in Benton County shot up from around \$2 million in the 1940s to around \$23 million in 1959. Then Benton County farmers found a new bonanza: chickens. Poultry farming, which got a

²⁷ “Wanna Go Home,” *Newsweek* 62, no. 6 (August 5, 1963), 30.

²⁸ Roger C. Woodworth, “Solution to the Problem of Low Income in the South: Farm Reorganization,” *Journal of Farm Economics*, 39 (December 1957): 1462-70.

²⁹ Julius Duscha, “Aid for Our Own Undeveloped Areas,” *The Reporter*, 26 (February 1, 1962): 36-39.

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start in Benton County soon after World War II, boomed in the 1970s. Worth around \$17 million in 1959, it shot up to \$98 million in 1978. With the farm sector continuing to drive the local economy to a considerable degree, Benton County’s population grew by around 40 percent in the 1960s and by around 55 percent in the 1970s.³⁰

Out-migration from Arkansas reflected, for the most part, a general lack of opportunity in the state’s economy and a lot of hardship for those individuals who were forced or who took it upon themselves to leave. Yet one overall effect of out-migration was to lift the state’s per capita income. Population loss meant a freeing up of land and jobs for those who stayed. Those new conditions helped set the stage for economic conversion and a new prosperity that became manifest in the closing decades of the twentieth century.³¹

In-Migration

In the postwar era there was a counter flow of people moving into Arkansas that was sometimes identified as a second “back-to-the-land” movement. The first back-to-the-land movement, it will be recalled, occurred in the early years of the Great Depression and resulted from a lack of jobs in the cities. The second back-to-the-land movement was motivated not so much by economics as by ideology or a new focus on lifestyle. Typically the people who took up farming in the region after World War II were leaving their city jobs and forsaking their urban homes for a preferred life in the country. They tended to idealize what they expected to find in their new endeavor. The qualities they were looking for included a slow pace of life, friendly neighbors, spacious surroundings, and natural beauty – in short, an Arcadia. “Here everyone has space,” wrote one of these new settlers in 1955, “and time, like clear mountain air, is abundant, limitless, inexhaustible.”³²

Julia McAdoo and her husband, seeking their own Arcadian dream in 1953, bought a tract of land “in the hills of Northern Arkansas.” In an article for *American Mercury*, she extolled the virtuous people whom she had come to call her neighbors:

In these secluded hills where telephones are rare, and roads are bare of traffic, where jobs are few and industry unknown, lives a race, a people, quite different from most. Unimpressed by riches, unafraid of poverty, serene, not humble and not proud. These “hillbillies,” these woodsmen, have no set

³⁰ All figures for numbers of farms and farm income are derived from U.S. agricultural census data. Figures for Benton County’s population growth are from U.S. population census data. Benton County’s population grew from 36,272 in 1960 to 50,476 in 1970 to 78,115 in 1980.

³¹ Bolton, “Turning Point: World War II and the Economic Development of Arkansas,” 148-49.

³² Julia McAdoo, “Where the Poor Are Rich,” *American Mercury*, 81 (September 1955): 87.

standard of living, no respect for money, nor fame, nor caste. They know no greed, no envy, no subserviency. These unimpressive men in unimpressive garb, though poor they seem, are immensely rich.³³

McAdoo went on to give examples of the local people's pleasure in simple things, humble pride, and extraordinary honesty. She was impressed, too, by how many of her neighbors had once held city jobs or traveled around but had chosen to come back home. Giving clues to the world she had left behind, she wrote: "Life is simple here. There is no need to be on guard, or count the change, or lock the doors."³⁴

Gary and Pat Hanson were another couple of back-to-the-landers. They bought a 120-year-old hill farm and started raising hogs. Their hogs foraged in the forest and multiplied, and they caught and sold the six-month-old pigs for their main income. They planned to cultivate five acres of corn – a patch reminiscent of the first wave of white settlement before the Civil War. Putting in long days of hard physical work to build a new house and get the old farm back in operation, Gary Hanson said a little dubiously, "We made this change to live a more sensible life style, not to punish ourselves."³⁵

Barry and Marilyn Hughes sold their home in a Chicago suburb, bought sixty acres near Eureka Springs, and purchased a pre-cut house that they built with their own hands. When their house was finished they had virtually no savings left. A former airplane mechanic, Barry Hughes went to work as a piano repairman to supplement the family's modest farm income. The Hughes had three small boys whom they wanted to raise in the country, not in the suburbs.³⁶

The postwar back-to-the-land movement peaked in the 1960s and early 1970s under the influence of the Counterculture. Longtime residents of the Ozarks referred to these newcomers as "hippies."³⁷ Indeed, a number of hippie communes formed in the region in the early 1970s. There was a commune called Sassafras in Boxley, on the upper Buffalo River, which was initiated in 1972. About the same time a commune known both as Mulberry Farm and Mulberry School was established in Pettigrew, Madison County. The New Beginnings Community formed in nearby Dutton, Madison County, in the mid-1970s. Meanwhile, two communes developed near the town of Leslie in southern Searcy County: Indian Camp in the early 1970s and a group called the Leslie Folks a few years later. Farther east, a commune called Dharma Masa formed in Stone County, Arkansas. The hippie communes were often committed to non-mechanized forms of agriculture,

³³ McAdoo, "Where the Poor Are Rich," 87.

³⁴ Ibid, 89.

³⁵ Tom L. Gettings, "Two homesteading newcomers to the Ozarks," *Organic Gardening and Farming* 24, no. 2 (February 1977), 114.

³⁶ Gettings, "Two homesteading newcomers to the Ozarks," 111.

³⁷ Smith interview.

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environmentally benign uses of technology, and simple living. They practiced a “voluntary primitivism,” consciously rejecting farm methods and technologies that were seen as insidious causes of the environmental crisis. Some communes strove to preserve nature.³⁸

Another important group that contributed to the in-migration were retirees. Retirees were attracted to the Arkansas Ozarks for similar reasons that drew back-to-the-land people to the region: land was relatively cheap, countryside was spacious and pleasing to the eye, and the local people were friendly and trustworthy. The sunny, warm climate of the Ozarks also appealed to the elderly, especially after the invention and spread of air conditioning ameliorated summer heat. In particular, the climate attracted Midwesterners, as they were accustomed to humid summers and appreciative of the area’s mild winters. By the 1950s and 1960s, numerous planned retirement communities had taken root in the Arkansas Ozarks such as Cherokee Village Development Community, Horseshoe Bend Development Community, and Bella Vista Village. Some retirees sought old farmsteads or houses on back roads away from the towns and planned retirement villages. “Midwestern retirees now occupy a permanent position in the Arkansas Ozarks,” historian Brooks Blevins has remarked, “and as more and more filter into the back country away from the planned retirement communities, their influence will be felt even in the most remote rural communities, the communities that have suffered the most from out-migration and agricultural transformation in the years since World War II.”³⁹

Modern Agriculture

Agriculture in Benton County and the Arkansas Ozarks changed markedly in the latter part of the twentieth century. A number of influences were at work: out-migration made land available for farm consolidation, better roads and the rise of commercial trucking led to a shift in agricultural markets, and growing prosperity allowed farmers to acquire new technology and embrace farm mechanization.

Land consolidation occurred as a byproduct of farm abandonment. One farmer’s loss was often another farmer’s gain as those who stayed added to their land holdings. In Benton County, the average size of a farm in 1940 was 82.2 acres; fifty years later, it was 131 acres. In other Ozark counties the growth in the average farm size was greater. Some Ozark farmers acquired immense holdings of several thousand acres.⁴⁰

³⁸ Timothy Miller, *The 60’s Communes: Hippies and Beyond* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1999), 260-279.

³⁹ Brooks Blevins, “Retreating to the Hills: Population Replacement in the Arkansas Ozarks,” *Agricultural History*, 74, no. 2 (Spring 2000): 479-488; quote on 488.

⁴⁰ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Agriculture: 1945, Vol. 1, Part 23, Arkansas*, 19; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Agriculture: Geographic Series, Vol. 1, Part 4, Arkansas*, 226.

Not all abandoned farmland was put back into crops by the new owners. Much abandoned farm land reverted to woodland. A lot of the woodland was used for pasturing livestock. In Benton County and elsewhere in the Arkansas Ozarks, as the number of farms dwindled so did the acreage under cultivation. In Benton County, the amount of land in farms shrank by 36 percent in half century that followed the onset of World War II. In nearby Newton County, it shrank by 42 percent. In place of the old pattern of numerous small farms growing a variety of grains, row crops, and livestock, the new pattern was one of somewhat larger farms that mostly grew hay and cattle.⁴¹

Improved roads in the Ozarks and the rise of commercial long-haul trucking brought Ozark farmers in contact with wider markets for their agricultural products. Ozark farmers found new opportunity in providing beef and dairy products for the national market. In the 1950s, Ozark farmers “stampeded” in that direction according to one local historian, building up their livestock herds and raising hay, and in some cases developing commercial dairy farm operations as well.⁴²

With the rise of cattle ranching and dairying, a movement arose to end open-range livestock grazing in the region. This hurt hog farmers. Although hog farmers had long resisted any fencing of livestock range, they now found themselves outnumbered. The Forest Service supported the movement and served notice that it would trap and remove thousands of hogs that trespassed on the Ozark National Forest. When trapping operations began in 1966, hog farmers responded by setting fires in the woods. For a time, the Forest Service faced the ire of the local populace. After Forest Service rangers trapped and impounded the trespassing hogs, they would return them to the owners only if the owners agreed to pay costs. As many owners refused to claim the hogs, they were then sold at auction. Hog farmers showed their opposition to the Forest Service by frequently shunning these auctions. In the long run, however, hog farmers had to accept enclosure of grazing lands.⁴³

Another agricultural product that went into decline as cattle and dairy took over was the canning tomato, once known as the red gold of the Ozarks. Tomatoes emerged as a specialty crop in the 1880s, and the first tomato cannery was established in Springdale in 1885. Ozark tomatoes became known as a very high grade of tomato. Canneries proliferated mainly in the Springfield Plain north of Benton County. With the rise of long-haul commercial trucking after World War II, however, giant canning industries arose in the Midwest that distributed their products to supermarket chains throughout the central United States. The smaller Ozark canneries could not compete with those. As the

⁴¹ U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Agriculture: 1945, Vol. 1, Part 23, Arkansas*, 19; U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Agriculture: Geographic Series, Vol. 1, Part 4, Arkansas*, 226.

⁴² Orville J. McInturff, “The Evolution of Searcy County’s Economy,” *Mountain Wave* (Marshall, AR), May 23, 1974.

⁴³ Sharon M. W. Bass, *For the Trees: An Illustrated History of the Ozark-St. Francis National Forests 1908-1978* (Atlanta: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, 1981), 123-124.

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canneries went out of business, farmers had to shift to other crops. By 1960, there was just one sizeable tomato cannery left in the Ozarks and it was located in Springdale where it had all begun.⁴⁴

Traditional crops such as cotton and tobacco, throwbacks to the days of general farming, and even corn crops, the staple crop of Ozark farmers since pre-Civil War times, all but vanished in the latter half of the twentieth century. Virtually all row crops went away in favor of raising hay and cattle.

Mechanization played a significant part in the process of conversion. Only one in eight Benton County farmers owned a tractor in 1945. By 1960, most farmers had a tractor, and by 1978 the U.S. agricultural census for Benton County counted 2,621 tractors on 1,852 farms. Many farmers acquired tractor-pulled mechanical balers and mowers as well. The baler picked up the cut and raked hay and compressed it into bales. The mower or “bushhog” operated like a giant rotary lawnmower and allowed farmers to rip up each year’s spring growth of weeds from their hayfields for far less effort. The appearance of the bulldozer soon after World War II was also important. It enabled farmers to clear land more cheaply and quickly and to create stock ponds where high pastures lacked water for livestock. As a result, some ridge tops and hillsides were brought into use as pasture for the first time.⁴⁵

Two New Giants in Agribusiness and Retail

Modern agriculture also featured the rise of agribusiness, and in Benton County that was nowhere more apparent than in the case of poultry farms. Benton County farmers began to experiment with raising poultry in the early twentieth century, but they faced serious impediments. The market for poultry products was fickle, prices fluctuated, and worse, farmed chickens were susceptible to disease and high mortality rates. Traditionally, therefore, poultry farming remained small scale, usually pursued as a minor component in the scheme of general farming. That changed after World War II as Americans’ growing enthusiasm for poultry meat as a cheaper alternative to beef drove up consumer demand while the rise of interstate trucking allowed chicken farmers in rural areas to supply big-city markets located hundreds of miles away.⁴⁶

Benton County’s early poultry farmers purchased chicks from hatcheries in Missouri and raised them into broiler hens in what were termed broiler houses. As more farmers turned to raising broiler hens, the hatcheries in Missouri could not keep up with

⁴⁴ Tom Dicke, “Red Gold of the Ozarks: The Rise and Decline of Tomato Canning, 1885-1955,” *Agricultural History* 79, no. 1 (Winter 2005), 1-26.

⁴⁵ McInturff, “The Evolution of Searcy County’s Economy,” *Mountain Wave* (Marshall), May 23, 1974.

⁴⁶ La Guana Gray, ““Arkansas’s First Boomtown’: El Dorado and the Emergence of the Poultry Processing Industry,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 72, no. 3 (Autumn 2013), 199.

the demand for chicks. Benton County's broiler farmers then teamed up to get a new supply of baby chicks from hatcheries in New England. In "Operation Chicken Haul," the first 40,000 chicks were flown to Benton County in a twin-engine cargo plane, a Douglas C-47 Skytrain. The year was 1947. The big aircraft overshot the stubby landing field at Rogers Airport, which was then "little more than a somewhat level beanfield with about 1,500 feet of runway between two deep ditches." But after the plane finally jostled to a stop in tall weeds beyond the end of the runway, the baby chicks were found to be okay. So began the legendary airlift of some 12 million baby chicks into northwest Arkansas over the next four years.⁴⁷

The key to the success of poultry farming in Benton County was vertical integration, or its transformation into an agribusiness. The new business model was to bring hatcheries, chicken feed mills, and broiler farms together under one company operation so that the entire production line from egg to hatchling to broiler hen was brought under unified management. The leader in developing poultry farming into an agribusiness was John Tyson, who was not a farmer at first but started out in the trucking industry hauling broiler hens and other farm produce from northwest Arkansas to Kansas City. In 1943, Tyson bought a broiler farm in Springdale. In 1947, he opened a chicken hatchery and chicken feed supply and incorporated his business as Tyson Feed and Hatchery, Inc. John Tyson's son Don was brought into the business and eventually succeeded to the head of the company. Don Tyson built the company's first processing plant in 1958, completing the plan of vertical integration. Tyson Foods, Inc. thus positioned itself to become a giant in the industry of producing, processing, and marketing poultry-based products.⁴⁸

For Tyson Foods, Inc. there were both advantages and disadvantages in its being located in northwest Arkansas. The chief disadvantage was that it was a long way from large urban markets. Tyson Foods, Inc. overcame that disadvantage by specializing in highly processed, higher-value chicken products such as packaged, frozen chicken dinners and chicken-meat frankfurters. Meanwhile, the chief advantage of its Arkansas location was that the company had access to cheap labor. Besides employing many women who sought wage earnings to supplement their husband's modest farm incomes, Tyson Foods, Inc. recruited many Hispanic immigrants. As Tyson Foods, Inc. built more processing plants in the 1970s and 1980s, the number of Hispanic workers rose into the thousands. The company was a major force in bringing more manufacturing jobs into Benton County's economy. At the same time, its hiring practices began to bring more ethnic diversity into Benton County's population.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Benton County Heritage Committee, *History of Benton County, Arkansas*, 11-12.

⁴⁸ Rosen, *Boomtown*, 174; Gray, "Arkansas's First Boomtown," 211.

⁴⁹ Rosen, *Boomtown*, 174, 181; Gray, "Arkansas's First Boomtown," 214-15.

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Another company arose in Benton County around the same time as Tyson Foods, Inc. that eventually came to have an even bigger impact on Benton County’s economy and population growth. This was the retail giant Walmart. Sam Walton and his wife Helen moved to Bentonville in 1950 when it had a population of around 2,900 people. Sam Walton opened his first store, “Walton’s Five and Dime,” in Bentonville. He opened his first “Wal-Mart” discount store in Rogers in 1962. Walton quickly grew his business into a successful chain of retail stores: eighteen stores across Arkansas by 1966, thirty-six stores across multiple states by 1970, 125 stores across a seven-state area by 1975, by which time Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. was a publicly traded corporation with 7,500 employees and total sales of \$340 million.

Walmart made its corporate headquarters in Bentonville, and the town began to grow as Walmart grew into a nationwide chain and then the largest retailer in the business. A crucial development for Bentonville was Walmart’s decision to partner with Walmart’s major suppliers, sharing computer data with them through the corporation’s private satellite network. Many major suppliers then began moving management teams to Bentonville to solidify the relationship, giving the town a new nickname “Vendorville.” The influx of management teams made Bentonville’s ethnic makeup more diverse. Many of Walmart’s suppliers were foreign countries, so the town acquired a bevy of foreign nationals in its resident population.⁵⁰

Historically, Walmart’s employee workforce was overwhelmingly white and Christian – mostly Protestant Christian. Now all the Walmart employees at corporate headquarters mingled with foreign nationals who were Muslim and Hindu and Catholic and came from countries in South Asia and Latin America. The situation prompted Walmart to work on diversifying its workforce. To that end, it hired Coleman Peterson, who was black, to serve as its new director of human relations. Peterson pushed for the recruitment of blacks and other minorities. Along with Tyson Foods, Inc.’s recruitment of Hispanic workers to work in its processing plants, Walmart’s two actions to partner with suppliers and to diversify its workforce brought a further infusion of nonwhites into the community. The town of Bentonville grew by 40 percent from 2000 to 2007. In 2020, the population of Benton County stood at 284,333, nearly triple what it was in 1990. Its ethnic makeup is shown on Table 7 (opposite page).

Blacks in Benton County in the Modern Era

This historic resource study of the Pea Ridge battlefield and vicinity traces the local story of the black experience in slavery and freedom. As discussed in Chapter Six, the few African Americans who lived in the vicinity of Pea Ridge all soon left their homes for other places, leaving Sugar Creek Township without any black population.

⁵⁰ Rosen, *Boomtown*, 1-4.

Some relocated to Bentonville along with other freed slaves who came from other places around Benton County. Numbering fewer than forty people, they formed an African American enclave in Bentonville. The enclave persisted through generations, growing to around 150 people in 1890, surviving the hardest times of Jim Crow in the early twentieth century, lasting into the civil rights era and beyond, and finally coming to anchor a sizable African American population of around 5,000 people in Benton County today.

Table 7. Benton County Population in 2020 ⁵¹

White	191,761	71.34%
Black	4,523	1.59%
Native American	3,799	1.34%
Asian	13,602	4.78%
Pacific Islander	2,598	0.91%
Other/mixed	17,510	6.16%
Hispanic or Latino	50,540	17.61%

When the U.S. Supreme Court ruled on desegregation of public schools in *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954, the black community in Bentonville was at its lowest level. By then, school segregation had nearly broken the tiny community. The Bentonville Public High School did not accept black students and never had, while the Bentonville Colored School with grades one through eight closed when it no longer had any pupils. Families with school-age children faced a grim choice: they could send their children away for school, or they could move away. Many chose to move away.

Beth Dishmon was one of the last school-age children in Bentonville's black community. When she was an age to enter high school, her mother Clara Dishmon sent Beth to live with an aunt in Springfield, Missouri, so that Beth could attend high school there. It angered Clara Dishmon that she had to send her daughter away to get a high school education, and it still angered her when she talked about it with her adult daughter some sixty years later in 1995.⁵²

Clara Dishmon's choices were limited when her daughter was a teenager. A single parent, she lived next door to her own parents and received their help in raising her only child while she worked as a domestic servant in homes around Bentonville. Moving

⁵¹ Explore Census Data, <https://data.census.gov/table?g=50XX00US05007&tid=DECENNIALPL2020.P2>.

⁵² Anita French, "Coming home: Bentonville native returns to her family roots," *Benton County Daily Record*, July 2, 1995.

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with her daughter to some other community was not a good option. Sometime after Beth went away to school and eventually to a life in California, Clara Dishmon moved in with her aging parents. The 1950 census found the three of them still living together: Clara Dishmon’s mother, Mary Ann Gilbert, was ninety; Dishmon’s father, General C. Gilbert, was seventy-nine; and Dishmon was then fifty-four. In 1958, Clara Dishmon became Sam and Helen Walton’s housekeeper and worked for them for her last thirty years.⁵³

The other black families still remaining in Bentonville in 1955 were all living in hard circumstances as well. There were only half a dozen households with around fourteen or fifteen occupants in total. Arthur Dickerson still worked long hours in his shoeshine shop – sixty-five hours a week according to the 1950 census report. Cinco Dickerson no longer taught school but worked thirty hours a week as a janitress. Mattie and Grant Levi, a couple in their forties, survived on Grant Levi’s income from working forty-eight hours a week doing odd jobs in white folks’ homes. Mac Claypool, age fifty-six, lived alone and worked sixty hours a week at a hardware store. Albert and Addie Barker, ages sixty-four and sixty-five, did not work and presumably lived on Social Security. Bertha Robinson, fifty-one years old, a widow and mother of eight, lived with her two youngest children and a four-year-old grandchild. Her son, John Robinson, worked forty hours a week as a janitor in a department store, while her daughter, Leatrice Robinson Stewart, worked as a housekeeper.⁵⁴

Leatrice Stewart faced the same problem as Clara Dishmon did when her own child, Carl approached school age. Leatrice Stewart arranged for Cinco Dickerson, the former teacher, to give her son solo school instruction since he was barred from attending the white school. The state paid Dickerson under the “separate but equal” doctrine, and the “school” was located on land owned by the black Claypool family. This arrangement continued for Carl from first through third grade. For Carl’s coming fourth grade year, Leatrice Stewart made the agonizing decision to send her nine-year-old boy on a bus to the integrated public school in Fayetteville. The year was 1955. Fortunately, the circumstances changed with the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. After the ruling, the Bentonville School Board integrated the Bentonville schools without a fuss. In the fall of 1955, the Baker Elementary School admitted its first black pupil, Carl Stewart, to the fourth grade. Stewart went on to graduate from Bentonville High School in 1964 and lived in Bentonville until his death in 2020.⁵⁵

While school integration brought momentous change, it happened quietly in Bentonville (as it did in many Arkansas communities). According to reporter Bill

⁵³ French, “Coming home: Bentonville native returns to her family roots.”

⁵⁴ 1950 U.S. Census, Benton County, Arkansas, population schedule, Osage Township.

⁵⁵ Bill Bowden, “Bentonville grad recalls open arms,” *Northwest Arkansas Democrat Gazette*, March 6, 2011; “Ronald Carl Stewart, Bentonville, AR, 1946-2020,” *Northwest Arkansas Democrat Gazette*, January 26, 2020; Rosen, *Boomtown*, 26; Jerry Harris Moore, personal communication to author, January 14, 2024.

Bowden's research, the Bentonville School District was the fourth in the state to integrate. Charleston School District in Franklin County (near Fort Smith) was the first to integrate in the fall of 1954, following the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in May 1954. In Charleston, eleven black students entered the formerly all-white junior high school. The Fayetteville School District was second, as its school year began a few days after Charleston's. There, seven black students were enrolled in the town's high school with scarcely any social tension. A year later, after *Brown v. Board of Education II*, the Hoxie School Board in Lawrence County voted to integrate. Some white families protested but the Hoxie School Board stood its ground. The Bentonville School Board voted to integrate a few days after Hoxie but it barely received public notice.⁵⁶

As Carl Stewart would recall many years later, he could hear the school kids playing at recess while he was receiving separate instruction. In the spring of 1955, the principal of the Baker Elementary School invited him to play with the white kids, which allowed new friendships to form over the summer. When he entered fourth grade in fall, he was accepted with "open arms." Similar scenarios seem to have unfolded in other Arkansas communities with very small black populations. That was in contrast to the vicious resistance to integration that developed in Little Rock, where it took the courageous action of nine high school students who demanded admittance to the all-white Central High School to break the standoff over integration finally in 1957.⁵⁷

Meanwhile, the civil rights movement targeted other bastions of racial segregation, such as restaurants and hospitals. The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) spearheaded the effort. In 1962, the SNCC launched a campaign to register disenfranchised black voters in the South. It focused on Mississippi, but also worked across the river in Arkansas's Delta region. Benton County, with its tiny black population, remained mostly on the periphery of these struggles, which culminated with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.⁵⁸

Even with these landmark achievements, the hard economic and social conditions that African Americans faced were slow to improve. Whole regions of the Upper South and lower Midwest had practically purged their black populations in the long era of Jim Crow, and Benton County fell squarely within that pattern. If the white people of Bentonville took some refuge in the claim that their town was never a "Sundown" town, nevertheless some three to four generations of whites had habitually treated the tiny black population of Bentonville as a lowly group in a caste society. Consequently, blacks were skeptical about moving to such places as Benton County where whites comprised 98 to 100 percent of the inhabitants.

⁵⁶ Bowden, "Bentonville grad recalls open arms."

⁵⁷ Rosen, *Boomtown*, 26; Bowden, "Bentonville grad recalls open arms."

⁵⁸ Wayne et al., *Arkansas: A Narrative History*, 410-12.

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The black population began to rebound in Fayetteville and Washington County sooner than it did in Bentonville and Benton County. Large institutions such as the University of Arkansas and hospitals, guided by the federal government’s policy on affirmative action, hired blacks from outside of the area for qualified positions. Most of the people who were hired for those well-paying jobs had college degrees and came from out of state. They were middle class and worldly, with different life experience from the resident blacks who had lived in their close-knit enclaves in Fayetteville or Bentonville for most of their lives and who were descended from families who had come there in the last decades of the nineteenth century from a heritage of enslavement. In Fayetteville, the black newcomers in the 1970s became known as “emigrant blacks,” and it was noted that the resident blacks were not necessarily welcoming toward these newcomers who had better jobs than they and who lived in more affluent neighborhoods.⁵⁹

In Bentonville, the black population began to grow in the 1980s and 1990s. As in Fayetteville, affirmative action provided an important stimulus, but in Bentonville the hiring impulse was centered at Walmart where a newly hired black director of human relations launched an effort to diversify the workforce in the 1990s. As in Fayetteville, the black newcomers stood apart from the indigenous black community in a way that belied continuing racial tensions. In this instance, the perception on the part of the indigenous black community was that so-called “Walmart blacks” did not associate with indigenous blacks and preferred to establish their own community activities. To some of the indigenous blacks, the newcomers seemed to feed into the Lost-Cause racist view – still held by many in the white majority – that blacks were somehow still beholden to whites.⁶⁰

In the 2000 census of the population of Benton County, just 629 African Americans were enumerated in a total population of 153,406. That amounted to just 0.4 percent. In percentage terms, the black population had only recovered the ground it had lost when, one hundred years earlier, white supremacists in the Upper South and lower Midwest sought to purge the region of its small black enclaves. By 2000, small black populations were re-established in several Benton County towns: 174 people in Bentonville, 153 in Rogers, 53 in Siloam City, 39 in Lowell, and 31 in Springdale. Only in the first two decades of the twenty-first century did the in-migration of African Americans raise the population to more than a miniscule one – to around 5,000 people or 2 percent of the total population. There was comfort in numbers as black residents could begin to find black pastors, teachers, doctors, and barbers serving the larger community.

The changing demographics in Benton County helped to raise whites’ race consciousness and to confront forms of racism in the community that had long gone

⁵⁹ Gordon Morgan, “Blacks Taking An Expanded Role in Community Affairs,” *Northwest Arkansas Times* (Fayetteville, AR), April 7, 1974.

⁶⁰ Moore personal communication.

unchallenged. Some towns in northwest Arkansas admitted to having been “sundown” towns in an earlier day, and took pains to renounce those past policies. The Rogers Historical Museum documented a regrettable time in the city’s history in the early 1960s when the Rogers Chamber of Commerce sought to suppress criticism of the town’s tradition of ethnic cleansing. In recent times, the Rogers Historical Museum hosted an exhibit “Reflections of the Black Experience,” that combined works of art by Arkansas artists with traveling textual exhibits from the 1619 Project. The latter, conceived by writers with the *New York Times Magazine*, aimed to raise awareness about the central role of slavery and its legacy in American history. The aim of the exhibit at the Rogers Historical Museum was to introduce the 1619 Project “to a broader Northwest Arkansas community.”⁶¹

While race relations in Benton County showed signs of improvement in the early twenty-first century, the problem of racism remained far from resolution. The Black Lives Matter movement that began in 2013 highlighted racial discrimination by police in municipalities across the nation. Following the George Floyd murder by Minneapolis police in 2020, protests occurred all over Arkansas with the largest demonstration happening in Bentonville. Peaceful demonstrators circled the town square in the early evening on June 1. About two hours later, after nightfall, the city police demanded that the crowd disperse. The city police received backup from surrounding towns, and police numbers grew as a cordon of law enforcement officers dressed in riot gear formed in front of the county courthouse. Protestors threw water bottles at the police cordon and the police fired tear gas into the crowd. The violence in Bentonville that night reflected simmering tensions that harkened back to the days of the night-riding Klan and Sundown towns, and farther back to Civil War times.⁶²

Indeed, the George Floyd protest in the square added to the pressure on the city to remove a statue of a Confederate soldier that stood near the town square to a new location in a private park. Soon after the protest, the local chapter of the United Arkansas Daughters of the Confederacy, the group that owned the statue, finalized a plan to relocate the statue. The statue was removed from its spot near the public square in September 2020, and it was placed on a new pedestal in James H. Berry Park, a private park that is open to the public, in the summer of 2023.⁶³

⁶¹ Loewen, *Sundown Towns*, 204-05; James Loewen, “Sundown Towns,” in *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*, at <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/sundown-towns-3658/>; Kinya Christian, “Reflections of the Black Experience Exhibit,” at <https://www.kinyachristian.com/reflectionsoftheblackexperience>.

⁶² Anissa Raiford-Ford, “Black Lives Matter,” *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*, at <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/black-lives-matter-13638/>; Tracy Neal and Doug Thompson, “Before the Tear Gas: How peaceful protest turned into chaos,” *Northwest Arkansas Democrat Gazette*, July 26, 2020.

⁶³ Mike Jones, “Bentonville’s James H. Berry Park groundbreaking set for March,” *Northwest Arkansas Democrat Gazette*, January 15, 2022; Mike Jones, “Confederate statue returns to public view as James H. Berry Park gets set to open in Bentonville,” *Northwest Arkansas Democrat Gazette*, July 29, 2023; Mike

The Two-County Metropolis

In the late twentieth century, the towns of Bentonville, Rogers, Springdale, and Fayetteville grew so fast they began to merge into one large metropolis extending north and south from Benton County to Washington County. The U.S. Census identified the area as a “Metropolitan Statistical Area” or MSA. The U.S. Census estimated the population of the MSA as 464,623 in 2009, assigning it the rank of 109th biggest MSA in the nation. The area experienced two growth spurts. From 1990 to 2000, it was the sixth fastest growing MSA in the country in percentage terms. From 2016 to 2021, it ranked seventh in the nation in a list of fastest growing “midsize” metropolitan areas, with a growth rate of 11.3 percent. The MSA now has more than half a million people, with Benton County poised to overtake Pulaski County (Little Rock) as the most populous county in Arkansas.⁶⁴

The immense population growth altered the landscape in the region profoundly. Villages in the vicinity of the battlefield became small towns. Towns grew into bedroom communities for the metropolitan area. The town of Pea Ridge had a population of 6,559 in 2020 according to the U.S. census. The population of the town was spread among 2,021 households and 1,455 families – a far cry from the small town of 380 inhabitants in 1960, when many if not most families still traced their ancestry to the pioneer families who had settled on Pea Ridge in the nineteenth century. Garfield’s population growth was less than Pea Ridge’s but still impressive: from forty-eight people in the 1960 census to 593 in 2020. The village of Avoca near Brightwater, which was platted in 1881 when the railroad came through, grew to a town of 487 people on the outskirts of Rogers. The former village of Little Flock, a farm community located on a tributary of Little Sugar Creek due north of Rogers, suddenly had a population of 3,055 in 2020.

Bella Vista, located north of Bentonville, was established as a summer resort in 1917. Designed to attract a well-heeled clientele for summer-long stays, the place featured a chain of artificial lakes built on Sugar Creek, tennis courts, golf courses, horse trails, and a dance pavilion. The resort struggled through the mid-twentieth century as the rise of auto tourism provided alternatives to the sojourning-style summer vacation. In 1965, it changed to a retirement community. It expanded with more sales of home sites in the late 1970s, becoming a blended community of retirees and absentee homeowners who came for part of the year. Then it hit on a period of rapid growth, the population swelling

Jones, “Rally gets violent in Bentonville; tear gas deployed,” *Northwest Arkansas Democrat Gazette*, June 2, 2020.

⁶⁴ “Northwest Arkansas Metropolitan Area,” *McNaughton Real Estate*, at <https://www.allnwahomes.com/northwest-arkansas-metropolitan-area/>; “The Fastest Growing Metropolitan Areas in the U.S.,” *Inspection Support Network*, at <https://inspectionssupport.com/the-fastest-growing-metropolitan-areas-in-the-U.S./>.

from 2,589 in 1980 to 30,104 in 2020. It remained a wealthy community with many amenities stemming back to its beginnings as a summer resort.⁶⁵

The population growth in northwest Arkansas stimulated much new highway development. When the U.S. interstate freeway system was constructed in the 1950s and 60s, no interstate freeway came near the Ozark region. So, in later decades, it became necessary to upgrade state highways to federal highways, to turn federal highways into four-lane expressways, and finally to build new interstate freeways. As the various roadways were rebuilt to handle more traffic at faster speeds, some sections were realigned with massive roadcuts made through hills and mountains. The new freeway sections in Benton and Washington counties required construction of limited-access “clover leaf” interchanges. While divided highways and limited-access interchanges took up considerable acreage in their own right, these highway developments also spawned their own roadside clutter of billboards, gas stations, eateries, and overnight lodging facilities. The highways together with the highway-related businesses made up big swaths of new development crisscrossing the formerly pastoral landscape. Moreover, the giant interstate freeway system had a strong homogenizing effect on the traveler service industries that developed along these new travel corridors. By the late twentieth century, the gas-station convenience stores and chain hotels and fast-food outlets found along highways in Benton County were virtually indistinguishable from what the car traveler might encounter in Ohio or Arizona.

To a large degree, towns and metropolitan areas came under the same homogenizing influence of the car culture that the highway system did – especially where the highways passed directly through them, forming commercial “strips” completely beholden to the car culture. Strip malls, shopping malls, office parks, and huge box-store complexes all acquired a sameness that intruded on a town’s or metropolitan area’s regional distinctiveness. By the twenty-first century, towns like Bentonville and Rogers struggled to preserve those historic features that gave the towns their original character, such as the town square in Bentonville or the brick streets around the train station in downtown Rogers.

The designation and listing of historic districts helped to preserve a modicum of old charm in these towns, but often there was virtually nothing left from the old days but local memory and historic photographs. In Springdale in the 1920s and 1930s, farmers set up their fruit stands along the wide, dirt downtown street called East Emma Avenue. The place was thronged with buyers and truckers prepared to load up their trucks with produce and haul it to other markets. In the 1960s and 1970s, Tyson Foods, Inc. changed the demographic makeup of Springdale so that it became about 35 to 40 percent Hispanic and Pacific Islander and a predominantly working-class community. Then in the 1980s

⁶⁵ John Spurgeon, “Bella Vista (Benton County),” *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*, at <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/bella-vista-benton-county-2856/>.

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and 1990s, Walmart built outlet stores around the town that bled away most of the commerce in Springdale’s downtown stores, killing the old business district along East Emma Avenue.⁶⁶

In her book *Boomtown: How Wal-Mart Transformed an All-American Town into an International Community*, author Marjorie Rosen argues that the public spaces and commercial development in greater Bentonville are even more homogenized than the typical metropolitan area of its size, thanks to the influence of Walmart. The corporation’s “fingerprints are everywhere,” she writes, as lean public investment and minimal city planning, or what she calls “boomtown pragmatism,” led to inexpensive sprawl and a “congenial blandness” in the metropolitan area’s public landscape and architecture.⁶⁷

Mass Tourism

Northwest Arkansas’s extraordinary population growth since the 1990s was accompanied by strong growth in the tourism industry over the same period. But mass tourism had already taken hold in the Ozarks about three decades before then in the 1960s. Ozarks tourism stood on two strong pillars: first, a rich tradition of folk music; and second, increasing recreational use of the new manmade lakes built by the Corps of Engineers.

Folk music was the first element of Ozark folklife to attract national attention as radio broadcasts in the 1920s and 1930s popularized so-called hillbilly music among a nationwide audience. In the 1950s, James Corbitt Morris, a middle-aged school teacher and songwriter from Mountain View, Arkansas, changed his name to Jimmy Driftwood and started his rapid climb to stardom. In 1957, he recorded his first album in Nashville, *Newly Discovered Early American Folk Songs*. Driftwood would soon secure top billing for Ozark musicians in the annual Arkansas Folk Festival held in Mountain View.⁶⁸ Starting in 1948, Eureka Springs hosted its own folk festival. Although the event did not draw as many tourists as organizers hoped, the town decided to make it an annual event and its popularity steadily grew. Held in October when tourists could also enjoy the region’s autumn colors and amiable climate, the Ozark Folk Festival regularly featured native folklore and music.⁶⁹

Before Ozark folk festivals became mass tourism events, however, tourists were lured to the region in increasing numbers by the Ozarks’ natural attractions, including

⁶⁶ Rosen, *Boomtown*, 167-70.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁶⁸ Brooks Blevins, “In the Land of a Million Smiles: Twentieth-Century America Discovers the Arkansas Ozarks,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 61, no. 1 (2002): 1-35.

⁶⁹ William R. Wilson, “It’s Still Summer in the Ozarks,” *Today’s Health* 37 (September 1959), 77.

several new lakes created by dams. Norfolk Lake, near Mountain Home, drew tourists in search of water sports and relaxation, while Bull Shoals Lake, in northern Marion County, was popular with anglers. People also came to enjoy the rugged scenery and relatively cool summer temperatures found in the Ozark National Forest. A tourism study in 1953 found that more than 600,000 tourists traveled the 1,122 miles of roads on the national forest and used its fourteen public recreation areas.⁷⁰ Tourists also visited Arkansas state parks in growing numbers, including Buffalo River State Park, which received 25,000 visitors that same year.

Mass tourism took hold in the Ozarks in the 1960s. North of Eureka Springs, the town of Branson, Missouri, had been slowly developing a tourism-based economy for many years. In 1960, the resort town began a period of rapid growth as the Baldknobbers Hillbilly Jamboree Show began its second year, the Old Mill Theater started production of “Shepherd of the Hills,” the Presley Family opened a second music show, and Silver Dollar City built a theme park.⁷¹ Branson became a leading tourist destination in the Ozarks, fueling resort development in the surrounding region.

Eureka Springs, meanwhile, underwent its own transformation. In 1964, Gerald L. K. Smith, a wealthy minister, anti-Semite, and erstwhile presidential candidate of the Christian Nationalist Party, retired in the community and began work on an ambitious religious theme park. Although the park was never completed according to the original design, the town did acquire an enormous statue, the Christ of the Ozarks, as well as a Passion Play that was staged on a 400-foot reproduction of a street of Old Jerusalem and became the largest outdoor pageant in the nation. These developments revitalized Eureka Springs and caused it to grow into the state’s leading tourist destination by 1975.⁷²

While Eureka Springs continued to hold the annual Ozark Folk Festival, the town of Mountain View inaugurated the annual Arkansas Folk Festival in April 1963. The original festival was largely the work of the Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service and was expected to feature a craft fair. However, festival organizers enlisted the help of Jimmy Driftwood to develop the festival’s music program and to people’s surprise the musical event, which featured local artists performing in the high school gymnasium, drew the largest crowd of any part of the festival. In the following years the festival revolved around music and drew larger and larger crowds. By the early 1970s, it had become the state’s biggest annual tourist event, attracting as many as 100,000 visitors,

⁷⁰ Leslie G. Kennon, “Ozarks: Autumn Playground,” *Travel* 100 (October 1953), 9.

⁷¹ “Branson, Missouri – A Brief History,” at <http://www.branson-missouri-com;history/asp>.

⁷² Glen Jeansome and Michael Gauger, “Gerald Lyman Kenneth Smith (1898-1976),” *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*, at <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/gerald-lyman-kenneth-smith-1767/>.

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which included an eclectic mix of old-timers, vacationing families, motorcycle gangs, and hippies.⁷³

The success of the Ozark Folk Festival spurred development of the Ozark Folk Center, a unique state park and “living museum” of folk life. Located near Mountain View, it was the only state park in the nation dedicated to preserving Southern mountain folkways. The Ozark Folk Center was developed with the help of federal grants from the Economic Development Administration and the influence of Congressman Wilbur D. Mills. The park was established in 1972 and the \$3.4 million center opened to tourists the following year. Facilities included a music theater, numerous craft shops, a welcome center, and a lodge.⁷⁴

These three centers of tourism in the Ozarks – Branson, Eureka Springs, and Mountain View – anchored a growing tourism industry around folk music. At War Eagle in southeast Benton County, the War Eagle Fair, also known as the Ozarks Arts and Crafts Fair, developed around folk arts and crafts. The annual event, held in October, began in 1954 at the initiative of Blanche and Lester Elliott with support from a local handweavers’ guild. The fair was held in the Elliotts’ living room and then on the grounds of the Elliotts’ historic farm, the former property of early settler Sylvanus Blackburn. From small beginnings the fair grew at a fast pace in the late 1950s and early 1960s to become another regional tourist attraction.⁷⁵

Meanwhile, the Ozarks’ new artificial lakes drew growing throngs of outdoor recreationists. Use of natural lakes and reservoirs exploded in the 1960s as boat ownership proliferated and Americans took up new forms of water-based recreation. Water-skiing, for example, grew at a furious pace. By 1965, it was estimated that ten million Americans went water-skiing, a 50 percent jump in five years. The American Water Ski Association reported that in 1969 the American people spent \$30 million on water-skis and \$11 million on related equipment. Even such a traditional recreational sport as fishing saw a 10 percent increase in participation in the decade.⁷⁶

When Beaver Lake appeared in the southwest corner of Benton County in the mid 1960s, it immediately drew strong recreational interest (Map 7). The first bass fishing tournament in the nation was held there in 1967; today, the lake hosts eight bass fishing tournaments each year. Scuba diving was another recreational activity that took effect early as people came to enjoy the crystal clear waters near the dam. Scuba diving courses

⁷³ “A Brief History of the Arkansas Folk Festival,” at <https://www.lyon.edu/a-brief-history-of-the-arkansas-folk-festival>.

⁷⁴ Catton, *Life, Leisure, and Hardship along the Buffalo*, 256.

⁷⁵ Dana Sutton, “Ozark Arts and Crafts Fair,” *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*, at <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/ozark-arts-and-crafts-fair-2023>.

⁷⁶ U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, *The Recreation Imperative: The Nationwide Outdoor Recreation Plan*, printed for the use of the U.S. Senate Committee on Interior and Insular Affairs, 93rd Cong., 2d sess. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1974), 245, 256-57.

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were offered and people came from hundreds of miles away to get certified. Motorboating and waterskiing continued to surge in popularity in the 1970s. In the following decades, kayakers, canoeists, sailboarders, wakeboarders, and tubers all came to the lake in significant numbers as well. Beaver Lake now gets a whopping 3 million visitors each year according to Corps of Engineers estimates.⁷⁷

A newer big draw for tourism was the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, which opened in 2011. Founded by Sam Walton’s daughter Alice Walton, the museum occupied 120 acres of forest and garden in Bentonville. The museum complex included seven art galleries for the museum’s 60,000 collected items, a library, a restaurant, and a network of trails. The Walton Family Foundation donated more than a billion dollars toward the project, and the museum was free to the public thanks to a grant from Walmart, Inc.⁷⁸

In 2013, Benton County ranked fourth among Arkansas counties in tourism revenue. It attracted an official count of 1,319,531 tourists who spent nearly \$300 million in travel expenses – most of which went into the local economy. Pea Ridge National Military Park drew around 100,000 visitors annually according to the NPS’s official visitation statistics, making a significant contribution to the overall tourism industry in the county.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Theodore Catton, “The Corps Lakes: The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Rise of Reservoir-based Recreation in American Outdoor Life,” report prepared for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, May 2023, publication forthcoming.

⁷⁸ Katherine Teske, “Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art,” *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*, at <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/crystal-bridges-museum-of-american-art-4556/>.

⁷⁹ Michael B. Dougan, “Tourism,” *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*, at <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/tourism-4215/>; Huggard, *Pea Ridge National Military Park: An Administrative History*, 285.

Chapter Nine

Commemoration and Preservation

The Nineteenth Century

The act of Congress of July 20, 1956 that led to the establishment of Pea Ridge National Military Park was a crucial milestone in preserving this Civil War battlefield, but many other acts of preservation preceded it. Preservation of the Pea Ridge battlefield began in the time of the Civil War and evolved through the next century and a half to the present day. Early preservation efforts amounted to setting aside small plots of ground for cemeteries and monuments; only later did preservation come to entail extensive public land acquisition to preserve whole landscapes.¹

Every act of preservation was also implicitly an act of commemoration. Some forms of commemoration were overt and took center stage, as when veterans gathered at the site for reunions. Battlefield commemoration evolved just as battlefield preservation did, but the main objective stayed the same: to preserve and shape the public memory of the historic battle and the war. In 1991, the Civil War Sites Advisory Commission articulated four themes of Civil War battlefield commemoration, all of which were as pertinent in the time period immediately after the war as they were more than a century later:

- Seeing the battlefield is basic to an understanding of military campaigns and battles, while the latter are crucial to comprehending all other aspects of the Civil War.
- To be upon a battlefield is to experience an emotional empathy with the men and, in fact, the women who fought there.
- Clashing convictions and the determination to defend them cost the nation 620,000 lives.
- The values tested and clarified in that great conflict are what continue to bind the nation together today.²

Battlefield preservation at Pea Ridge began immediately after the battle when the dead were interred. Burying the many dead soldiers who lay on the battlefield was a grim necessity, but it was also an act of consecration that implied a commitment to remember

¹ Timothy B. Smith, *Altogether Fitting and Proper: Civil War Battlefield Preservation in History, Memory, and Policy, 1861-2015* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2017), xvi-xvii.

² Civil War Sites Advisory Commission, *Civil War Sites Advisory Commission Report on the Nation's Civil War Battlefields, Technical Vol. 1: Appendices*, iv.

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and protect those graves for posterity. The soldier graves were by necessity crude. On the Federal side, burial parties dug long shallow trenches in the rocky soil, placed the bodies side by side after wrapping each one in a blanket, and put the soldier's name and unit, if known, on a wooden headboard. On the Confederate side, the burial party sent by Gen. Van Dorn took less time with the mass graves and made little effort to identify individuals – perhaps because the gravediggers worked under a white flag on enemy held ground and were anxious to return to their command. In either case, the shallow graves were inadequate to protect the remains from potentially being dug up by hogs or exposed by heavy rains, which left the army with a desire to return at some point and do a better job of it.³

After the many deaths in the Battle of Pea Ridge, followed by the even more shocking carnage at Shiloh one month later, Union officials saw the need for a more respectful treatment of soldier dead on the battlefields. In July 1862, Congress passed a law to authorize the establishment of national cemeteries. The process was begun of reintering some of the soldier dead in more dignified graves. Thirty national cemeteries were established by the end of the war and more followed after the war. In 1867, a national cemetery was established at Fayetteville, and 110 remains of Union soldiers who were buried at Pea Ridge were disinterred and moved to this cemetery. As the Federal government only allowed Union soldiers to be buried in national cemeteries, parallel efforts on behalf of the Confederate dead had to be undertaken by private groups. In 1872, the Southern Memorial Association of Fayetteville created another cemetery on a hill east of the town.⁴ In 1873, more Union soldiers' remains were removed from graves at Pea Ridge and presumably reinterred in the national cemetery at Fayetteville.⁵

Civilians were soon drawn to Civil War battlefields. War correspondents and army photographers visited the battlefields as soon after the battle as they could get there. Artists followed, and on the heels of artists came the just plain curious. Battlefield tourism began in some parts of the country even as the war still raged.⁶ It may be assumed that at least a few tourists visited the Pea Ridge battlefield in the Reconstruction era, although northwest Arkansas was not very accessible to tourists until the coming of the railroad. Probably tourism of the Pea Ridge battlefield was very light before the 1880s.

Victorian-age tourists often searched for physical objects to take home as mementos of their travel. There was no law against pot-hunting, no ethical guidance telling visitors to “take only photographs and leave only footprints.” To the contrary, Victorian-age culture held keepsakes in high esteem, so battlefield tourists in that period

³ Shea and Hess, *Pea Ridge*, 272; Smith, *Altogether Fitting and Proper*, 6-7.

⁴ Huggard, *Pea Ridge National Military Park: An Administrative History*, 27.

⁵ Seamster, “First Marker Placed on Battlefield in 1885,” 104.

⁶ Smith, *Altogether Fitting and Proper*, 2-3.

generally had no compunctions about scavenging the ground for artifacts. It was even a fairly acceptable practice to break off a small chunk from a monument to take home as a souvenir.

Local farmers freely scavenged the battlefield as well. One might imagine that big, obvious items such as discarded guns and saddlery disappeared quickly, while many smaller items remained undiscovered for years. Farmers recalled the large number of cannonballs lodged in trees, and they continued to plow up shells and Minnie balls in their fields long into the next century. Many items eventually found their way from farmers' personal collections into local museum collections. Recovered cannonballs even got incorporated into the fabulous Monte Ne resort, where they were embedded in concrete at the front entrance to the main hotel.

It was not long before veteran soldiers returned to the battlefield. They went to recall their own personal heroism and to remember their fallen comrades. Some veterans returned for a specific purpose other than commemoration. Cpl. Lyman G. Bennett of the 36th Illinois Infantry Regiment, a skilled cartographer, was later assigned to the engineering department and tasked with mapping the Pea Ridge battlefield and several other battlefields in the Trans-Mississippi West. In 1876, he teamed up with the regimental chaplain, William M. Haigh, to write the history of his regiment. It seems from their account of the battle that one or both of them may have returned to the site to refamiliarize themselves with the terrain.⁷

One veteran of the Battle of Pea Ridge returned by himself to the battlefield some forty-nine years later. A. M. Payne, a soldier in the 3rd Missouri Infantry Regiment (Confederate), was no longer the smooth-faced young private of March 1862 but was then an old man with a white beard. He wrote after this visit to the battlefield that he was “surprised to find how little it had changed.” He located the rebuilt Elkhorn Tavern, recognized the elk antlers mounted above the gable, but noted that the barn was gone and replaced by an apple orchard. Payne stayed one night in the tavern, watched a full moon rise over the battlefield from his comfortable chair on the porch, and slept peacefully with the exception of one time during the night when an owl awakened him; its hooting brought up more memories of the long-ago battle. The next morning, Payne tried unsuccessfully to find the precise location where his commanding officer, Lt. Irvin Glasscock, had been killed right next to him. It bothered Payne that there was no marker for this fallen soldier, that “he lives only in the memory of his fast disappearing

⁷ Bennett and Haigh, *History of the Thirty-Sixth Regiment Illinois Volunteers* 152-53; State Historical Society of Missouri, “Lyman G. Bennett Collection,” no date, <https://files.shsmo.org/manuscripts/rolla/R0274.pdf>.

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comrades.”⁸ It was that very sentiment that drove many Civil War veterans to advocate for preservation of battlefields.

Sometimes, veterans took matters into their own hands and made their own monuments to their fallen comrades. Local historian Alvin Seamster recorded that the first marker erected on the Pea Ridge battlefield was placed there by Confederate veterans who wanted to honor the memory of their fellow soldiers. This marker was placed on the Morgan farm in 1885 at the spot where Gen. James McIntosh was killed. It was moved to the Elkhorn Tavern two years later when Confederate veterans held their first formal reunion in 1887. When they moved the marker, the old soldiers marked the spot of McIntosh’s death with a pile of rocks. In Seamster’s account this pile of rocks sat on the foundation where the monument was first erected. Seamster closed his account of this first marker with the note that “One old soldier returned each year during his lifetime to the spot where McIntosh was killed as a tribute to the general for having saved his life during the battle.”⁹

As noted in Chapter Four, Seamster’s account of the first marker is problematic because it stands in contradiction to the view that McIntosh was killed near the spot where McCulloch was killed, at the north edge of Oberson’s Field. There is no indication from Seamster’s account that he personally inspected the pile of rocks marking the spot where veteran soldiers thought McIntosh was killed. Seamster was deceased by the time an alternative view of where McIntosh was killed became standard. The pile of rocks and the foundation seem to have disappeared by the time park officials looked into the matter in the mid-1970s, but a local resident confidently marked the spot on a sketch map while another local resident stated in 1975 that he had identified the spot to a park ranger some years earlier.¹⁰

Civil War Soldiers’ Reunions

The first soldiers’ reunion was held by Confederate veterans on September 1, 1887, twenty-five years after the Battle of Pea Ridge. A large crowd assembled at a temporary campground located approximately one mile southwest of the Elkhorn Tavern “near a fine gushing spring” – probably Winton Spring. The location afforded a view of

⁸ A. M. Payne, “Memoirs of A. M. Payne on Battle of Pea Ridge, Copied from original letters and a typewritten Mss. in possession of Mrs. W. H. Flower, St. Louis, Mo.,” (typescript prepared by Idress Head Alvord, 1942), Pea Ridge NMP, history files.

⁹ Seamster, “First Marker Placed on Battlefield in 1885,” 104.

¹⁰ Sketch map by Mrs. Frank A. Walker, December 24, 1975, and record of conversation with Emery Bailey, April 21, 1975, Pea Ridge NMP, history files, File “Springer Cabin.” Seamster’s account seems to suggest that the “marker” erected in 1885 on the Morgan farm was in fact the marble shaft erected in 1887 at the Elkhorn Tavern, but the point is unclear. Perhaps the marker that was moved in 1887 was something more crude that did not last. One wonders, too, what became of the “foundation” for that first marker on the Morgan farm. Was it made of concrete? Could it simply lie buried in the forest now?

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Elkhorn Mountain and Round Mountain. According to Goodspeed (1889), the reunion drew “thousands of people, including many veterans.” Many Union veterans attended, even though it was a Confederate veterans’ reunion. Public speakers for the event included U.S. Representative Samuel W. Peel of Bentonville, Judge C. A. DeFrance, U.S. Senator James H. Berry, and the onetime Confederate governor of Texas, Francis R. Lubbock. After serving one term as governor, Lubbock had joined the Confederate army in 1863, rising to the post of aide-de-camp to President Jefferson Davis. Lubbock was in Richmond, Virginia, when the Confederacy collapsed; he fled the capital with Davis and was apprehended by Federal troops in Georgia. He served eight months in a Federal penitentiary for treason. Now, twenty-two years later, he delivered the main address to the reunion, calling on his listeners to stand by the old U.S. Constitution (albeit with its Fourteenth, Fifteenth, and Sixteenth amendments) and be loyal and conservative citizens.¹¹

The first reunion concluded with the dedication of a Confederate soldiers’ monument. The monument was purchased with funds donated by the people of Benton County. The monument was a plain shaft of marble on which was inscribed:

O give me a land where the rains are spread
And the living tread lightly on the hearts of the dead
Yes, give me a land that is blest by the dust
And bright with the deeds of the downtrodden just.

O give me a land with a grave in each spot,
And names in the graves that shall not be forgot,
Yes, give me the land of the wreck and the tomb;
There’s grandeur in graves, there’s a glory in gloom.

The graves of our dead, with green overgrown,
May yet form the footstool of liberty’s throne,
And each single wreck in the war-path of might,
Shall yet be a rock in the temple of right.

The marble shaft stood on a square pedestal with separate tributes on the north, west, and south facing sides to Confederate generals W. Y. Slack, Ben McCulloch, and James

¹¹ “First Reunion at Pea Ridge, September 1st, 1887,” in *100th Anniversary Battle of Pea Ridge* (1962 reprint; Bentonville: Benton County Historical Society, 1992), 5-6.

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McIntosh, respectively, and on the east facing side to all the Confederate soldiers who died on the battlefield on March 7 and 8, 1862.¹²

The first reunion was so successful the organizers decided to make it an annual event. The second reunion in 1888 was expressly called a reunion of “Blue and Gray” – one for veterans on both sides of the conflict. Blue and Gray reunions became popular around this time as aging veterans felt prepared to lay aside old battlefield animosities, while the nation as a whole aimed for “reconciliation.” Unfortunately, the nation’s move toward reconciliation signaled a broad retreat on one of the principal aims of Reconstruction: to establish racial equality. In the interest of fostering reconciliation, white Northerners moved to accept white Southerners’ view that the war had not been fought over slavery but rather over two different views of the defense of liberty. In the language of the time, the war had come about through a “tragic misunderstanding.” As the second reunion was billed as a “Blue and Gray” event, it was draped in the ideology of reconciliation.

This 1888 reunion stretched over several days. An estimated 2,500 people attended. The event was held in a grove near the Elkhorn Tavern where the Confederate soldiers’ monument stood. The highlight of the program came on the third day when thirty-nine ladies performed a dance drama titled “Secession and Reunion.” One lady was the Goddess of Liberty, while the other thirty-eight represented the thirty-eight states. They marched up on the platform and seated the Goddess of Liberty on a throne. Then they began marching around her, encircling her, all singing in harmony at first. By and by, the circle broke into two clumps and the singing fell out of harmony. Fifteen of the ladies stepped out of the circle and went off to one side, forming their own smaller circle. After a few minutes these disaffected ladies came back, and the ones who had never left the platform made room for them in the circle, and the harmonious singing resumed. The audience found this performance very pleasing.¹³

A third reunion in 1889 was styled the “Second Annual Reunion of the Blue and Gray.” This 1889 reunion was held over five days, September 3 to 7, and drew a revolving attendance of as many as 3,000 people at one time. U.S. Representative Peel gave the keynote address. The program culminated with the unveiling and dedication of a second monument.¹⁴

For this monument, the people of Benton County obtained the help of stone carver Lucy J. Daniel, a resident of Springdale from 1883 to 1886, who was then living in Missouri. Women stone carvers were rare in the nineteenth century. Daniel carved a

¹² “First Reunion at Pea Ridge, September 1st, 1887,” in *100th Anniversary Battle of Pea Ridge* (1962 reprint; Bentonville: Benton County Historical Society, 1992), 5-6.

¹³ “Blue and Grey,” *Benton County Democrat*, October 20, 1888.

¹⁴ A. W. Hurley, “The Blue and Gray Reunion at Pea Ridge, Sept. 1889,” typescript, no date, Pea Ridge NMP, history files.

female figure, “Miss Goddess of Liberty,” inspired by the dance drama of the year before. This was Daniel’s only known work of sculpture. The figure was cut from statuary marble and mounted atop blocks of sandstone cut from an outcropping on Pea Ridge. On one side, beneath the figure, are inscribed the words:

Spirit of eternal light,
Keep silent vigil o’er the brave;
The untarnished Blue,
The unsullied Gray,
In peace and love unite.

Proud heroes have fallen,
And over their grave,
Our hearts are united,
Our country to save.

Over the dead the living bend,
And up to their God their voices send
That in Liberty’s Crown of eternity’s day,
The Blue and the Gray.

Beneath the inscription was a bas relief of two clasped hands and another inscription, “A United Soldiery.” Daniel reportedly made the sculpture as a gift to veterans. Her father, Isom Daniel, served on the Union side in the 23rd Kentucky Infantry Regiment.¹⁵

The 1889 reunion was the last one held at the Pea Ridge battlefield for some time, because a grand national Blue and Gray reunion took precedence in 1890 and the annual Pea Ridge event was not revived after that. However, Civil War veterans of northwest Arkansas continued to meet locally in smaller gatherings well into the twentieth century. For instance, in the year 1911 the local chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy hosted a dinner in Rogers for old Confederate veterans. Pea Ridge pioneer J. Wade Sikes, now in his eighty-third year, attended along with fourteen other veterans. There was an address, a reading, Civil War songs were sung by the ladies, and then some reminiscences were offered by the veterans themselves.¹⁶

¹⁵ Abby Burnett, “Lucy J. Daniel (1865-1957)” in *Encyclopedia of Arkansas* at <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/lucy-j-daniel-6450/>.

¹⁶ “Reception to War Veterans,” *Rogers (AR) Democrat*, undated clipping, Rogers Museum, Civil War vertical file. In the next column is mentioned the U.S. Supreme Court decision (1911) to break up the

The First National Military Parks

In the last decade of the nineteenth century, Congress established the first handful of national military parks around the most famous Civil War battlefields. The spate of preservation acts began with the establishment of Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park in Georgia and Tennessee and Antietam National Battlefield Site in Maryland in 1890. Next came Shiloh National Military Park in 1894, Gettysburg National Military Park in 1895, and finally Vicksburg National Military Park in 1899. Each national military park included a substantial acreage covering most of the battlefield area. The classification “national military park” was offered by Henry Van Ness Boynton, a leading light in the Civil War battlefield preservation movement. The word choice was significant, for it signaled a national commitment to a new, more ambitious approach to battlefield preservation. Rather than preserve only a small plot of ground around a cemetery or a monument with which to remember the nation’s sacrifice, the concept was to preserve the whole landscape where the battle took place so that the course of battle would be remembered more clearly. Those two competing visions of preservation and commemoration – monument or landscape – would continue to exist side by side in the Civil War battlefield preservation movement for many decades to come, but now the ideal of landscape preservation had been established as one practical alternative.¹⁷

The aging Civil War veterans were much involved. The veterans were the most interested in preserving whole battlefields, not just a sacred grove here or there. For them, relatively unchanged landscapes were a big aid to them for remembering events, while drastically altered landscapes had the opposite effect, dimming their recollections. Veterans’ reunions brought national attention to the battlefields. There was a growing sense that veterans’ firsthand knowledge of what took place on the battlefields must be preserved before the veterans all passed on. By the 1890s, aging veterans were very well represented among members of Congress. In establishing the national military parks, Congress provided for park commissions to administer each area under the overall direction of the Secretary of War. Knowledgeable veteran commanders were appointed to the park commissions. The park commissions called upon veterans as knowledge sources to assemble detailed information about each battle.¹⁸

Of course, veterans’ ground-truthing on the battlefield and onsite recollections were not the only sources of information for reconstructing the course of a battle. After-action reports written by the various field commanders just days after the battle were the gold standard used by military historians in putting together a coherent account of what

Standard Oil Company. Huggard’s *Pea Ridge National Military Park: An Administrative History*, references a final soldier reunion in 1928.

¹⁷ Smith, *Altogether Fitting and Proper*, 37.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 36-48.

happened. The massive effort to collect military reports and correspondence into one authoritative collection for publication was well underway by this time. Initiated in 1864, the effort culminated in the 1890s. The 128 books were published from 1881 to 1901 under the title *War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*. The series was replete with after-action reports, and yet those prized reports were an imperfect record, because they were limited by the fog of war and distorted in some cases by the officer's desire to put his leadership in the best possible light. So, the living memory of veterans was viewed as a valuable supplement and even a corrective to the voluminous written record. Veterans' recollections of unit positions would be reflected in the abundant signage at these oldest of all national military parks, notably at Shiloh and Vicksburg.

The movement toward national reconciliation influenced Civil War battlefield preservation. During Reconstruction, the attention to battlefields was divided as Union army veterans focused primarily on the Gettysburg battlefield in Pennsylvania while Confederate army veterans dominated commemorative events in the South. As Blue and Grey soldier reunions became the norm in the 1890s, Civil War veterans became more unified in their quest for preservation of battlefields. The Secretary of War generally took pains to appoint both Union and Confederate veterans to the national military park commissions. In the interest of national reconciliation, commemorations aimed toward sympathetic and balanced appraisals of both armies' performances on each field of battle.¹⁹

The handful of national military parks established in the 1890s gave the War Department more experience in preservation. The War Department already had taken on responsibility for the protection of Yellowstone National Park in the 1880s. Now the Secretary of War oversaw the various national military park commissions. The management of the national military parks went well beyond the War Department's earlier caretaker responsibility for national cemeteries. Now the work included historical research, vegetation management, land acquisition, and coordination with private associations on the placement of memorials – all activities that the NPS would eventually take on when it came to manage these areas.²⁰

Civil War Battlefield Preservation in Arkansas

The movement to preserve the Pea Ridge battlefield always faced an uphill struggle in Congress because the battle took place in Arkansas. To most members of

¹⁹ Smith, *Altogether Fitting and Proper*, 35.

²⁰ Richard West Sellars, "A Very Large Array: Early Federal Historic Preservation – The Antiquities Act, Mesa Verde, and the National Park Service Act," *Natural Resources Journal* 47 (Spring 2007), 286-90; War Department, *Annual Reports of the Gettysburg National Military Park Commission to the Secretary of War, 1893-1904* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1905), 103-07.

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Congress, its location was so far west it did not seem to warrant the same level of attention as Civil War battlefields in Virginia or Tennessee. But Arkansas citizens did not see it that way. The battle was the most decisive engagement in the war for the state of Arkansas. The forces engaged – some 25,000 men – constituted a big battle regardless of where the battle was fought.

U.S. Representative Samuel W. Peel of Bentonville raised the matter in Congress for the first time in 1890. In a floor speech, he introduced six petitions signed by 402 citizens of Benton County, Arkansas asking for an appropriation to purchase land on Pea Ridge where the battle was fought. The matter was referred to the House Committee on Military Affairs, but no further action was taken.²¹

Meanwhile, another movement began for the preservation of Arkansas’s second biggest battlefield at Prairie Grove. After preservationists tried and failed to get state or national officials interested in their project, the local chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy stepped up and purchased nine acres at the center of the Prairie Grove battlefield. A private park was dedicated in 1910 and a stone archway and wooden bandstand were built with private funds in the 1920s. The local chapter of the Lyons Club took over management of the small park in 1957, embarking on fundraising and another set of improvements, which included the addition of a museum in the 1960s. Their ultimate aims were to get the park added to the state park system and enlarged. The promoters finally succeeded in their first aim in 1971. More land was purchased or donated in 1980, 1992, and 2005. Today the Prairie Grove Battlefield State Park covers 840 acres.²²

The movement to establish a national military park at Pea Ridge gained momentum in the 1920s after the Pea Ridge National Park Association was formed. The president of the association was an old Civil War veteran, Capt. C. L. Pickens. With Arkansas citizens lobbying for a park, U.S. Representative John N. Tillman of Fayetteville introduced a bill in Congress. Tillman’s bill failed, in part because Tillman ill-advisedly headed his legislation “to establish the Peel National Park at the Pea Ridge battlefield at Benton County, Arkansas.” Although the namesake and recently deceased Samuel W. Peel of Bentonville was a Confederate veteran of both the Battle of Pea Ridge and the Battle of Prairie Grove as well as a former U.S. congressman from Arkansas, he was hardly a household name for most Americans. The desire to memorialize this rather obscure local hero only served to confirm Congress’s doubts that the Pea Ridge battlefield was too far west to merit national attention. Tillman tried again with five more bills, dropping Peel’s name and calling for establishment of a “national military park at

²¹ Huggard, *Pea Ridge National Military Park: An Administrative History*, 27.

²² Smith, *Altogether Fitting and Proper*, 62; Staff of the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism, “Prairie Grove Battlefield State Park,” *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*, at <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/prairie-grove-battlefield-state-park-1253/>.

and near Pea Ridge, Arkansas.” Finally, he tried another approach, calling for a modest \$2,000 appropriation and the appointment of a commission to look into the matter. In Tillman’s proposal, the three-member commission would consist of a commissioned officer of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers together with one Union and one Confederate veteran. The three would inspect the battlefield, consider the battle’s historical significance, and evaluate the potential for a national military park at the site. Congress granted the appropriation and the commission was appointed. The commission performed its work. Unfortunately, it did not rate the significance of the Civil War site as very high. So, the report hobbled Tillman’s further legislative efforts to establish a park.²³

Efforts to establish a national military park at Pea Ridge continued under new leadership in the 1930s. Roland Judd, executive director of the Pea Ridge National Park Association, led battlefield tours to build public interest. Arkansas’s 1936 centennial celebration of statehood became an occasion for sparking more public interest in battlefield preservation at Pea Ridge. Arkansas’s Governor Charles H. Brough launched a fundraising campaign for land acquisition, hoping to take advantage of a Federal program of matching grants for preservation. At the end of the decade, the movement acquired a new champion in Clyde T. Ellis of Bentonville, a state legislator who was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1939. Ellis wrote that he had grown up on the edge of the battlefield (in Garfield – before moving to Bentonville), so he was quite familiar with it.²⁴

By the time Ellis joined the movement, much had changed at the national level for Civil War battlefield preservation. In 1933, all the national military parks that were under War Department administration were transferred to the NPS in the Department of the Interior. The transfer came as part of a wholesale transfer of War Department parks and monuments, Forest Service monuments, and national capital parks to the National Park System. Retiring NPS Director Horace Albright suggested the transfer to newly elected President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who saw its merits and carried out the transfer by executive order. The transfer added around sixty new units to the National Park System including about twenty Civil War sites. They included more battlefields at Fredericksburg, Spotsylvania, and Petersburg, Virginia; Stones River and Fort Donelson in Tennessee, and Kennesaw Mountain in Georgia. Other Civil War sites included Appomattox Courthouse and the Custis-Lee Mansion. Besides the many Civil War sites, there were Revolutionary War battlefields, frontier forts, old turnpikes, and archeological sites (as well as many natural areas). The reorganization was transformative for the NPS,

²³ Huggard, *Pea Ridge National Military Park: An Administrative History*, 28-32; “The following article, written by May C. Downer of Rogers, Arkansas, appeared in the October 16, 1955 Joplin Globe,” *Benton County Pioneer* 2, no. 3 (March 1957), 7.

²⁴ Huggard, *Pea Ridge National Military Park: An Administrative History*, 35-38.

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enlarging the agency’s role from steward of the nation’s national parks to keeper of the nation’s premier historic sites as well.²⁵

But that was not all. In the New Deal, the NPS put its shoulder to the wheel to help administer emergency work relief programs, especially the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Through the CCC, the NPS was instrumental in developing state park systems, many of which combined natural-area parks and historic-site parks as the National Park System now modeled. In another new development, the Historic Sites Act of 1935 lent support to the historic preservation movement at the state and local levels and placed the NPS in an administrative and advisory role that became a preview of its later role as keeper of the National Register of Historic Places under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. And through the Park, Parkway, and Recreation Area Study Act of 1936, the NPS was assigned the task of scoping the Federal government’s role in providing outdoor recreation for the American people – a comprehensive effort that brought more attention to historic sites and further embedded the NPS in the historic preservation movement.

The NPS’s approach to national military parks differed sharply from how the War Department had treated them. The War Department’s sense of the national military parks’ purpose was essentially proprietary and inward looking. The purpose of battlefield commemoration was chiefly to honor the Civil War veterans. The purpose of battlefield preservation was chiefly to preserve the terrain that would allow future generations of military personnel to understand what had happened there. The War Department had a narrow sense of history focused on military events. The purpose of military history was to inform military science, to sharpen the current military’s understanding of strategy and tactics. The War Department worked closely with Civil War veterans through park commissions and commemorative events. By the time the War Department gave up administration of the national military parks in 1933, surviving Civil War veterans were in their eighties and nineties so the traditional focus on the veterans was fast becoming obsolete.²⁶

The NPS treated the Civil War national military parks as places where the general public could connect with the nation’s past. The NPS had a broader sense of history that included political, economic, and social history. The NPS’s historians and site managers were intent on contextualizing the battles within the larger meaning of the war.²⁷

The Civil War sites were only a subset of the many historic sites under the NPS’s purview. If Civil War veterans had once claimed the Civil War battlefields as sacred ground not only for themselves but for all Americans who had lived through the war, that

²⁵ Barry Mackintosh, *The National Parks: Shaping the System* (Washington: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1991), 24-43.

²⁶ Smith, *Altogether Fitting and Proper*, 110.

²⁷ *Ibid*, 134.

vision was not shared by most Americans in the 1930s, as most had been born since the Civil War and did not have firsthand memories of those times. The NPS partially accepted the veterans' notion that the battlefields were sacred ground, but the NPS also recognized the general public's desire to visit these areas for inspiration and enjoyment. As one administrator said in defense of new horse trails and golf links built by the CCC at Petersburg National Battlefield, the point was to make "the area more beautiful and interesting to the public." NPS policies backed him up. Visitors did not come to these places to weep, one statement of policy noted. Visitors came to enjoy, and each visit had to be regarded in some sense as a recreational visit.²⁸

Those Arkansans who were active in the movement to establish a national military park at Pea Ridge were well aware of the transfer of battlefield administration over to the NPS. As auto tourism was by this time fully formed, Arkansans were familiar with how auto tourism and public use of national parks dovetailed. Arkansas had its own national park, Hot Springs National Park, established in 1921 from the old Hot Springs Reservation. During the depression decade the historic bathing resort was a popular tourist destination. Bullish on national parks, the Rogers Chamber of Commerce got behind the Pea Ridge battlefield preservation movement in the late 1930s, interested in drawing more tourism to Benton County. Representative Clyde Ellis went to NPS Director Arno B. Cammerer to request help for their project, and Cammerer tasked the superintendent of Vicksburg National Military Park, Walter Coleman, with inspecting the battlefield and filing a report. Ellis informed the Rogers Chamber of Commerce that the NPS superintendent was coming to Pea Ridge, and he suggested the chamber might give the NPS official a "small reception" to show him there was local public support for the project.²⁹

Coleman's report did not advance the project, however. Coleman observed that the landscape was different from the way it looked in 1862 due to more intensive cultivation of cleared areas and forest succession in wooded areas. He did allow that the changed appearance was not an insurmountable obstacle to historic preservation. What was more discouraging was Coleman's opinion that the battle itself was not one of "major rank." Coleman's report was referred to the Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings, and Monuments, a body established by the Historic Sites Act. The Advisory Board picked up on Coleman's last point and averred that the battle, though dramatic and interesting to the student of military history, was not as important as other Civil War battlefield sites in the National Park System. Again, the view emerged that the Pea Ridge battlefield was too far west to qualify for preservation at least at the Federal level.³⁰

²⁸ Smith, *Altogether Fitting and Proper*, 133-34.

²⁹ Huggard, *Pea Ridge National Military Park: An Administrative History*, 37.

³⁰ *Ibid*, 38-39.

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Undaunted by Coleman’s negative report and the Advisory Board’s adverse recommendation, Ellis turned to the Arkansas state office of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) for another study, this one aimed at evaluating the potential for preserving the battlefield in a state or county park. This last initiative by Ellis was soon shelved when the U.S. entered World War II. But as Christopher Huggard noted in his administrative history of Pea Ridge National Military Park, this WPA-funded study, performed by the NPS’s assistant landscape architect Rex C. Connor under the direction of the WPA’s district landscape architect Walter Metschke, actually accomplished important groundwork that was helpful when the proposal for a national military park was revived more than a decade later in the mid-1950s. Connor’s report addressed the right questions, namely: 1) what were the existing conditions of the battlefield, 2) what were the educational, historical, and recreational possibilities of the area, and 3) what was the appropriate type of preservation, restoration, and development.

Of most interest to this historic resource study, Connor’s report documented the condition of historic structures and other features as they appeared in 1941. He reported that the historic Telegraph Road or “Old Wire Road” was “rough at present” but could be restored and put “in good condition with little work.” Connor was able to compare contemporary road alignments with what they were in 1862 using two War Department maps, one dating from 1865 and the other from 1926.³¹

Connor stated that the historic Elkhorn Tavern, though it was burned during the war, was rebuilt on its original foundation between the two original chimneys, so it constituted a potentially valuable historic resource. Leetown was mostly gone; only the Mayfield House was still standing. Pratt’s store was “not located,” implying that it, too, was gone. Many large and small artifacts from the battlefield were collected in Dick Rice’s Castle Museum and the Elkhorn Tavern’s museum. Connor found that trenches and fortifications still appeared faintly on the landscape here and there. Numerous “worm type rail” fences were reminiscent of Civil War times, and a picket fence in front of the Elkhorn Tavern more or less matched the one that existed in 1862. Round Mountain and Elkhorn Mountain were covered in forest while the lower plain was mostly in cultivation. He noted that the timbered areas consisted mostly of “small oak and hickory timber ranging up to 12” to 16” in diameter.”³²

Connor’s far-sighted list of recommendations are recorded in Huggard’s administrative history. It is worth noting that Connor urged against the further erection of commemorative monuments, pointing out that wayside exhibits would do a better job of interpreting the course of the battle. The best commemoration of the battlefield, Connor wrote, would be the restoration and preservation of the area itself, not more monuments.

³¹ Huggard, *Pea Ridge National Military Park: An Administrative History*, 40. The maps are identified in the administrative history.

³² *Ibid*, 40-41.

(Later, it would be noted that the near absence of monuments on the Pea Ridge battlefield was one of its distinguishing qualities as it gave the landscape a more pristine or historic look compared with the Civil War battlefields like Gettysburg, Shiloh, and Vicksburg that fairly bristle with monuments erected in the half century or so after the war.) Connor thought the area preserved should include the battlefield from the vicinity around Elkhorn Tavern westward to the vicinity around Leetown as well as Round Mountain and Elkhorn Mountain, and he advocated land acquisition along roads and the main highway “to preclude encroachment of commercial interests.” Connor’s idea of park boundaries was fairly close to what would emerge in the final park proposal.³³

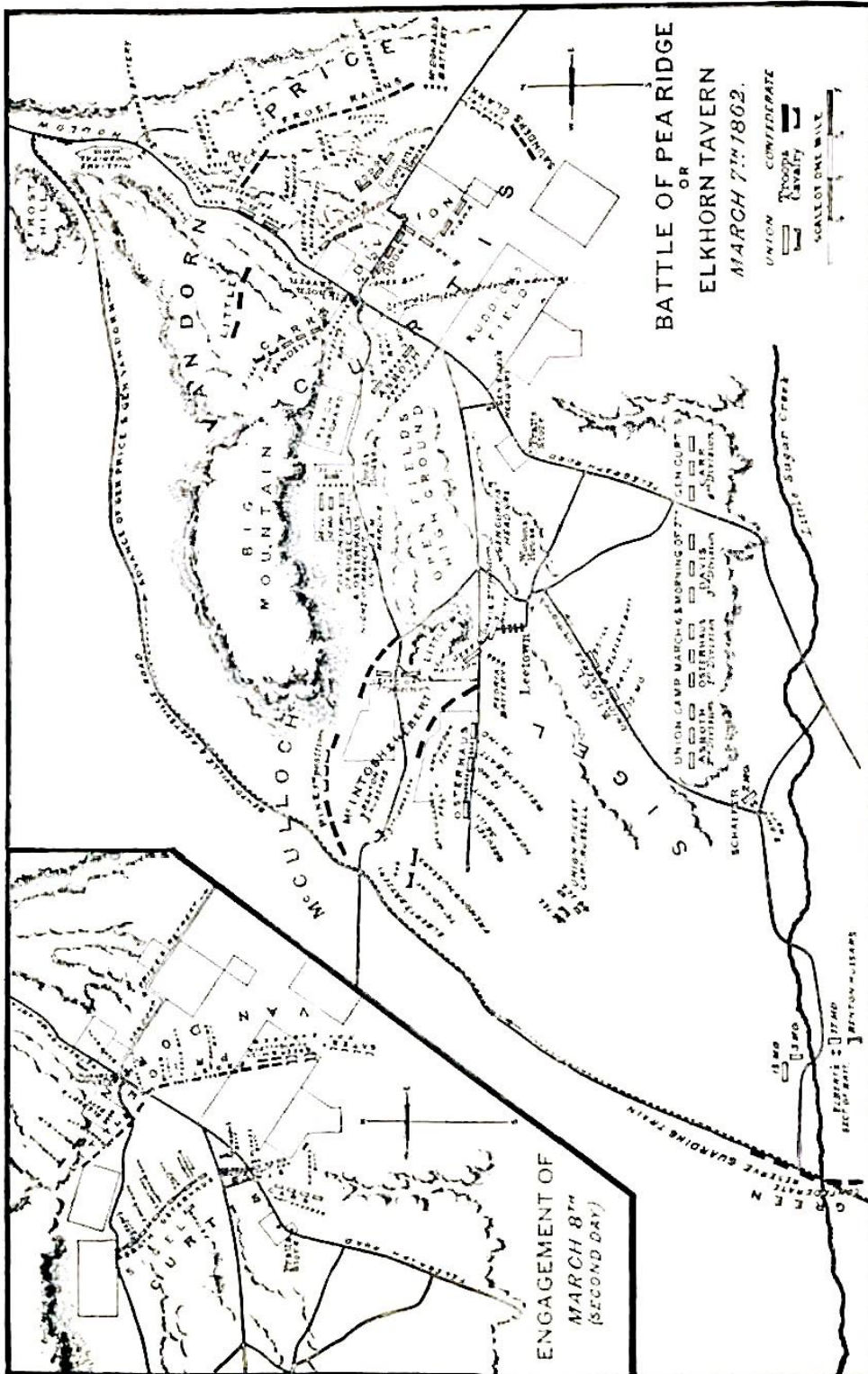
Establishment of Pea Ridge National Military Park

The final campaign to establish Pea Ridge National Military Park took place in the 1950s. Alvin Seamster, then mayor of Bentonville, along with other key members of the Benton County Historical Society, initiated the project and drummed up local support. Governor Orval E. Faubus took the crucial step of forming the Arkansas Civil War Commission in 1955 with the express goal of investigating the feasibility of acquiring land for Pea Ridge battlefield preservation on the scale outlined in Connor’s report. U.S. Representative James Trimble of Berryville, Carroll County, representing northwest Arkansas, introduced legislation to establish the park. U. S. Senator J. William Fulbright introduced a companion bill in the Senate. The campaign hit a major stumbling block when Assistant Secretary of the Interior Wesley A. D’Ewart submitted a negative recommendation to the congressional committees, once again expressing the view that the Battle of Pea Ridge lacked sufficient importance. However, by garnering support from other persons of influence, including retired Gen. Douglas MacArthur, the campaign overcame Interior’s objection and Congress passed the legislation anyway. For a more detailed narrative of this interesting campaign, the reader is referred to Huggard’s *Pea Ridge National Military Park: An Administrative History*.³⁴

Once the authorizing legislation was enacted on July 20, 1956, two parallel efforts got underway to make Pea Ridge National Military Park a reality. One effort was centered in the NPS. Starting with historical research on the Battle of Pea Ridge, the NPS effort was focused on two practical needs: first, identification and survey of the desired park boundaries; and second, the creation of historical base maps to inform the planning for how the park would be developed. The other effort was taken up by the state and revolved around acquiring the land for the park. Independent of this two-pronged effort by the NPS and the state, the U.S. Congress established the Civil War Centennial Commission in 1957, creating a further stimulant (see Map 8, next page).

³³ Huggard, *Pea Ridge National Military Park: An Administrative History*, 41-42.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 42-52.



Map 9.

COMMEMORATION AND PRESERVATION

Leading the NPS effort was Ed Bearss, historian at Vicksburg National Military Park. He must have begun researching the Battle of Pea Ridge soon after the legislation was passed, for his first publication on the battle, an article in the *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, was published in 1958. Then followed a series of reports for internal use by the NPS in setting up the park. These reports, which are held in the park's history files, remain valuable sources today:

- 1961. "Artillery at Pea Ridge." A typescript memo to the superintendent, this document contains 194 pages of narrative text and footnotes about the different artillery units deployed by both armies at Pea Ridge. The principal aim of this report was to provide information for the NPS to procure the correct types and numbers of guns and where to display them on the battlefield.
- 1962. "Historical Land Ownership Map." This typescript report was based on land title records in the Benton County Deed Books. It provided the land title history behind all land ownerships at the time of the battle. Bearss presented the information by township, range, and section for the following sections: 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 33, 34, 35 and 36 in Township 21 North, Range 29 West; and sections 2, 3 and 10 in Township 20 North, Range 29 West. The last section included the detached area of the park covering the Federal trenches overlooking Little Sugar Creek. As each section included multiple ownership tracts in 1862, and as transfers of ownership often involved splitting the tract into pieces, Bearss' narrative format is hard to follow. Yet it contains valuable data on who was living there before the Civil War and gives an indication of land values in the pre-Civil War decade.
- 1962. "Documented Narrative to Support Historical Features and Vegetative Cover Shown on the Pea Ridge Historical Base Map." Bearss combed through the *Official Records* as well as regimental histories and other sources from which he gleaned contemporary descriptions of the terrain, the vegetation, and cultural features such as fence lines, roads, and cornfields. He organized the descriptions by locale, for example, he provided seven pages of short descriptions of the Elkhorn Tavern and its immediate environs.
- 1965. "Leetown, Elkhorn Tavern Grounds, Federal Earthworks, and Tanyard as of March, 1862." In this 181-page narrative report, Bearss combined physical description drawn from the above effort with historical context. Thus, he discussed the pre-war development of Leetown, the hasty construction of the Federal Earthworks on the eve of battle, and the frontier tanning industry around the Tanyard.

Bearss's output on behalf of Pea Ridge National Military Park was impressive. While working on Pea Ridge history from his post at Vicksburg National Military Park, he

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conducted similar work on behalf of Wilson’s Creek Battlefield Park, which was established in 1960, and on behalf of Arkansas Post National Memorial, which was also established in 1960 and whose long history included the Battle of Arkansas Post, fought in December 1862. Bearss was first and foremost a historian of the Civil War. He wrote his master’s thesis on the Confederate officer Patrick Cleburne, and began his distinguished career in the NPS at Vicksburg National Military Park in 1955. He transferred to the NPS’s Washington Office in 1966, and served as chief historian from 1981 to 1994. He became known to the American public through his lively appearance in the Ken Burns miniseries documentary, *The Civil War* (1990), which was watched by millions. Long into retirement, he led popular battlefield tours.

Bearss was a veteran soldier of World War II. Born in 1923 in Montana, he enlisted in the U.S. Marines in April 1942. His platoon was on patrol in dense jungle on the Japanese-held island of New Britain when it suddenly came under heavy enemy machine gun fire. Every man in Bearss’s platoon that day was killed or wounded. Bearss escaped with two badly shot up arms. It was January 1944. More than a year and a half later on VJ Day, he was still in hospital undergoing surgeries to save his arms.³⁵

While Bearss and a couple other historians and historical architects were at work on behalf of the NPS, a group of Arkansas citizens were carrying out the state’s land acquisition program. In 1959, Governor Faubus appointed five men to the Pea Ridge National Park Commission. They were retired judge Neil Bollinger of Little Rock (chair), Homer Fleeman of Rogers, Hugh Parks of Van Buren, Carl Brown of Harrison, and Max Walker of Pea Ridge (secretary). Two attorneys were appointed to assist the commission: Hardy Croxton of Rogers and Clayton Little of Bentonville.³⁶

Since the commission’s work involved a lot of negotiating with landowners over the purchase price for their parcels of land, and since the negotiations mostly took place in the Benton County Courthouse, it fell to Max Walker, a native of Pea Ridge currently residing in Bentonville, to represent the commission at most of the negotiations and court appearances. After the commission completed its initial work of surveying all the parcels that it aimed to acquire and getting each one appraised, Walker’s work in the courthouse started in earnest. As the commission worked through condemnation proceedings to acquire tracts from unwilling sellers, Walker spent many hours in the witness stand explaining the commission’s position to the judge with the unwilling sellers looking on.

³⁵ Ed Lengel, “Semper Fi: U.S. Marine, World War II Veteran, Historian Ed Bearss,” September 17, 2020, at <https://www.nationalww2museum.org/war/articles/us-marine-historian-ed-bearss>.

³⁶ Billie Jines, “Pea Ridge Man on Commission to Acquire Property for Pea Ridge National Military Park,” in *Pea Ridge, the Community...as seen through the writing of Billie Jines* (Pea Ridge, AR: Bob Jines Family Publications, 1977), 25.

Indeed, he not only had to face some angry landowners in the courtroom, sometimes they went to his house to voice their displeasure with him.³⁷

Max Walker came from an old Pea Ridge family. His grandfather, Robert Anderson Walker, was born in Tennessee in 1831 and came to Pea Ridge before the Civil War. His father, Robert Franklin Walker, was born on Pea Ridge in 1867, died in 1953, and was buried in the Pea Ridge Cemetery. Max Walker was born on Pea Ridge in 1920. Numerous ancestors of Max Walker were buried in the Pea Ridge Cemetery, the Patterson Cemetery, and the Tucks Chapel Cemetery on Pea Ridge. There was no question why Walker was selected for the commission and why he drew the short straw to sit through the condemnation suits. A former mail carrier in Pea Ridge, he knew all his neighbors. While condemnation proceedings were tough on the community, Walker was assured of the fact that many people in Arkansas and Benton County wanted the Pea Ridge battlefield preserved and memorialized. People of Walker's generation remembered that old Civil War veterans had once "carried the torch for this dream," but now those veterans were all gone and it was up to another generation to bring the project to fruition. Walker was not paid for his work for the commission; it was a volunteer position.³⁸

Max Walker was another World War II vet like Ed Bearss. He went into the army in 1943 and took part with the 29th Infantry Division in the D-Day landings at Omaha Beach. He was critically injured on August 1, 1945.³⁹

While the power of condemnation was an indispensable hammer, most landowners came to terms without too much resistance. Frances Cox Scott, who owned the Elkhorn Tavern and still resided there, said she would sell as long as she could reside at the place for the rest of her life. She was in her nineties. The commission agreed to make that allowance. Scott moved away in 1959 and died on April 3, 1960 at the age of ninety-five.⁴⁰

The commission declined to purchase one tract of 140 acres in the northeast sector of the authorized area because the deed carried a dower's right that was very difficult to negotiate around. This old homestead consisted of well-wooded broken terrain wrapped around a northeast shoulder of Elkhorn Mountain. The land was on the very edge of the fighting in the Confederate retreat on March 8. The Telegraph Road ran on a

³⁷ Ibid, 25-26.

³⁸ Jines, "Pea Ridge Man on Commission to Acquire Property for Pea Ridge National Military Park," 25. Information on the Walkers comes from the Find-a-Grave website as well as Billie Jines, "The Peas of Pea Ridge," in *Pea Ridge, the Community...as seen through the writing of Billie Jines* (Pea Ridge, AR: Bob Jines Family Publications, 1977), 40.

³⁹ "Max Walker," at https://siscofuneralhome.net/obituaries/print?0_id=3531830.

⁴⁰ Jines, "Pea Ridge Man on Commission to Acquire Property for Pea Ridge National Military Park," 26; Maxine Miracle Wasson, "Cox Family and the Elkhorn Tavern," no date, typescript, Pea Ridge NMP, history files.

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north-south trajectory just to the east of it. Other than to make the area of the park compact, there was not much else to recommend this property for acquisition. As a result, the park boundary, which was otherwise roughly rectangular in shape, made a sizeable jag around this parcel in the park’s northeast quadrant. This homestead only recently was added to the park through the cooperation of four siblings who were all born on the property. Its chief value to the park is to eliminate a missing piece and make the area sturdier from an ecological standpoint.⁴¹

Landscape Restoration and Park Development

As the Park Service assigned a superintendent and staff to the area and established the Pea Ridge battlefield as the nation’s latest national military park, it had a two-pronged objective: one, to restore the landscape as much as possible to its appearance in 1862; and two, to build the infrastructure that would allow the public to get around the battlefield and draw inspiration from it. The two aims were not wholly compatible with one another. This was the classic “preservation versus use” conundrum at the heart of the NPS mission statement. It was no different from the dual preservation-and-enjoyment mandate that the NPS had in Yellowstone National Park or any other natural-area park, except that the preservation ideal in this instance was not nature primeval but rather a rural landscape restored to the way it looked at a specific time in history.

The first superintendent at Pea Ridge, John T. Willett, commented on the appearance of the landscape when the park was newly established: “The terrain of the area is one of the more strikingly beautiful of the many battlefields within the National Park System.” The park’s roughly 4,300 acres covered “all the significant land over which the battle was fought.”⁴² There were no residential subdivisions intruding on the viewshed. The gentle relief and the mix of farm field and woodland were pleasing to the eye and not drastically altered from how the area appeared at the time of the Civil War.⁴³

Superintendent Willett went on to describe the main features of park development soon to be added. First, there would be a visitor center with indoor interpretive exhibits and an outdoor observation platform where visitors would gain “a panoramic view of Pea Ridge and ‘Round Top’ mountain and the Elkhorn Tavern.” And second, the NPS would build a park road, a “closed-loop interpretive tour route,” around the area to give visitors the opportunity to explore the battlefield by way of a self-guiding auto trip. Willett

⁴¹ Jines, “Pea Ridge Man on Commission to Acquire Property for Pea Ridge National Military Park,” 26; “Conservation Fund donating Green homestead to Park Service, which ‘completes’ Pea Ridge National Military Park,” *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*, August 4, 2023.

⁴² John T. Willett, “Development of Pea Ridge National Military Park,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 21, no. 2 (Summer 1962), 167.

⁴³ Speech delivered by George H. Benjamin, May 6 1960, copy at Pea Ridge NMP, history files.

interpreted for his readers the NPS mission of preservation and use as it applied to Pea Ridge:

The mission of the Park Service at Pea Ridge is to provide an opportunity to its visitors to gain a sense of reality of the Battle of Pea Ridge, an understanding of its importance in saving Missouri for the Union, and its influence upon later events of the Civil War. This must be done and at the same time preserve the battlefield for the coming generations.⁴⁴

In restoring the landscape to a semblance of how it appeared in 1862, the NPS could not put back all the old farmhouses and barns that had long since disappeared. Missing buildings such as Pratt's store or the log homes in Leetown would mostly be left for the visitor's imagination to put back into the scene, sometimes with the help of an artist's rendering on a wayside exhibit. In a few cases, missing buildings might be "ghosted" into the scene by placement of foundation walls or by mowing the former footprint of the missing structure. Only in very special cases, as with the Elkhorn Tavern, would the NPS undertake historic restoration of a building.

The NPS performed intensive study of the Elkhorn Tavern to make the historic restoration as authentic as possible. It was learned that the building, after its destruction by bushwhackers, was first rebuilt as a one-story cabin between the still-standing tall chimneys. A second story was added in the 1880s, reportedly on the same plan as the original pre-war structure. Various alterations to the building followed in the early twentieth century. The NPS chose to restore the building to the way it appeared in the 1880s because it had good documentation for that period and it was presumed that the restoration would then closely resemble the building that was there at the time of the battle. In 1965 and 1966, portions of the building were torn off and others were rebuilt and strengthened.⁴⁵

Meanwhile, nearly all buildings within the park area that post-dated the war were removed. There were many, and a lot of them were removed by the owners before the NPS began its restoration work. Local historian Billie Jines described the process in the early going:

⁴⁴ Willett, "Development of Pea Ridge National Military Park," 67.

⁴⁵ Henry A. Judd and Buford L. Pickens, "Historic Structures Report Part I Architectural Data Section on Elkhorn Tavern, Pea Ridge National Military Park, Pea Ridge, Arkansas," 1965, typescript, Pea Ridge NMP, history files; "Architects Make New Find; One-Story Elkhorn Tavern," July 29 1965, and "Elkhorn Tavern Nears Completion," December 26, 1965, newspaper clippings in Rogers Museum, Elkhorn Tavern vertical file.

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As the deeds for parcels of land were acquired, the commission gave the landowners from whom they purchased them a right to remove their houses off of the park area if they wished. Some did. Some houses were not moveable. Among the buildings removed was the Central Schoolhouse. It had not been used for a school for a decade. It was moved across Highway 62 to a site near Pratt Cemetery.⁴⁶

After the deeds were transferred to the NPS, the NPS had all the remaining buildings boarded up pending removal. The NPS hired Max Walker’s brother, Russell Walker of Pea Ridge, to seal up the abandoned buildings. Russell Walker became the first employee of Pea Ridge National Military Park and stayed on until retirement.⁴⁷

In arranging for demolition of all the abandoned houses, two older houses of approximate Civil War vintage presented judgment calls, but ultimately got removed. The first to go was the Mayfield House in Leetown. Superintendent Willett decided that for the sake of aesthetics it should be removed, and in that era before the National Historic Preservation Act there was little further discussion. Once it was razed, there was a ripple of consternation in the local community as some thought the house dated to Civil War times, if not to the day of battle. The second house, the Winton Springs House, stayed until 1993. For years it served as park employee housing. It became a costly nuisance to maintain, but a decision to demolish it was put on hold when research determined that the house, or a part of it, was there in the Civil War. Ultimately, the changed appearance of the house as well as the high cost of maintenance led to its removal notwithstanding its vintage. But some people later regretted that decision.⁴⁸

Landscape restoration required realigning a section of State Highway 72 where it crossed the battlefield. In 1956, State Highway 72 cut across the battlefield where Ford Road runs today, passed by the Elkhorn Tavern, and followed the old Huntsville Road a short distance before bending due south and joining U.S. Highway 62 near Garfield. The state of Arkansas consented to abandon this section of the highway as well as the entire section of Telegraph Road running north and south through the park. However, the state and the NPS came to a compromise on where State Highway 72 would be rerouted south. Thus, the highway realignment made a bend just inside the park boundary and went south to its junction with U.S. Highway 62 through the western edge of the park. The roadbed

⁴⁶ Jines, “Pea Ridge Man on Commission to Acquire Property for Pea Ridge National Military Park,” 26. In its new location, the old school building was used as a community building and a Church of God chapel for some years but has since vanished.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Huggard, *Pea Ridge National Military Park: An Administrative History*, 55, 111, 179-81.

of the abandoned section was restored to the appearance of a minor farm road as far as the Elkhorn Tavern vicinity and it was obliterated from there eastward.⁴⁹

Mission 66 Development

The visitor center and the tour road were built in 1962-63. These key park developments were part of Mission 66. Now that these features of Mission 66 development have reached an age of fifty years and more, they have acquired a historical character in their own right under the terms of the National Historic Preservation Act and the National Register of Historic Places. Indeed, the NPS went through a wave of considering all of its Mission 66-era buildings and park infrastructure as historical properties with potential National Register eligibility when they began to reach fifty years of age in the early twenty-first century.

As landscape architectural historian Ethan Carr discussed in *Mission 66: Modernism and the National Park Dilemma*, Mission 66 addressed a genuine crisis in the National Park System. Burgeoning numbers of people were coming to enjoy the national parks, crowding upon visitor accommodations that had not been modernized or properly maintained since the 1930s. Mission 66 was fundamentally a construction program aimed at protecting the national parks from crumbling under the onslaught of growing visitor use after World War II. To save the national parks from destruction by overuse, Mission 66 was heavily focused on new construction of roads, campgrounds, and buildings, but all in the service of preserving the historic place or wild nature that lay beyond this essential park infrastructure.⁵⁰

Mission 66 architecture showed a strong degree of uniformity, because Mission 66 was managed from the top down and nearly all the planning and design was performed in the Western and Eastern Offices of Design and Construction. The visitor center at Pea Ridge displays many of the common features found in visitor centers across the National Park System. It was strategically situated at what Mission 66 planners called a “threshold” location – a discreet distance from the park’s main features yet oriented in a way to give the visitor an enticing overview of the park. The building’s shallow roof lines and earth-toned exterior façades were intended to make it inconspicuous from other vantage points on the battlefield. The construction design made use of inexpensive building materials, while the floor plan efficiently combined a visitor oriented space with an office wing for the park staff. The visitor oriented space included public restrooms, a

⁴⁹ Jines, “Pea Ridge Man on Commission to Acquire Property for Pea Ridge National Military Park,” 26; Huggard, *Pea Ridge National Military Park: An Administrative History*, 73.

⁵⁰ Ethan Carr, *Mission 66: Modernism and the National Park Dilemma* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), 55-56, 63-64, 175-76.

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reception area with information desk, exhibit rooms, a projection room, a small bookstore area, and glass doors exiting to an outdoor view of the battlefield.

The tour road likewise exhibited design principles developed during the Mission 66 period that were commonly seen in other parks. Because Mission 66 was aimed at making the parks capable of hosting more people while also making them feel less crowded, Mission 66 planners put a strong emphasis on managing “visitor circulation.” If visitors could be encouraged to move from one point of interest to the next in an orderly pattern, then bottlenecks could be eliminated and congestion could be minimized. This principle held true for people moving through a visitor center and it also held true for people driving through the park in cars. The ideal visitor circulation pattern for people in their cars was a one-way loop road with everyone driving in the same direction so as to minimize traffic jams. Wayside exhibits served to call out points of interest and to spread people out around the park so that they did not all go to one premier attraction such as the Elkhorn Tavern.

Superintendent Willett enthused about the self-guiding car tour facilities when they were in development. Note his emphasis on effective visitor circulation, a Mission 66 trademark:

When the visitor arrives in the area he will be received at a Visitor-use Center located conveniently off U.S. Route 62 on a spot presently affording a panoramic view of Pea Ridge and “Round Top” mountain and the Elkhorn Tavern. After the visitor has received the interpretation normally supplied in Service Visitor Centers, he will proceed to the orientation terrace where, with the major features of the battlefield in clear view, he will be informed of the closed-loop interpretive tour route and what he may expect to find along it.

Before entering the tour loop proper, a visitor may elect to go first to the heights overlooking Little Sugar Creek where Curtis was dug in on the night of March 6 awaiting an expected Confederate attack from the south. The only remaining earth work of the battle is found here. These remains will be preserved. Or, without missing any of the actual battle terrain, he may proceed on the regular tour. The route will follow the chronological order of the battle. This method, supplemented by markers, exhibits-in-place, overlooks, and the restored war-time Elkhorn Tavern will provide a memorable and inspirational visit for the park guests. As a primary objective of the Park Service this land is being restored to a condition similar to that of 1862.

The first stop on the tour route will be at the site of General Curtis’ headquarters which was near the present day temporary headquarters.

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Interpretive signs and markers placed here will provide on-the-ground orientation for those visitors who do not make the side trip to the detached area above Little Sugar Creek. The next stop will be at the site of Leetown, a principal landmark of the first day's battle. Just ahead, he will enter the area of heavy fighting on May 7 where Confederate Brig. Gen. Benjamin McCulloch and James M. McIntosh were killed. An interpretive pull-off will be placed at this point to tell the story of the action. From here the tour road will ascend the western end of Pea Ridge Mountain and traverse the whole length of the plateau atop the ridge. Along the section of the road will be two overlooks permitting the visitor to review the battle terrain and enjoy the scenery. The one at the eastern end will be the principal overlook and from it part of the first day's and all of the second day's action will be told by interpretive devices. The road will descend at this point and pass Elkhorn Tavern, which is to be restored and equipped with period furnishings. The tour will continue to Williams Hollow where roadside exhibits will explain the final phase of the battle. The visitor will then proceed by the tour road to the point of entry on U.S. 62.⁵¹

The tour road was built for aesthetics as well as for effective visitor circulation. The NPS, sympathetic to automobile use from the time of the agency's founding in 1916, became maximally inclined toward the car culture in the Mission 66 era. To Mission 66 planners, the generic park visitor was a passenger in a motor vehicle. The generic park visitor experience was essentially an automotive experience. Visitor centers were based on the car-centric suburban concept of "one-stop shopping" for convenience, while park roads were built for "pleasure driving." The tour road at Pea Ridge National Military Park still bears the hallmarks of Mission 66 park design. Just a couple years after the tour road was built, the agency's strong interest in the aesthetics of park road design culminated in the key NPS document, *Park Road Standards* (1967). The authors of this work stressed that the ideal park visit must be a leisurely experience, and that the design of park roads was a key factor in setting the desired pace. Thus, park roads were sinewy rather than straight, and they were paved in a way to give the automobilist a smooth, quiet ride. Road verges might be seeded with grass and regularly mown to create the aesthetic of a parkway – even as the roadway itself was an intrusion on the natural or historic landscape. The 1963 master plan for Pea Ridge National Military Park envisioned a park road alignment that would generally follow "historic traces and existing historic roads, with the exception of the road on Elkhorn Mountain that provided scenic overlooks with views of the battlefield." In reality, however, the only section of the tour road that actually followed a historic road was the section between the visitor

⁵¹ Willett, "Development of Pea Ridge National Military Park," 168-69.

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center and the Elkhorn Tavern that followed the Telegraph Road. Most of the tour road was a new creation aimed at giving park visitors easy access and a pleasurable drive around the historic battlefield.⁵²

The east overlook on the tour road is another classic example of Mission 66 park design. Mission 66 planners were lavish in their use of overlooks and wayside exhibits because these facilities encouraged more self-guided auto tours, which reduced the pressure of visitor numbers on ranger-led walking tours while dispersing visitor use more evenly around the park. The east overlook uses a short side road and short foot path to access a great view of the battlefield from the height of Elkhorn Mountain. Exhibit panels are mounted on an aesthetic semi-circular stone wall, and the open-air space is covered by a flat roof for shade and shelter. The exhibit panels point out to the visitor that from this vantage point virtually the entire battlefield is visible. A soldier in 1862, it is noted, might have stood at this spot and observed practically the entire line of battle of both armies – an astonishing sight that was perhaps without parallel at any other Civil War battlefield. The east overlook nicely illustrates the NPS’s aim of stimulating the visitor’s imagination, educating through inspiration. Freeman Tilden, the dean of NPS interpretation, referred to such overlooks as “observation stations.” The key to good interpretation at these locations was to avoid smothering the visitor with too much information. “They limit themselves to what is local, coherent, important, authentic,” Tilden wrote. “They tell a story, and having told *that* story, they stop. They tell the story in a way which requires no special knowledge to understand.” The east overlook not only provides a superb view of the Pea Ridge battlefield, it reveals something essential about the National Park System.⁵³

The Battlefield Landscape in 1970 and After

Park historian Robert F. Holmes described the restored historic landscape in 1970. A significant feature of this restored historic landscape was the network of fences that helped to delineate old farm fields and old property lines. Holmes suggested that the rustic split-rail fences presented “an historic aura.”⁵⁴ Historian Alaric Parrish, who wrote the first administrative history of Pea Ridge National Military Park in 1974, stated that around eight miles of fence was constructed in 1965 and 1966. The split rails were supplied by local farmers, while the fences were built by the park’s maintenance crew based on a fence design that was common in the Civil War era. Sections of fence had to

⁵² Pea Ridge National Military Park, “Cultural Landscape Report and Environmental Assessment,” pp. 2-45 and 3-31.

⁵³ Freeman Tilden, *The National Parks* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1951), 34-35.

⁵⁴ “Pea Ridge Becomes National Park 98 Years After Battle,” *Northwest Arkansas Times*, June 30, 1970.

be replaced as they rotted, but the network of fences reconstructed in the 1960s was maintained more or less on the same pattern through the years.⁵⁵

The patchwork of forest and fields was another significant feature. Historical research by Ed Bearss revealed where the forest had been cleared in 1862 and farm fields existed. Since the goal of the NPS was to recreate that patchwork as nearly as possible, park managers allowed areas of the battlefield that had been cleared since 1862 to become reforested. This effort largely succeeded as regenerated forest came to cover much of the area. In 1975, park managers re-established native prairie in the northwest portion of the park. This initiative began with a one-acre plot that was expanded in the following years. Further consideration was given to managing the natural vegetation in the context of a Fire Management Plan, completed in 2005, and a Vegetation Management Plan, completed about 2014. In general, the regenerated forest lacked the open understory that characterized the standing forest at the time of the battle. Park managers recognized a need to manage the forest more closely so as to recreate the forest structure and species composition that had been present in 1862. Those efforts are ongoing.⁵⁶

Federal Trenches

In 1970, the Federal Trenches unit of Pea Ridge National Military Park contained the only known physical remains of earthworks that were thrown up at the time of the battle. While these earthen breastworks were overgrown by vegetation, they still made distinct impressions with some sections even exhibiting the head log that had been placed along the leading edge of the trench to obstruct enemy fire. Around 1970, the NPS completed development of a parking area and paved trail leading to the top of the bluff overlooking Little Sugar Creek where the trenches had been constructed by Curtis's army on the eve of the battle.⁵⁷

The park's cultural landscape report described the condition of the trenches in 2014:

This structure is a shallow trench with earth ramparts that is several hundred feet long but just a few feet deep and wide. Some portions of the trench are fairly deep (up to three feet deep). Other portions are very shallow including those that disappear into the hillside at the ends of the trench.

⁵⁵ Huggard, *Pea Ridge National Military Park: An Administrative History*, 110, 235. Huggard cites Parrish on p. 91.

⁵⁶ Pea Ridge National Military Park, "Cultural Landscape Report and Environmental Assessment," pp. 255 to 258 and 4-32 to 4-35.

⁵⁷ "Pea Ridge Becomes National Park 98 Years After Battle," *Northwest Arkansas Times*, June 30, 1970.

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The shallow trench with earthen ramparts is not readily discernable to the untrained eye, and the full extent of the earthwork is difficult to see. Overgrown vegetation including undergrowth, trees and shrubbery make the trench even more difficult to see. The form of the trench appears to be in good condition. Some areas have filled with dirt and debris, further obscuring the structure.

Although the trench is the most legible military built feature, it is likely that the entire top of the bluff was manipulated by the Union army as they built their protective fortification.⁵⁸

About 2003, park ranger Robert Still literally stumbled into a gun emplacement covered by underbrush. Finding that the depression was about the width of an axle and two wheels, he poked around and located three more extending in a line to the east of the known Federal trenches. The four gun emplacements were arranged in two pairs on either side of a gully descending toward Little Sugar Creek. Still surmised that the Telegraph Road originally came down the gully and that the guns were positioned to cover this weak point in the line of bluffs. Still showed Ed Bearss the spot and Bearss agreed with his assessment.⁵⁹

This eastward extension of the Federal defensive position is on private land located outside the Federal Trenches unit of the park. When the railroad was built through the area in the early 1880s the railroad grade itself missed the earthworks but some quarrying associated with the construction of the railroad grade took out a portion of the earthworks between the existing Federal trenches and the gun emplacements. Fill placed at one end of the trestle spanning Little Sugar Creek also obliterated some features of the Federal line. The Telegraph Road – the present Old Wire Road – was rerouted to its present alignment one gully to the west in the 1920s. Thick vegetation has since grown in over the long-abandoned road alignment. All of these changes obscure the scene that would have existed at this spot in 1862 where the Telegraph Road then forded the creek. Curtis prepared for an enemy attack coming northward up the Telegraph Road, and it appears that the four gun emplacements, now lost to view outside the park, were at the key spot in the Federals’ defensive line as the guns covered the declivity where the Telegraph Road climbed through the bluffs.⁶⁰

When Robert Still was interviewed for this study, he recalled that Superintendent John Scott asked him to develop a line for a proposed boundary change that would

⁵⁸ Pea Ridge National Military Park, “Cultural Landscape Report and Environmental Assessment,” p. 3-125.

⁵⁹ Robert Still, conversation with author, September 18, 2023.

⁶⁰ Still interview.

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enlarge the Federal Trenches unit to encompass the four gun emplacements. The proposed boundary change was included in Alternative 3 in the park's General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (GMP/EIS) that was completed in 2005. When Still closely examined the relevant maps in the park's Cultural Landscape Report (CLR) of 2014, he confirmed that the CLR used the proposed boundary line from the GMP/EIS to define a "study area" encompassing the full length of the Federal earthworks; however, Still noted that the maps created for the CLR placed the road and the railroad in the wrong place. Figure 3-117 in the CLR erroneously depicts the two pairs of gun emplacements as a cluster of three in no apparent relation to the topography (Map 9 below, and Map 10 next page).

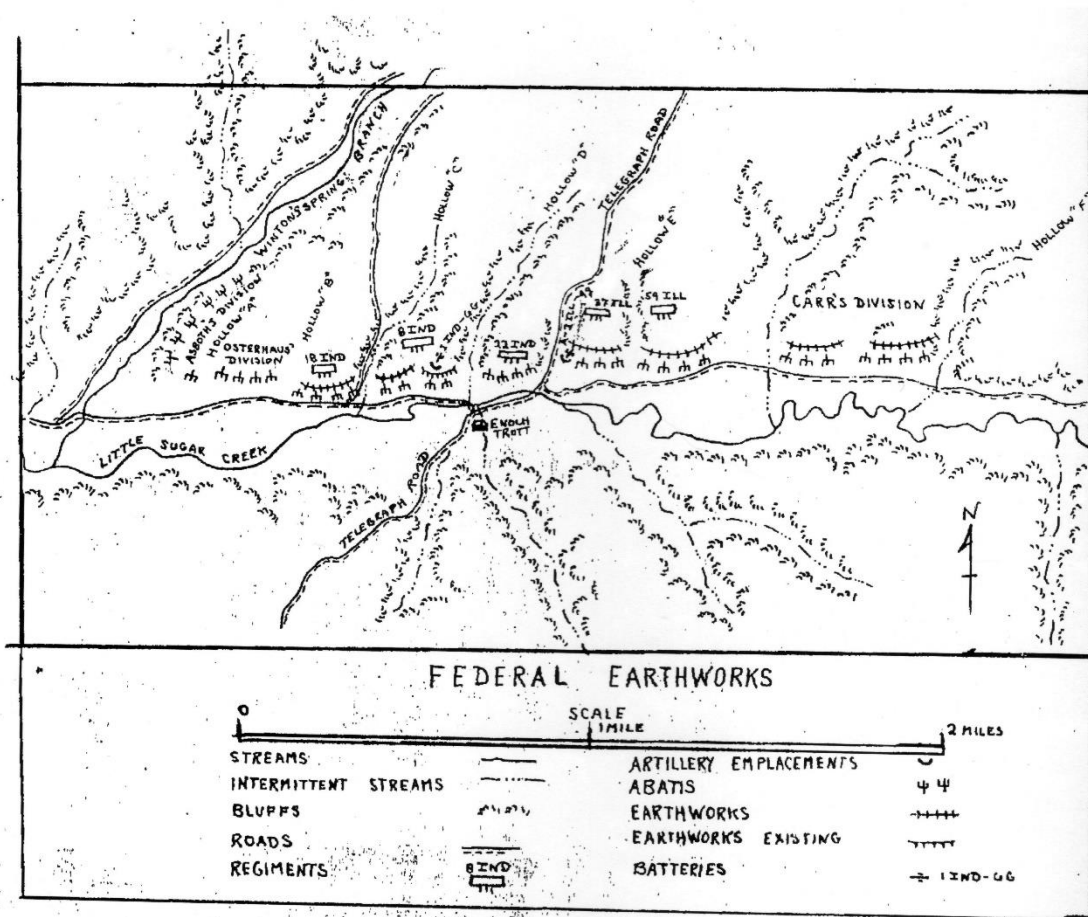
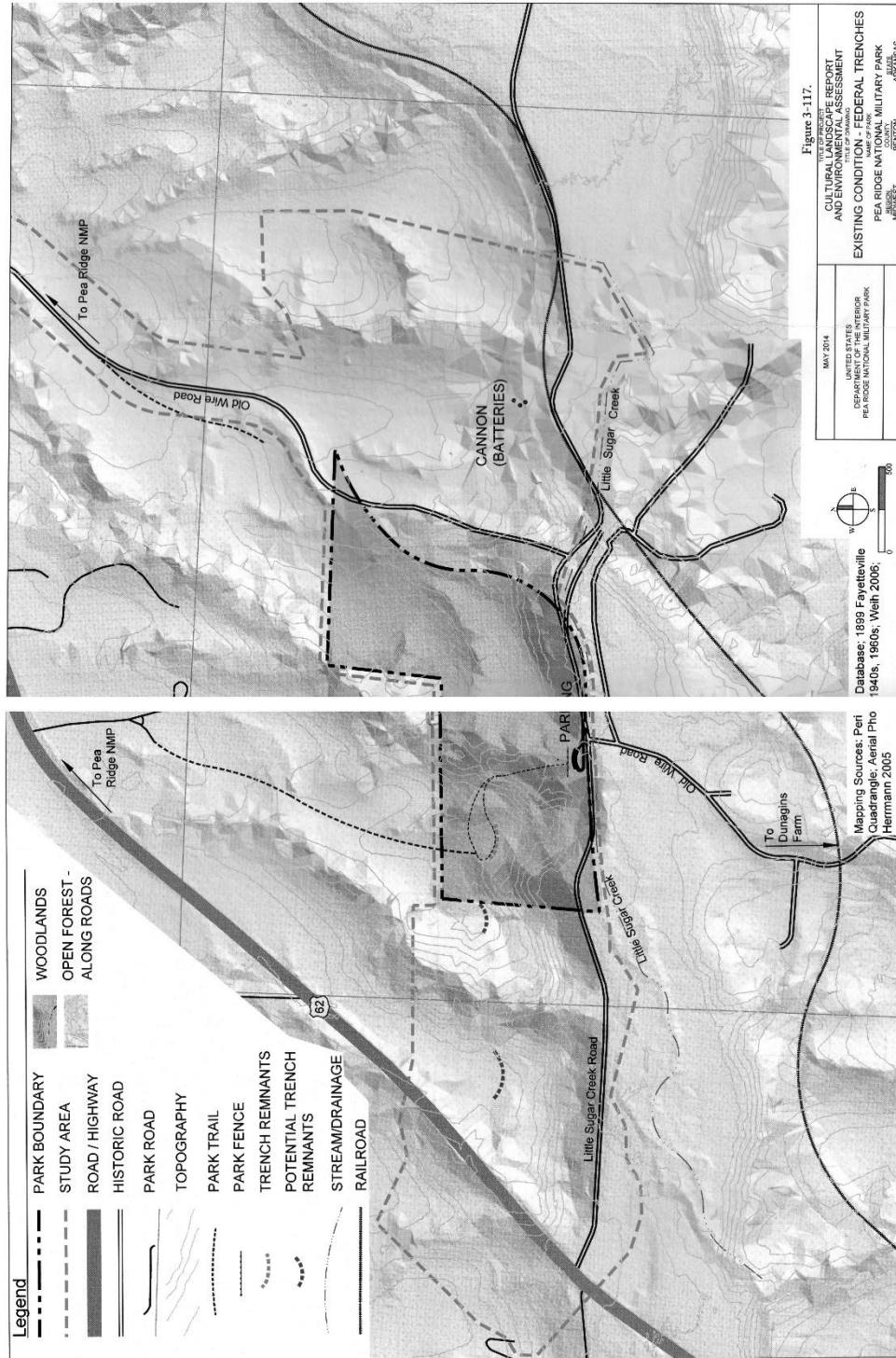


Illustration No. XIV

Map 10. Federal trenches. Source: Cultural landscape report, 3-116.



Map 11. Federal trenches unit and vicinity, from Cultural Landscape Report.

Roads

In 1970, old roads crisscrossed the battlefield. The network of roads and road traces that existed in 1970 still exists in the present. The roads and road traces are well described and mapped in the CLR. Some of the roads and road traces dated to the time of the battle, and therefore are identified as “contributing features” of the historic landscape. These included Ford Road, Foster’s Lane, Oberson Road, Winton Springs Road, Leetown Road, Lee Creek Road, Telegraph Road, Huntsville Road, South Road, Twelve Corners Road, and Dodd Road – though the last named was only “likely established in the mid-1800s, and in place during the battle.” Another historic road, Pratt’s Road, had disappeared by 1970 and its location and alignment was still not definitely known when the CLR was prepared in 2014.⁶¹

Ford Road was partially overlain by Highway 72 at the time of the park’s establishment. The two-lane asphalt highway, built in the 1920s, was demolished sometime between the park’s establishment in 1956 and when the park opened in 1963. Some remnants of the old highway alignment may still be seen along Ford Road, either in the form of road base or asphalt remnants. Ford Road now consists of a road trace, mostly in the form of two parallel ruts or tracks, with sections of the road possibly having been realigned a little in the period when it was overlain by Highway 72.⁶²

The Alvin Seamster Road is a gravel road that traverses the northeast corner of the park. The road is visible in 1940s aerial photographs but it does not date back to the Civil War era. As the road serves as a minor connecting road for local traffic, the NPS decided to leave it be. It is maintained by Benton County. The CLR listed it as a non-contributing feature of the historic landscape since it was not present during the period of significance.⁶³

U.S. Highway 62 clipped the southern edge of the park when the park was established. Consideration was given to moving the highway to the south to avoid the park but nothing happened for many years. As the population in the area grew, site managers worried that strip development spreading out of Rogers and Avoca could someday encroach on the park. Moreover, as the volume of traffic on U.S. Highway 62 grew, pressure mounted to expand the highway from two lanes to four lanes. After years of contention, the NPS entered an agreement with the Federal Highway Administration and the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department. In 2014, the section of highway through the southern edge of the park was rebuilt so that it skirted the park.⁶⁴ Instead of widening this section of the highway to four lanes a turn lane was added.

⁶¹ Pea Ridge National Military Park, “Cultural Landscape Report and Environmental Assessment,” pp. 3-43 to 3-55.

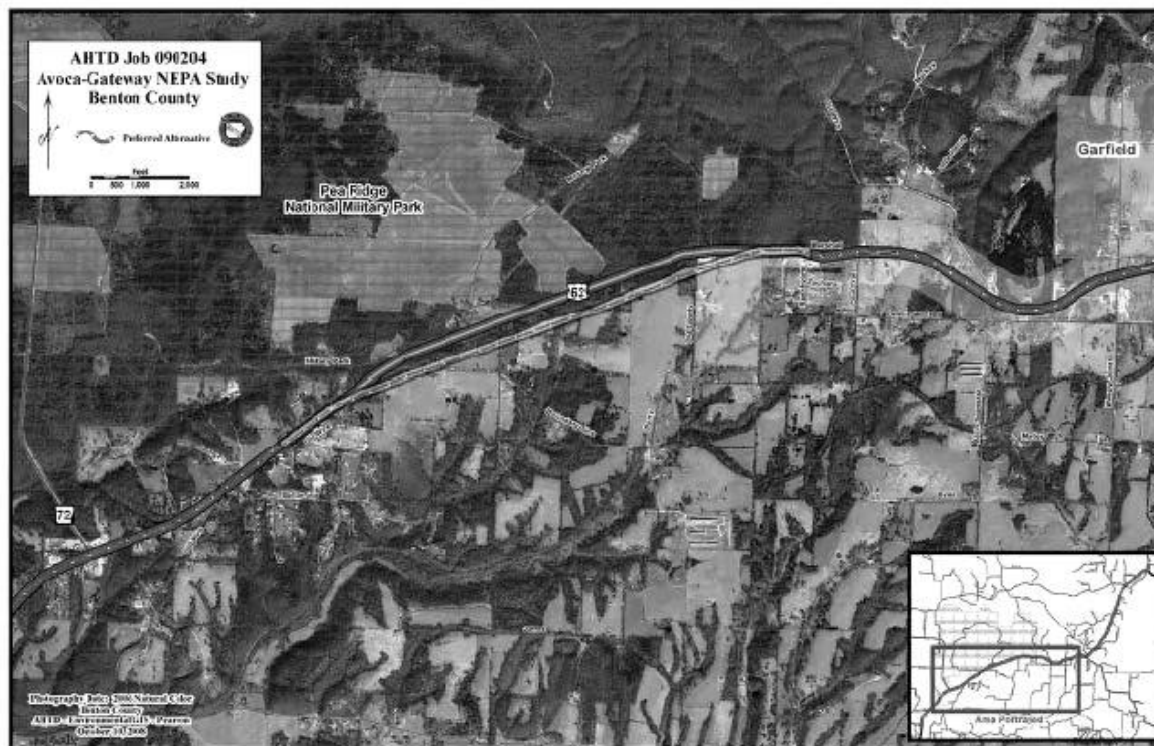
⁶² Ibid, pp. 3-41 to 3-43.

⁶³ Ibid, p. 3-54.

⁶⁴ National Park Service, *Foundation Document, Pea Ridge National Military Park, Arkansas* (Pea Ridge National Military Park, Arkansas: National Park Service, 2016), 4.

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However, the left turn into the park was hazardous. To mitigate that problem, the park entrance was moved a mile and a quarter to the east for better visibility, and a new park entrance road was built along the eastern portion of the former highway alignment (Map 11). The new park entrance road was built in 2021.⁶⁵



Map 12. U.S. Highway 62 realignment.

Other Historic Resources

A stone monument located at the site of the Union headquarters was built in 1935 and is preserved as part of the historic monumentation of the battlefield. It consists of a bronze plaque mounted at the center of the stone monument of rough masonry fieldstone. The monument is roughly five-foot square and sits on a native field stone plinth.⁶⁶

Several building foundations are preserved within the park. The foundations are all that remain of buildings that may or may not have existed at the time of the Civil War. These include two foundations associated with the Clemons House (one for the house and the other for a barn) that probably date to pre-Civil War, the Will Mayfield house

⁶⁵ “New entrance opens to PRNMP,” *Pea Ridge Times*, August 18, 2021, at <https://prt.nwaonline.com/news/2021/aug/18/new-entrance-opens-to-prnmp/>.

⁶⁶ National Park Service, *Cultural Landscape Inventories, 2020, Pea Ridge National Military Park* (Pea Ridge National Military Park, AR: National Park Service, 2020), 71. See also Pea Ridge National Military Park, “Cultural Landscape Report and Environmental Assessment,” (Public Review Draft), May 16, 2014, pp. 3-65.

foundation that probably dates to the 1850s, and the Winton Springs House foundation that probably dates from sometime between 1904 and 1915 though it is believed that an earlier structure was built on the same spot that may have dated to the Civil War. A partial foundation is associated with Pratt's store. Traditionally, Pratt's store was thought to be the site of Curtis's headquarters but recent study casts doubt on that. Another foundation belongs to an unidentified log cabin. Remnants of the cabin are collapsed on top of the foundation. This log cabin ruin is located on Lee Creek in Morgan's Wood. It is not known when the cabin was built, but it could date to the Civil War era.⁶⁷

There are two cemeteries located within the park. The Ford Cemetery contains about thirty-four engraved stones plus additional simple stones without engravings and unmarked graves. Last names recorded on headstones include Ford, Cox, Green, Hammock, Morgan, and Scott. The Leetown Cemetery has just one visible grave marker. The grave marker is a tent-style grave house constructed of slabs of local stone with an inscription on the west-facing gable end. The cemetery's boundary is marked by a low wooden fence. The number of graves in this small graveyard is not known.⁶⁸

At the Tanyard site north of the Elkhorn Tavern there are faint remains of the tannery house and the tannery well. At several locations in the park, remains of spring houses, wells, and other small features associated with water and food storage in the period of early white settlement are preserved. The most notable features include the Spring Box at the Elkhorn Tavern and the Winton Springs Farm Rock Dam (a tiny dam across a creek that may have also served as a ford).

The NPS has recorded other historic resources that date to the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. They include a few more house foundations, concrete pads, cisterns, and wells.⁶⁹

In 2020, the NPS revised the National Register of Historic Places nomination for Pea Ridge National Military Park to include commemorative monuments and park developments built in the Mission 66 era. The draft nomination form named eleven historic resources that were determined eligible for listing on the National Register. Approved by the State Historic Preservation Office in August 2020, the nomination as of spring 2024 awaits revisions requested by the NPS Washington Office's Park History program prior to final submission to National Register staff for final review leading to

⁶⁷ National Park Service, *Cultural Landscape Inventories, 2020, Pea Ridge National Military Park* (Pea Ridge National Military Park, AR: National Park Service, 2020), 77-78. See also Pea Ridge National Military Park, "Cultural Landscape Report and Environmental Assessment," (Public Review Draft), May 16, 2014, pp. 3-63 to 3-71.

⁶⁸ Information on the cemeteries is recorded in the NPS's Cultural Resource Inventory System (CRIS) on Single Record Reports for each cemetery (ID nos. 407793 and 407794).

⁶⁹ "Pea Ridge National Military Park, Resource Identification," Excel file, no date, provided to the author.

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listing by the Keeper of the National Register. Those eleven historic resources named in the pending nomination are:

1. Huntsville Road
2. Monument to Brave Confederate Dead
3. Spring Box at Elkhorn Tavern
4. Soldiers Reunited Memorial
5. Ford Road
6. U.S. Army Headquarters Monument
7. Union Trenches
8. Telegraph Road
9. Tannery House Foundation Shadow
10. Tannery Well Shadow
11. Leetown Cemetery Shadow

Conclusion

Pea Ridge National Military Park preserves the battlefield of the most important Civil War battle fought west of the Mississippi River. Its roughly 4,000 acres take in all of the area of the fighting on March 7 and 8, 1862. As the battle was fought in two locations, one around Leetown and the other around Elkhorn Tavern, it is extraordinary that the entire area is protected. Moreover, it is exceptional that the whole battlefield may be surveyed from a single point atop Elkhorn Mountain, the east overlook on the park road.

The Battle of Pea Ridge is a significant Civil War battle in many ways. It was of strategic importance in securing Missouri for the Union. Fought near the end of the first year of the war, it saw a large-scale marshalling of forces and a massing of artillery that was huge for that time. The battle's ferocity and carnage shocked the nation. The magnitude of fighting and killing at Pea Ridge was subsequently eclipsed by much bigger battles fought east of the Mississippi River where the war would ultimately be decided, but that should not obscure the fact that this was one of the first big battles, awakening Americans to the reality that the war between North and South was to be long and bloody.

At a tactical level, the Battle of Pea Ridge had many unusual and dramatic features. The battle plan conceived by Brig. Gen. Van Dorn involved a grand envelopment of the enemy. Van Dorn sought to cut off the enemy's retreat and win a decisive battlefield victory. Brig. Gen. Curtis, for his part, managed to turn his whole line around, hold the position, and on the second day of battle snatch victory from the jaws of defeat. A combination of factors doomed the Confederates' chances on the second day despite their superior numbers on the battlefield. The main factors were the deaths of two Confederate generals and the resulting loss of initiative by half the Confederate army on the first day of fighting, the failure of the Confederate supply train to get food and ammunition to the soldiers before the second day of fighting, and the overall hunger and fatigue of the overtaxed Confederate soldiers as the battle wore on.

This momentous battle forever changed the rural community that occupied Pea Ridge in 1862 and indeed, the society that had been developing in Benton County since its founding at the time of Arkansas statehood. Union victory at Pea Ridge hastened the inexorable wartime disintegration of slavery in the region, which would culminate in freedom for blacks after the war. Meanwhile, the thin Union occupation of northwest Arkansas led to three years of guerrilla conflict and the displacement of much of the civilian population, white and black. Animosity between Northern and Southern sympathizers persisted for a long time, even as the rural community of Pea Ridge was

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transformed in the following decades by the appearance in Benton County of railroads, new industries, public schools, an emergent town life, and a racial caste system in place of slavery.

A movement to preserve the Pea Ridge battlefield arose as one element in this evolving society. Starting out largely as a commemorative effort aimed at national reconciliation, the battlefield preservation movement drew people together despite their past differences. Battlefield preservation efforts at Pea Ridge eventually succeeded with an impressive land acquisition initiative by the state of Arkansas and the establishment of Pea Ridge National Military Park. Meanwhile, the largely rural landscape of Benton County continued to change as the population grew and the network of primitive farm roads was transformed into a modern transportation system of highways and county roads. Northwest Arkansas’s newfound prosperity in the last quarter of the twentieth century, which was spearheaded by Federal dam projects, rising tourism, and the success of two major corporations in Tyson Foods and Walmart, eventually turned the towns of Bentonville, Rogers, Springdale, and Fayetteville into one of the fastest growing metropolitan areas in the United States. Today, the preserved cultural landscape at Pea Ridge National Military Park exists near the outskirts of a thriving, multiethnic urban community that is far removed from the rural community that existed at Pea Ridge in 1862. In fact, the juxtaposition of Pea Ridge National Military Park and the two-county metropolis lying only a few miles to the west could scarcely have been imagined even a century on from the Civil War when the park was in development. The new metropolis’s proximity to the park both adds to the park’s value and increases its vulnerability.

Cultural historian Edward Linenthal observed in his book, *Sacred Ground: Americans and their Battlefields*, that “one of the great ironies associated with American battlefields is that they are often quite beautiful.” Many visitors to Gettysburg, Linenthal wrote, comment on how difficult it is to think of such terrible combat taking place in so peaceful a landscape. Linenthal ventured his opinion that “most visitors would feel deprived if Gettysburg were *not* beautiful; indeed, the field on which one of the great dramas of the Civil War was acted out *should* be physically inspiring as well as spiritually profound.”¹ The gently rolling patch quilt of field and forest at Pea Ridge National Military Park may present the modern visitor to Pea Ridge with a similar sense of cognitive dissonance to that at Gettysburg. Here, too, it can be difficult to contemplate the carnage of March 7 and 8, 1862 in a place of such appealing natural beauty. Yet the scenic beauty does not seem at all inappropriate because it is venerating. And it feels authentic, or representational at least, of the nineteenth-century landscape. As that rural society of the nineteenth century fades farther and farther from view, the challenge for

¹ Edward Linenthal, *Sacred Ground: Americans and their Battlefields* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 89.

the NPS is to keep Pea Ridge National Military Park both inspirational and meaningful for present and future generations of park visitors.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are notes to resource managers and future historical researchers.

Vegetation Management

The present landscape of fields and forest generally recreates the historic landscape of 1862. Known farm fields in 1862 such as Oberson's Field, Cox's Field, Ruddick's Field, and Pratt's Field are now edged around by regenerated forest, delineated on the park map, and maintained by mowing. But reforested areas in the park lack historic authenticity because the forest structure and mix of species are different now from what they were in 1862. If park managers are interested in managing the forest in ways that will make it more closely resemble the condition of the forest in 1862, then they may benefit from a special history study that is tightly focused on that problem.

Historian Ed Bearss assembled a considerable amount of historical data on vegetation in his 1962 report, "Documented Narrative to Support Historical Features and Vegetative Cover Shown on the Pea Ridge Historical Base Map." Bearss found descriptions of vegetation in contemporary documents, examined historic maps, and compared them with aerial photographs from the 1940s. Since Bearss did his work, there has been a lot of scholarship on pre-Civil War settlement patterns in the Ozarks. A lot is now known about patch farming that would suggest that the forest and fields in 1862 were more broken up than they now appear. Fields in 1862 would have included cultivated areas that were "resting" as well as woodlots left standing for a ready supply of firewood and fence rails. Forested areas would have included "deadening" at the first stage of forest clearing and "patches" of ten to twenty acres where row crops were planted. The forest understory would have been impacted by the open range herding of cattle and hogs as well as by contemporary burning practices. Since Bearss did his work there has been much forestry research done that would further assist with an improved understanding of the way the landscape appeared in 1862. To be useful to management, all of this scholarship needs to be brought together in a single document. Even if the mid-nineteenth century landscape of field and forest was too messy to be accurately recreated over the whole area, it could be interpreted through realistic artists' renderings or recreated in just a small section of the park.

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The Federal Trenches

The Federal Trenches unit alongside of Little Sugar Creek includes only a portion of the earthworks that were hastily thrown up by Curtis’s army on the eve of the battle – facing south in the direction of the expected Confederate attack. As was noted in the last chapter, former park ranger Robert Still discovered four gun emplacements to the east of the unit. Ranger Still subsequently figured out that the Telegraph Road had come down another gully to the east of its present location. At the time (around 2003) there was some interest by the superintendent in enlarging the Federal Trenches unit so that it would take in the full extent of the earthworks, or as much of them as possible. NPS interest in pursuing that land acquisition apparently faded. Park managers should not lose sight of these cultural resources located outside of the park in case a compelling interest in acquiring the land should develop at some later time.

Park Administrative History Update

Christopher J. Huggard produced a fine administrative history for the park in 1997. Sixteen years have passed since then, and the park would now benefit from a park administrative history update. An administrative history update would provide a valuable synthesis of the park’s long efforts toward vegetation management and much, much more.

The Death of Gen. McIntosh

In the course of preparing this study the author found one critical event in the Battle of Pea Ridge in which the facts are in dispute. This is the fact as to where on the battlefield Gen. McIntosh was killed. Civilian sources have long maintained that McIntosh was killed on the Morgan farm, but other authorities including historians Shea and Hess contend that McIntosh died at a spot close to where Gen. McCulloch fell at the north edge of Oberson’s Fields. The difference of fact is important for two reasons.

In the first place, according to the civilian sources the supposed site of Gen. McIntosh’s death is tied to early memorialization of the battlefield, for these civilian sources stated that veterans placed a marker at the spot that was later moved to the Elkhorn Tavern. Are we to believe that the veterans were in error about the location of McIntosh’s death? Or, that the story of a memorial marker is made up? Or, were the civilian sources correct, belying the standard accounts?

The second reason this is important is that the disputed facts point to a difference of interpretation of the tenor and timing of pivotal actions on the first day of the battle. If McIntosh was still alive to lead the Confederate charge through Morgan’s Woods, rather than that final charge having been led by the next in command, Col Louis Hébert, as most

standard accounts have it, then the repulse of the Confederate's final attack at Leetown and the shattering of Confederate morale in that sector of the battle did not happen in quite the way that it is usually presented. The scatter of shell casings in Morgan's Woods which was revealed through recent battlefield archeology adds more credence to the idea that the standard accounts are a little off the mark here.

In the preparation of this study it was not clear to the author whether the factual dispute around the death of McIntosh could be resolved one way or the other through further research or whether the truth will be forever obscured by the fog of war. A closely focused study on the death of McIntosh and the action in Morgan's Woods and around Leetown could address that problem.

The Clemens Farm

At the outset of this study the late park historian Troy Banzhaf stated that he was keen for information about Rufus Clemens. The official after-battle report by Col. Eugene A. Carr noted that Col. Grenville M. Dodge and his Fourth Iowa Infantry stubbornly held their position at the edge of a field near "Clemens' house" through the first day of the battle. Historian Ed Bearss, citing the report by Carr, named the Clemens house in his history of the battle and placed both the Clemens house and the Clemens field on the historical base map that was prepared for the park's master plan. It is worth noting that the report by Bearss on land ownership at Pea Ridge in the 1850s does not include any property transactions involving Clemens. Now the Clemens house site and field are preserved and named as such in park information. Yet the NPS does not have other sources that would convey something about Clemens or even confirm that this farmer really existed.

Unfortunately, the research for this study was unable to provide much corroboration of Carr's report that there was a Clemens house and a Clemens field at this site and presumably a man named Clemens. Nothing close to the name Clemens appears in the 1860 or 1870 census for Sugar Creek Township in Benton County. There is, however, a Rufus Clenon listed in the 1850 census. This individual was recorded as a farmer who was thirty years old and born in North Carolina. Sharing the household with Rufus Clenon was a woman named Mary Clenon who was thirty-one, born in Tennessee, and three children: Sarah, age eight, George, age four, and Rosanna, age two, all born in Arkansas, as well as one Margaret Briscoe, age sixty-five, born in North Carolina. No other information on Clemens (or Clenon) was found.

The recommendation is that park staff accept that this person will probably remain obscure. The naming of Clemens in Carr's report may have been in error, but it seems just as likely that the naming was accurate, that there was in fact a farmer named Clemens (or Clenon), and that he was simply missed in the 1860 census.

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American Indians in the Battle of Pea Ridge

It is said that the Battle of Pea Ridge was the only Civil War battle in which military units of American Indians took part. A considerable literature exists on the American Indian involvement in the battle. It seems well-established that Pike’s Indian Brigade did not have a significant role in the battle. On the morning of the first day, the 1st and 2nd Cherokee Mounted Rifles charged a Union battery, killed or drove off the Union troops, and silenced the guns. Though victorious, the Cherokees were disordered and placed in reserve. Two other units, the 1st Choctaw and Chickasaw and the 1st Creek Mounted Rifles, arrived late at the battle and were never sent into action.

Unfortunately, some Cherokee soldiers scalped some fallen Union soldiers, and the scalping came to overshadow everything else that was said about American Indian participation in this Civil War battle. Col. Cyrus Bussey reported on the scalping incident in his after-action report. Newspaper accounts of the battle quickly picked up the report, and numerous officer and soldier accounts, written soon after the battle or years later, repeated the story that Indians fought on the side of the Confederates and took scalps. Several historians wrote about the American Indian involvement in the battle as well. The literature about the American Indian involvement in the Battle of Pea Ridge became quite extensive. Much of it is racist, and virtually all of it is negative.

This topic is a sensitive one for Pea Ridge National Military Park. Visitors are interested to learn about the complicated story of how the American Indian nations in the Indian Territory were drawn into the Civil War. The Cherokee Trail of Tears passes through the park, and the Cherokee Nation borders Benton County to the west, so Cherokee involvement in this Civil War battle is already known to many visitors and perhaps not surprising to many others. Yet the story of the Cherokees in the Battle of Pea Ridge is fraught because so much of the literature is racist, or at best, culturally insensitive.

The park has in its history files a four-page summary essay, “The Indians at Pea Ridge.” From a stamp on the last page it appears that this document was prepared by park staff in 1964. The essay was a good summary in its time, but it is now out of date. The park may want to prepare a new summary essay, taking into account the extensive literature and being sensitive to contemporary perspectives about race, culture, and warfare.

Biography of Samuel R. Curtis

The scope of work for this project included the following discussion of Brig. Gen. Samuel R. Curtis:

After the battle, General Samuel Curtis issued Special Order 1251 which freed from bondage those who entered his lines and offered them assistance in traveling to the north and eastern Arkansas. Union officers provided each of the formerly enslaved with a certificate indicating that since their former enslavers had used them to aid the Confederate cause, they were considered contraband and released immediately of all bonds of servitude. Curtis consolidated the newly freed men into a sprawling camp located at Helena, Arkansas, in May 1862, where they received food, clothing, and shelter. Curtis' emancipation certificates pre-dated President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation which went into effect in January, 1863. By granting freedom to a portion of the population that had been enslaved, General Curtis personified the cause of the Civil War.

Curtis is an interesting figure who is strongly associated with the Battle of Pea Ridge and deserves more attention. There is no full biography of him. The park files contain letters that Curtis wrote to his wife and nephew after the battle. More Curtis papers are held at the Yale University library. Historians Shea and Hess present a highly favorable portrait of Curtis in *Pea Ridge: Civil War Campaign in the West*, asserting that he out-generated his opponent Van Dorn at Pea Ridge; that he demonstrated for other Union commanders that it was possible to campaign in the winter, outrun supply lines, and live off the country; and that he took measures of his own, ahead of the Emancipation Proclamation, to transform the war to end the rebellion into a war to end slavery.

Despite the appeal of this historical figure, in preparing this study it seemed that a lengthy treatment of Curtis would not work well with the civil rights theme and the treatment of selected Pea Ridge families to highlight the resident civilian experience in the battle. Curtis is worthy of a full biography. Perhaps the park would have an opportunity to support a graduate student in that endeavor? The Curtis project could qualify as a Special History Study.

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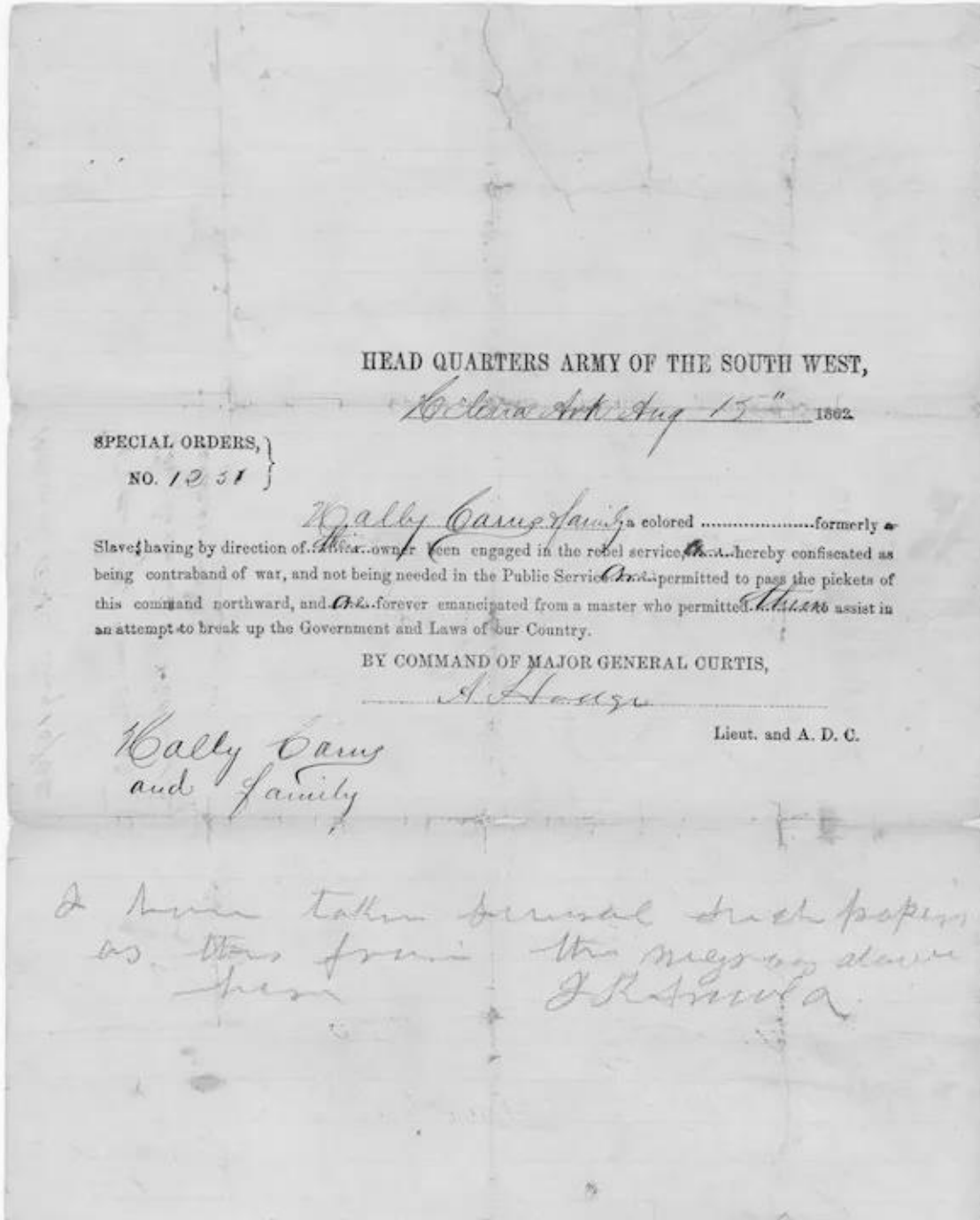


Figure 37. Freedom pass issued to Wally Caruz and family by command of Maj. Gen. Curtis in Helena, Arkansas, August 15, 1862.

Appendices

Appendix 1. Jesse Bliss letters

Jesse Bliss was a Union soldier in the 44th Illinois Volunteer Infantry Regiment who fought in the Battle of Pea Ridge. The letters describe Bliss's impressions of the battle and its aftermath. The letters convey a sense of high morale. These two transcriptions were made from the original letters held at the University of Arkansas (Manuscript Collection 1288, Box 1, Folder 1.)

Camp in Sugar Creek Bottom, March 13th, 1862

[Jesse Bliss to] Dr. H. B. Lucas, Richview, Ill

We are encamped here in this valley resting after seven days fighting and chasing the scoundrels around here we are camped near where the first ball was fired on the 6th inst. This is a most beautiful spring like day and I think we may as well throw away our stove as a nuisance. Oh it is warm and pleasant the birds are singing lizards crawling out and it looks like the people ought to be plowing as they would have been was it not we are here and death and destruction is in the midst of them. We see but two people and they are nearly frightened to death oh how miserable they are I almost feel sorry for them seeing them living on hominy alone for they have nothing else everything is destroyed I do not see what will become of them They are so poor to get away the secesh scalped about 20 of our men but I think they are sorry of that for they felt no fear at first as they were going to whip the Feds in two hours I will not to portend to say how many we lost or the secesh lost but we both lost plenty at any rate and routed them and their loss must be two to one of ours they are not all picked up yet the enemy had every advantage on us both in ground and numbers they were on top of a high steep hill that was impossible to get at them with infantry or cavalry but our Gen[eral]s are smart enough for them five times did they advance and retreat to draw the devils out and five times did they repulse them with great loss the Rebels left their Baggage at Boston Mountain a distance of 110 miles and I suppose will aim to retreat back there but they went in every course in every road up every ravine and hollow to get away from us we found guns everywhere we went and they threw them away loaded and cartridge boxes full of ammunition one man without arms would take two or three with arms we are getting quite familiar with this country for we have traveled all around one day in one place another day in another place and dead and wounded men has become so common that I can walk over a dead man without shuddering. I saw one poor fellow wounded and the leaves had burnt over him. I felt sorry for him I felt like saying God have mercy on you but we were marching

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and he was soon out of my sight I passed on and saw another poor secesh dead and the clothes burnt off him his flesh crisped up but why shall I picture the horrors of war we stopped long enough to whip the fire out and passed on to try and kill more. Let me say that this is the only place where the woods caught fire and it only burnt over a small space of ground. I do not know where we will go, whether it will be to Boston Mountains or Little Rock if the enemy stay at Boston Mountain we will go there if they advance we will follow them. We of course must rest and recuperate our men We hear and have heard great stories about Gen[eral]s Hunter and Lane coming to our support till I begin to think Lane will do his fighting in the papers and Hunter his in camp with Crackers but perhaps I am wrong for I have not seen a paper since I left Lebanon on the 10 of Feb. I think General [illegible] will come to our support with a small force in a few days but I hardly believe we need much force for we have just days but I hardly believe and feel sure we can do it again The secesh that are here burying the dead say it is only loaned they will pay us back at Boston Mountain as they have the advantage of us in the position but why did they not whip us here the enemy have been robbing our mail for some time and had our strength for we were mustered for pay on the 28th of February and official documents belonging to our Regt was found on the person of some of the prisoners doc[ument]s that was sent at the time our pay rolls was sent off and the pay roll show where every man is either sick, dead or detached so they knew just what force they were fighting but now know that same little force has whipped them killing McCulloch and McIntosh and wounding Price and McBride and killing any amount of secesh col[onel]s and smaller officers.

I wrote letters to Harriet on the 19-23-28 Feb and 1st and fifth of March and received one from Harriet and Eliza on the 23 of Feb and one from Lissa on the 28 of Feb I wrote to Livia on the first day of March and Thom Needles on the 23 and I. V. Holcomb on the 23 of Feb if the rebels got them I hope they had good times reading them for they were written about as bad as this and with pencil at that Please write soon and give my love to all

Truly yours

Jesse C. Bliss

Camp Hofmann

Near Keithville Mo

March 22, 1862

[Jesse Bliss to] Dr. H. B. Lucas, Richview, Ill

I wrote you a letter the other night in Sugar Creek Bottom telling you that I had at last been in one Battle viz the Battle of Pea Ridge Ark after several months hunting the Rebels they came to us and surrounded us and thought they would as (we say out here bag [?] us) take all Prisoners but you have heard all about it ere this by papers we are and are having our equinoxial storm out here it is quite disagreeable weather here I have never recd a letter from you I read [?] a few lines in one or two of Luna's letters from you I have written to you several letters but never Recd any answers to them but then our mail is so uncertain I scarcely get any letters I have saw but one or two copies of old date of papers since we left Lebanon on the of Feb I am getting to be quite an Arkansas traveler It is not probable we were stay here more than 8 days if that long as forage is very scarce out here and as we have to live in the [illegible] as well as other places we must move around I suppose it is preparatory to our moving on to Little Rock or Van Buren Ark and giving them another good whipping before they will lay down their arms

You ought to see with what coolness men go into action They have heard tell of the enemy so much and been in hearing of their guns so long they never appeared to think of death. Starting from home and at Camp Ellsworth is the time that danger was most feared and dreaded I used to think some of us will be killed and wonder what ones it will be. When we would be expecting a fight until even that wore off me law me how sore my feet would be as we were going down from Springfield but when I would hear the cannon boom I would press on without a murmur, and tired as I was I would hate to see the Regt halt at night when it was obliged to on account of the men being so tired they could stay in the rank (I do not profess to be brave yet I wanted to be in a battle at least before I wanted to see home again.)

The Rebels may talk about whipping five to one of our men but I think it is running they can do it if they concentrate at Little Rock I think we will meet our gun Boats there and after whipping them out go down the Arkansas River to the Mississippi I know that when you would hear of us being in eight miles of them you would think our men are not very anxious or they would catch them but there you are mistaken let men travel from daylight till dark straining every nerve they have in their bodies exciting every muscle and they can do no more it was only our cannons that stimulated us and got us along as fast as we did I never heard how you came out in the old factory with old Kellogg or your house whether you can hold it or not Our regiment was among the fortune ones lossing [sic] only one killed and one wounded although we protected the batteries and

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marched out in a meadow to draw the fire of the enemy so as to learn their position which we did by their opening their fire upon us with about 20 or 30 pieces of cannon at once but our artillery answered it and it was one continual roar and Buzz of Balls till we silenced them (I wouldn't be surprised if they was shooting at us from the way the Balls whizzed around us and over us.)

I must come to a close. Write soon all the news and everything else interesting.

Appendix 2. James M. Harrison letters

James M. Harrison was a Confederate soldier in the 15th Arkansas Infantry Regiment with the rank of lieutenant. These eight transcriptions were made from the original letters on microfilm at the University of Arkansas. The quality of writing indicates that Harrison was well educated. Written from March to August 1862, the letters describe Harrison's experiences on the retreat following the Battle of Pea Ridge and express his evolving feelings about the war. Harrison was seriously wounded in the Battle of Port Gibson, Mississippi, on May 1, 1863 and was captured by the enemy after the retreat of his regiment. He did not fully recover from his wound, and died after the surrender of Vicksburg on July 4, 1863. His body was returned to Washington County and buried at the Confederate Cemetery at Fayetteville.

Crawford Co. Arks. At Uncle Jock's March 23d 1862.

Dear Mother I seat myself to let you know I am alive and well. I am at Uncle Jock's today. Our regiment is at the ford of Frog Bayou on this road. We will march I expect in a few days, towards Clarksville. No body knows what we are going to do now nor where we are going to march. Some say we are going to Pocahantas others, to Little Rock others, to Memphis others, to Missouri by a roundabout way. Some of the troops have already started on the road towards Clarksville and it is thought that our regiment will march day after tomorrow. I dont know whether we will come as far as Clarksville or not, in fact I dont know whether we will march that way at all. If we get down that far I will try to come and see you if I can find where you are.

As to the battle I dont like to talk about that. We did no good nor gained any honor. We attacked the Federals on two sides near the Elk Horn. McCullocks forces on the North and Prices on the West. On Friday Prices men drove them a good peace and took their commissaries and subtler stores. But McCullocks men failed to do any good. McCullock was killed while viewing the enemies lines before he brought his men into action. McIntosh the same way. So we had no body to plan and give orders. Hebert led the Lousisana Regt McRae's and McNair's into an ambushade of the enemy. It was very

brushy and the regiment did not get into line good, got scattered, and a great many broke and fled. Parts of these regiments stood and fought for some time. But the other regiments not being ordered up to their support they had to fall back. That night we all marched around to Prices side and Saturday morning the fight commenced again. Our regiment did not get into it on Saturday. They did not fight long till we took up our line of march in an easterly direction. We thought we were falling back to get a better position but we kept gaining [going?] and didnt stop till we waded white river and went three miles further and arrived at Van Winkle's mill. There we camped for the night and made our supper and breakfast on poor hog without salt or bread. Next morning we marched in a southerly direction and waded the river several times, and then it commenced the hardest rain I ever saw and rained for several hours. The mud before night became half leg deep. That night we got some bacon and meal. We made dough in tin cups and baked it on boards. The meal was not sifted but I thought it was the best bread I ever ate. Some of the soldiers say they done without three or four days but I had something to eat every day. We marched on up the middle fork a piece then across to the west fork, up in and down howard's fork to Jim Wrights then across the mountains by way of cedar creek to Van Buren. I didnt suffer with hunger much but I suffered a right smart from lying on ground without tents or blankets. It has not given me much cold as you would expect, nor has it given me any cough as it has the most of the soldiers. I did not have another chill after I saw pap. The reason I have not written before is that I have not had the chance. Cousin Steve has a very bad cough and is very weak. Cousin Frank the same way.

On board the Sovereign, Memphis, Tenn. April 11th 1862

Dear Dock, in great haste I seat myself to tell you where I am etc. I am well. We got on board the Sovereign at Des Arc, April 8th, and arrived at Memphis last night at 10 o'clock. All our Regiment and an artillery came on this boat. Hill's Regiment came on the Golden Age. They left Des Arc, at the same time we did but I have not seen them since. All the first brigade left Des Arc the same evening but I dont know where any other regiments are but ours. This morning we are to get off the boat on to the Vicksburg, and go to Fort Pillow, 30 miles above here. Our army has fallen back from Island No. 10, to Fort Pillow. Our army has gained some success at Corinth Miss. We taken 5000 prisoners there, but our own loss was very great I learned.

I dont know whether this will ever reach you or not, it if does and pap and Mother have not moved back home let them all see it. If they have moved back send them word where I am and what I am doing.

Write to me if you have any chance.

yours truly J. M. Harrison

“WHEN THE WAR COME UP”

Rienzi Miss: April 14th [19th?] 1862

Dear Dock, I will drop you a line again. I wrote you a few lines at Memphis, but I am afraid it did not reach you. I told you in that letter that we were ordered from Memphis to Ft Pillow. We got off the boat that brought us to Memphis and put our things on board the Victoria and stayed on it an hour or two waiting for it to start, and then we got orders to unload our baggage and go to the depot and get on the cars and go to Corinth. We had a very muddy time moving our things from the steamboat to the depot, it was raining very hard and the streets were ankle deep in mud. We had to pile our things right out in the mud and water as we moved them off of the boat. After much delay we got started on the rail road to Corinth. We arrived at Corinth at midnight and staid until the next evening but we did not unload our baggage. We came on the cars to this place last night. This place is fifteen miles south of Corinth. We are in the North East corner of Mississippi. We have a great many men at Corinth. I have no Idea how many. I dont know what we will do next, nor do I care.

Send this letter to my folks. It is badly written, but I hope you can read it.

Yours fraternally J. M. Harrison

Camp Churchill Clark 4 miles South of Corinth Miss, May 26th, 1862

Dear Dock I will try again to get a letter to you. I have written you several letters but I am afraid you did not get them. I am well. I have no news to tell you. I am awful tired of being a soldier already and now the conscript law has got me in for two years more. I am satisfied of the wild goose chase and I want them to dry it up and let us all go home. I did not know how well I loved home before I volunteered, but now I know what it is to have a home and the comforts of life. Oh! what suffering, what misery, what untold agony, this hell-begotten war has caused. I wish all the misery that this war has caused might be turned from the mass of humanity and entailed on the prime movers, the instigators of this war. I wish those that have the power to settle it and will not might suffer the most extreme agonies of body and mind untill they reconcile these difficulties. I wish that Lincoln might see and feel the vast amount of suffering he has entailed on the human race. Maybe then he would be willing to do what is right and would stop this war. Sometimes I think that this war is necessary in order to fulfill the prophesies of the scripture. But I dont know anything. I suppose the great Baldwin, the author of Armageddon, says that the battle of Armageddon will be fought the 20th of June 1862. That the contending armies are the Federals and the Confederates; that the Confederates are to be victorious. He said those things in Nashville in a sermon he preached to the Federal soldiers. The Federal officers wanted to stop him when he said that the

Confederates would whip, but the soldiers would hear him out. I believe we will whip this battle if we have a fair chance. I believe the scale will then turn and we will gain ground. I suppose there is an intervention party getting up in England now. They say this war has to be stopped. There are thousands of them starving on account of being thrown out of employment; and this is for the want of cotton. I hope England will recognize our independance and tell Lincoln he has to let us alone. I hope something will turn up before two years for I sure I dont want to stay two years. I will die before that time is out I believe. Yet if I have to stay I will bear it the best I can.

We are in daily expectation of a battle at this place but it is still put off. The Federals picket us as close as they can but whenever we go forth to fight them they skedaddle back to their entrenchments. We have been out two or three times but they always avoid an engagement except with the skirmishers. There is some skirmish and picket fighting almost every day.

Col. Neal is going to start home in a few days. So is Frank Latta. I guess I will send this letter by Latta. Be sure to write me if you have the chance. Write any how if the mails are running and risk it getting to me. I have not received a letter from any one since I have been here. I did not expect any. Direct your letters to Corinth Miss. McRae's Regt Van Dones Division.

I will close. Give my love to all.

Affectionately yours Etc.

J. M. Harrison

Camp Priceville Miss.

July 7th 1862

Dear Father and Mother I will try once more to get a letter to you. I have started several letters to you since I have been in Miss. but I think it uncertain about your getting them. I have never heard from home since I have been here. I would like to get to here from home but I suppose it is impossible. There was a man left here a few days ago to take letters to take letters to Ark for this regt. and bring the answers back but I did not know anything about it till he was ready to start. If you can find him out when he goes to come back send me a letter by him. He charges 50 dollars a trip. All that sent letters by him paid a dollar a piece. He will carry letters to Ozark and you may hear of him; I dont know his name. I cant tell you much news at present. I suppose you have heard of the fight at Richmond before this time. Our men drove them back about thirty miles from Richmond killed a great many and took a great many prisoners. We are lying still here now doing

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nothing. I dont know how long we will lie still. We have done nothing since we fell back from Corinth. I cant tell where we will go when we leave here. Some think that we will go to Nashville. I think we will stay here till September or October.

We hear a good deal said about intervention now. But we dont have much hope of it effecting anything.

There is a great desire for peace among the soldiers. They are tired of soldiering but they want an honorable peace. We heard that Hindman had captured Curtis’s army, I hope it is so.

Our men are holding on to Vicksburg and they intend to still hold it. Our regiment is in Moore’s brigade now, and in Gen. Maury’s Division. We have been changed around pretty often.

Moore’s Brigade, Maury’s Division is the first brigade of the third division Army of the West.

Hobbs is our Col. now. Squire Boone of Ozark is our Lieut. Col. Galison Hagood was our captain, but he is dead now. He died of inflammation of the bowels.

I will close.

From your son James M. Harrison

Camp Priceville, near Tupelo Miss. July 23

Dear Dock, I commenced the above lines to some imaginary person, but as I didn’t finish them and paper is scarce I will write to you on this same page. George Hartgraves is about to get a discharge by hiring a substitute and I will try to send this letter by him. I wrote a letter to pap a few days ago and sent it by O. S. Miller the tobacconist who used to live in Bentonville. I have written a good many letters to you all, and I have wrote often because I was afraid the letters would be miscarried. If you have received them all I reckon it has been no burden to you to read them.

I am well at this time. I have been sick some little since I have been in this state. I took the diarrhea about six weeks ago, which was the first time I have had it since I have been out. It did not go very hard with me. I have now just got over a little spell of the intermittent fever about like that I had last fall. I feel as well now as ever all but being a little weak.

There is some talk now of the Army of the west being moved back across the Mississippi but it may be just talk I dont know. It is thought by some that the division that our regiment is in will be left on this side of the river. Our regiment is in the third

division of the Army of the West now. Our regiment is becoming very small now. We have discharged a great many non-conscripts, and a good many have been discharged on certificates of disability, and some have died, and about a dozen have deserted. Our company has but about forty here and half of them are not able for duty.

Frank Dyer is not able for duty at all now and has not been since we have been in this state. We are trying now to get him a discharge on certificate of disability. I think we will get him off in a few days. There are several in our company who are entirely unable to perform the duties of a soldier and never will be able to do duty. Our non conscripts can not get off till their time is out. The other companies of the regiment are discharging their non conscripts now. Those of our company will get off the second of November. We will have about fourteen to discharge.

We have had four men to die since we have been in this state. Their names are as follows: Galison Hagood, John Wilson (Old Billy Wilson's son, who lived in Tilley's prairie) Mattison Grimsley and a young man named Sutphin. The Federal army that was at Corinth has been divided and scattered I think. Some of it I think has gone to McClellan's army near Richmond and one division under gen. Buell is gone to Middle Tennessee and some have remained in the vicinity of Corinth. Some of our army has gone from here to Chattanooga. Gen Van Dorn himself and Breckenridge and his division are at Vicksburg. Van Dorn says he will hold Vicksburg at all hazards. Gen Bragg is in command of the army that is encamped around Tupelo. Gen. Price commands the army of the West now.

I have no Idea what will be the movements of the army from this time on. I think things will be still here now till cool weather. I have come to the conclusion that the war will last a long time and I am trying to reconcile myself to stay two years. There is no use for me to deny that I am tired of the service and that I want to be at home. I will come home the first honorable chance I have. And when I go into the service again I must ride.

Provisions are getting scarce here. We have plenty of flour and meal and molasses and sugar, but we dont have half enough meat. Clothes are getting very scarce and they are very high. I lost my coat and two pair of pants and two shirts. I have now one good pair of pants and one indifferent pair. I have three good pairs of drawers. I have three tolerably good pairs of socks. I have three shirts that are nearly worn out. Tell mother I lost my domestic shirts. Some fellow stole them and my pants. I will not suffer for clothes, if I get out I can buy them at a high price. A shirt that would have cost a dollar and a half two years ago will cost five dollars here now.

I gave a dollar and a half for a fine comb the other day. I gave six dollars for a pair of shoes that worth a dollar and six bits. Bacon costs us 30 cts per pound flour 10 cts. Coffee, what little we get, six bits per pound. The people in this country charge 50 cts per dozen for green apples, and 50 cts per dozen for roasting years, and a dollar a piece for

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chickens. A woman charge Ben Trixlee nine dollars for staying at her house two days and three nights. A woman charged me twenty cts a garment for washing and did not half do it. Last summer I got washing for five cts a garment. You have some Idea from these things how the times are in this country. I would be mighty glad to hear from home if there is any possible chance. If you have any chance at all you must write to me. I have not heard anything from home since I left home only Maurice Hill told me that pap had not moved back to Washington. He left about a month after we did I think. I believe I never have told you that we all have body lice on us. We call them body guards, or grey-backs, or jayhawkers. They make a fellow feel pretty low down but they are not as bad as the thoughts of them are. I know it was not my own nastiness that brought them on me but I caught them from others. I dont have many. I could keep clear of them if everybody about me would keep clear of them. Send this letter to the old folks when you read it. Tell Sally to consider this letter addressed to her the same as to you. I will close.

yours affectionately, James M. Harrison

[No address or date]

I am inclined to think you will be glad to read my scattering remarks though they have little of interest and come often. I started a letter to you just a few days ago but it is uncertain about your getting it, and as Mr. Givens is going to start home, I will start a letter by him. I am quite well at this time, all but laziness. The health of the soldiers is improving some, but there is still a great deal of sickness. Our company has nearly as many sick as well. There is one thing that is practiced among the soldiers here, to some extent, that is very bad. It is this: some men have a way of reporting themselves sick when they are not, in order to keep off of duty. The sick have a separate camp two or three hundred yards from the regiment. These fellows that feign themselves sick, go to the sick camp or hospital as it is called, and thus they get out of all duty, and the duty is therefore heavier on the balance. These feigned sick walk out four or five miles into the country and back in a day and carry loads of peaches and apples into the camp and sell them to the other boys at four or five times their worth. I wrote to you before about the high prices the citizens make us pay for apples, peaches, roasting ears, watermelons, onions, etc. The prices are still very high but they are somewhat lower than they were. The soldiers have got to going out and meeting the citizens as they come in with their loads, and buying their loads, then they will bring them in and sell them for twice what they gave for them. For instance they will buy apples and peaches for a dollar and a half a piece, and sell them at from two dollars to two and a half a piece.

In regard to the movements of the army I know as little as you do I reckon. We are still lying still at Tupelo, where we have been for two months. I suppose the Federals

are not over a hundred miles from us and they are on three sides of us almost. They are north of us and west of us and may be east of us. I expect the reason we dont move, is that the generals dont know which way to move. We still have rumors of us going back to Ark, but no movements to indicate such a thing. We all want to go back, very bad. Letters came from Ark a few days ago which stated that the Indians were doing great mischief on the border. The Ross party had turned against us and whipped Stand Watie and took all he had. The letter writer supposed that Ross's party had possession of Fort Smith at the time he wrote. I hope this is not so. We heard that Hindman had ruined his army by acts of tyranny and cruelty. It was stated that Hindman had had several men shot and that the Texans were leaving on account of it. Two whole Texans had left so said reports. It was said that Hindman had a great many men but hardly any arms and ammunition.

I have not yet received a letter from home. I want you to try very hard to send me a letter. Mr. Givens says he will try to get the people about Cane Hill to send some man with letters to us. If they do you must be sure and find it out and send me a letter. Letters come by mail from Ark to the soldiers and I am still in hopes that I will get one. J. M. Harrison

Camp Priceville Miss. August 2nd 1862.

Dear Dock, I am all right yet. If you and the balance of the folks get all my letters, I know you must hear from me pretty often, for it seems to me like I write pretty often. I am at the same place I have been for nearly six weeks. We are camped a mile and a half from Tupelo, a station on the Mobile and Ohio Rail Road. We are about the centre of Itawamba County. There is not much prospect of us doing anything soon. Something may turn up in a few days, but it is very uncertain what will be the course of events. A short time ago the talk was very common that the Army of the west would go back to Ark in a few days, but that has all died away, and now there is some talk of a movement up into Tennessee. The troops all want to go to Ark, and I believe if they were started that way they would fight harder to get there than in any other case. We all think it is pretty hard to have our own state unprotected and go into another state. I would a great deal rather be in Ark myself but I am willing to do whatever is calculated to contribute most to the interests of our whole country. If we establish the independence of the Southern Confederacy by fighting on this side of the Mississippi, Ark. can then be redeemed though she may suffer a great deal before that is accomplished. It grieves me very much to hear such reports as I do from Ark. but yet these reports may all be false. We hear of citizens being hung, of negroes being set free, of property being taken, of stock being killed and drove off etc. by the Federals. We heard that Curtis had freed all the negroes in Philips County. We heard that a body of the Feds came to fayetteville and took an officer

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who was enrolling the conscripts, and killed two or three of the citizens and made Judge Walker take the oath of allegiance to the U.S. and bound him in a bond of ten thousand dollars.

We had the report once that Hindman had captured Curtis and eight thousand troops; but we learned to our great disappointment that it was not the case. Curtis and his army is said to be on this side of the Mississippi now, opposite Helena. I notice in the paper today that it is thought that Curtis's Army will be sent to Vicksburg to fight Van Dorn. The Feds seem to have despaired of taking Vicksburg with their gunboats and it is said now that they are going to try it with a land force. It is said the fleet has left Vicksburg. (I mean the Federal fleet.) If Curtis's army goes to Vicksburg I am inclined to think that we will be ordered there to help defend the place. Van Dorn says that Vicksburg will be defended to the last extremity. But it is in a different department from what we are and it is probable that we will not go that way but go north when we do move. Mississippi has turned out a great many volunteers; and I think the conscripts are turning out promptly. The militia has been called out in some parts of the state. I think that they could get along over here now without us and let us go back to Ark. Frank Dyer got a discharge from the service a few days ago on certificate of disability. He is very weak. He aimed to go from here to Columbus to collect some forage accounts he had with him and they be allowed to try to go home. He will have to rest a great deal on the way and it will take him a long time to get home. He will go by your house I guess and he can tell you all about how we are getting along.

I believe I never have told you that I was elected third lieut. of the company at our reorganization. I dont know whether I ever told you this or not. We have a new captain now. He was first lieut. of another company and was promoted to captain of our company. They have adopted the system of promotion by seniority, entirely, now, to fill all vacancies but that of third lieut. Whenever a captain's place is vacant the oldest first lieut. in the regiment takes his place. When a first lieut's place is vacant the oldest second lieut. takes his place. The oldest third lieut. takes the place of second lieut. When the third lieut's place is vacant, one is elected from the ranks. By this system a fellow is moved from his own company, generally, when he is promoted. If two more vacancies of second lieutenant occur in our regiment, it is very probable that I will be promoted to fill one of the places, as I now next to the oldest third lieut in the regiment. (When I say oldest I mean the one that has held the office the longest. I dont want to leave my own company but as they have begun the senior [?] use of promotion if they promote me I will accept.

I want to come home, I will not deny it. I am tired of war. If ever I do get home and peace is made, I will know how to appreciate the blessings of home and kind friends. You must not think I am home sick, for I am not; I study but little about home and I dont let it trouble me.

I would love to hear from home. I have never got a letter from Ark since I have been on this side of the “big branch.” I’ll get awful mad if some of you dont write to me before long.

George Hartgraves was discharged from the service a week or two ago, and he started home. I sent a letter to him by you. I may have written some things in this letter that I wrote in that, for I have forgot what all I did write in that letter. George hired a substitute. Substitutes are in great demand. I heard of one man that offered a thousand dollars for a substitute.

I have said all I have to say I believe. It is useless for me to send compliments to the family or my friends for these are understood. I hope I will have a chance to hear from you all, sometime before long.

Yours fraternally,

James M. Harrison

Appendix 3. Ingram Manifesto

James M. Ingram was captain of a Rebel home guard unit in Benton County when the 1st Arkansas briefly garrisoned Elkhorn Tavern late in the year 1862. Ingram sent a threat letter to all Mountain Feds by way of the 1st Arkansas headquarters in Fayetteville a couple of months later. In Ingram’s manifesto, one finds the guerrilla captain laboring to define the rules of war and the code of good conduct that he and his men would follow, for they were already being branded as outlaws. The manifesto is presented here in two forms: the first with spelling and punctuation corrected, and the second with spelling and punctuation as presented in Bishop, Loyalty on the Frontier, 199-200.

Headquarters

White River hill to the militia of Benton, Madison and Washington Co. Ark. and all it may concern. I am opposed to burning and robbing families of their stuff and provisions and abuse to women. The militia is as well acquainted with the hill as I am and if they can take the advantage of me and my men from the brush and kill or take us prisoners we will but try to pay it back and will not go and burn nor plunder nor give abuse. But if you carry out the plan of burning and robbing I shall be compelled to patronize your plan. But it is a plan that I abhor and I would be glad you will drop the plan. We don’t want it said that the southern people brought families to

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suffer and turn out of doors. I expect to fight you on all occasions and if men fall prisoners in my hands they will be treated as prisoners of war. They will be give a trial and if they are not guilty of four crimes they will not be hurt and that is burning, robbing women and children of their provisions and household, abuse to families, and murdering men at home not in arms. The militia knows that I have not robbed nor burnt and have treated prisoners with respect.

To Colonel Bishop don't you know that the war is close at a end and you should be careful for you have give orders to murder innocent, unarmed men and burn. If you don't mind you will not be forgot after peace. I think men, women and children that had no hand in bringing up the war should not be hurt.

Colonel Bishop post at Fayetteville, Ark from Capt. James Ingram of the 6h provost Benton Co. Ark.

Feb. 27, 1863

Capt. JAMES INGRAM

Headquarters

White River hill to the molisha of Benton Madison and Washington co ark and all it ma consurn I am aposed to Burning and Robing famileys of ther stuff and provisions and a Buse to women tha molisha is as well acquainted with the hill as I am and if tha can take the advantage of me and my men from the brush and kil ar take us prisoners we will But try to pa it Back and will not go and Burn nor plunder nor giv abuse but if you carey out the plan of Burning and Robing I shal Be compeled to paternise your plan But it is a plan that I abhor and I would Be glad you will drop the plan we dont want it sed that the suthern people Brot famileys to suffer and turn out of Dores I Expect to fight you on all occasions and if men fal prisners in my hands tha will Be treeted as prisnors of wor tha wil Be giv a triol and if tha are not gilty of 4 crimes tha will not be hurt and that is Burning Robing women and children of ther provisions house hole and abuse to famileys and murdering men at home not in armes the molishy knows that I hav not robed nor Burnt and hav treeted prisnors with respect

To Curnel Bishop Dont you no that the war is clost at a end and you should be carful for you have giv orders to murder inosent unarm men and Burn if you dont mind you will not Be forgot after peace I think

men women and children that had no hand in Bringing up the war shud not be hurt.

Curnel Bishop post at fayetteville ark from Capt James Ingrum of the 6h provose co Benton Co Ark

Feb 27 1863

Capt JAMES INGRUN

Appendix 4. The Bluff Dweller Myth

Numerous bluff caves in the Ozarks have been found to contain impressive assemblages of prehistoric artifacts. The bluff shelter artifact assemblages gave rise to a misinterpretation of prehistory in the Ozarks now known as the Bluff Dweller Myth. For many decades, or from the 1920s to the 1970s more or less, archeologists contended that the artifact assemblages found in the many bluff shelters in the Ozarks were evidence of a distinct culture found only in this region, which they called the Bluff Dwellers. Essentially, the mythical Bluff Dwellers were a primitive people who lived in relative isolation from the surrounding region and proved resistant to cultural change. They were supposedly a people of the Woodland Tradition who clung to many Archaic cultural forms while resisting various new cultural forms of the Late Woodland period such as farming and living in permanent villages. Instead of assimilating the cultural influences from the outside, the Bluff Dwellers preferred to make their homes in the natural concavities found all through the rugged Ozarks hills and to subsist by hunting and fishing. Because of the power of this myth, subsequent Ozark archeology was at pains for several decades to show that the prehistoric inhabitants of the Ozark highlands were never appreciably removed from the evolving cultural patterns around them, if they were even removed from them at all.¹

Archeologists Lydia I. Rees and Jamie C. Brandon explain that the Bluff Dwellers concept came about because the bluff shelters made convenient seasonal habitation sites that were occupied over and over again intermittently for hundreds of years. Discarded items were well preserved in the dry conditions found in the bluff shelters, so the assemblages of prehistoric artifacts became a jumble of items from different periods. Moreover, the archeological record was only an incomplete inventory of the material

¹ Lydia I. Rees and Jamie C. Brandon, "Beyond the 'Bluff Dweller': Excavating the History of an Ozark Myth," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 76, no 2. (Summer 2017), 125-26, 131-33.

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culture of any group, as the sites were mostly inhabited only in the summer months and perhaps in some cases only for ceremonial purposes.²

The Bluff Dweller concept originated with M. R. Harrington, a Columbia University-trained professional archeologist with the Heye Foundation in New York. Harrington conducted his field work in twenty-five bluff shelters in the Ozarks in 1922 and 1923. He published an article on his findings in 1924. Harrington’s Bluff Dweller concept was further developed by Samuel Dellinger, who became curator of the University of Arkansas in 1926 and oversaw a program of bluff shelter archeology through the 1930s. Harrington published a book-length monograph, *The Ozark Bluff-dwellers* in 1960. By then his concept was well-known and unchallenged. It gained wide acceptance through its mention in the seminal work by Gordon R. Willey and Philip Phillips, *Method and Theory in American Archaeology*, which was published in 1958.³

Harrington constructed his idea of Bluff Dweller culture from a jumble of artifacts of different ages without benefit of the culture horizons that were carefully identified and refined (sometimes with the added precision of carbon dating) through the burgeoning fieldwork performed by “new” or “processual archeologists” in the 1960s and 1970s. By the latter decade, archeologists were forming a revised cultural sequence for the region that exposed the Bluff Dweller concept as a fallacy. Archeologist Mark L. Raab first pointed it out in an essay, “Expanding Prehistory in the Arkansas Ozarks,” published in 1982.⁴

In 1984, archeologist James A. Brown tried to demolish the Bluff Dweller concept systematically with his book *Prehistoric Southern Ozark Marginality: A Myth Exposed*. Brown assailed the concept both from the standpoint of theory and evidence. The Bluff Dweller concept was an example of “geographical barrier theory,” Brown wrote. Borrowing a term from ecology, he likened this theoretical survival of an essentially Archaic way of life in the Ozarks to a cultural *refugium*. Brown found this survival implausible. Southeastern cultural systems in the Woodland period could adapt themselves to highland and lowland environments; Woodland peoples had the knowledge and the technology to succeed with farming in a variety of climate conditions. Topographically, the Ozarks highlands were not the equivalent of an island or even a mountain range; though rugged, they were nowhere near rugged enough to present a geographic barrier to cultural diffusion.⁵

² Rees and Brandon, “Beyond the ‘Bluff Dweller,’” 26-27.

³ Ibid, 125-28.

⁴ Mark L. Raab, “Expanding Prehistory in the Arkansas Ozarks,” in *Arkansas Archeology in Review*, edited by Neal L. Trubowitz and Marvin D. Jeter, Arkansas Archeological Survey Research Series 15 (Fayetteville: Arkansas Archeological Survey, 1982), 233-34.

⁵ James A. Brown, *Prehistoric Southern Ozark Marginality: A Myth Exposed* (Columbia: Missouri Archeological Society, Inc., 1984), 3-4.

When Brown next examined the archeological evidence for the existence of a cultural refugium in the Ozarks, he found the evidence lacking. Thanks largely to the National Historic Preservation Act and the rise of public archeology in the 1970s, there were now many recorded archeological sites in the Ozarks. Brown proposed a concordant cultural sequence across the Ozark region that saw the beginning of pottery production in the Middle Woodland period, the introduction of hoe technology about the same time, and the appearance of maize cultivation soon after that. There simply was no evidence of a cultural lag in the Ozarks.⁶

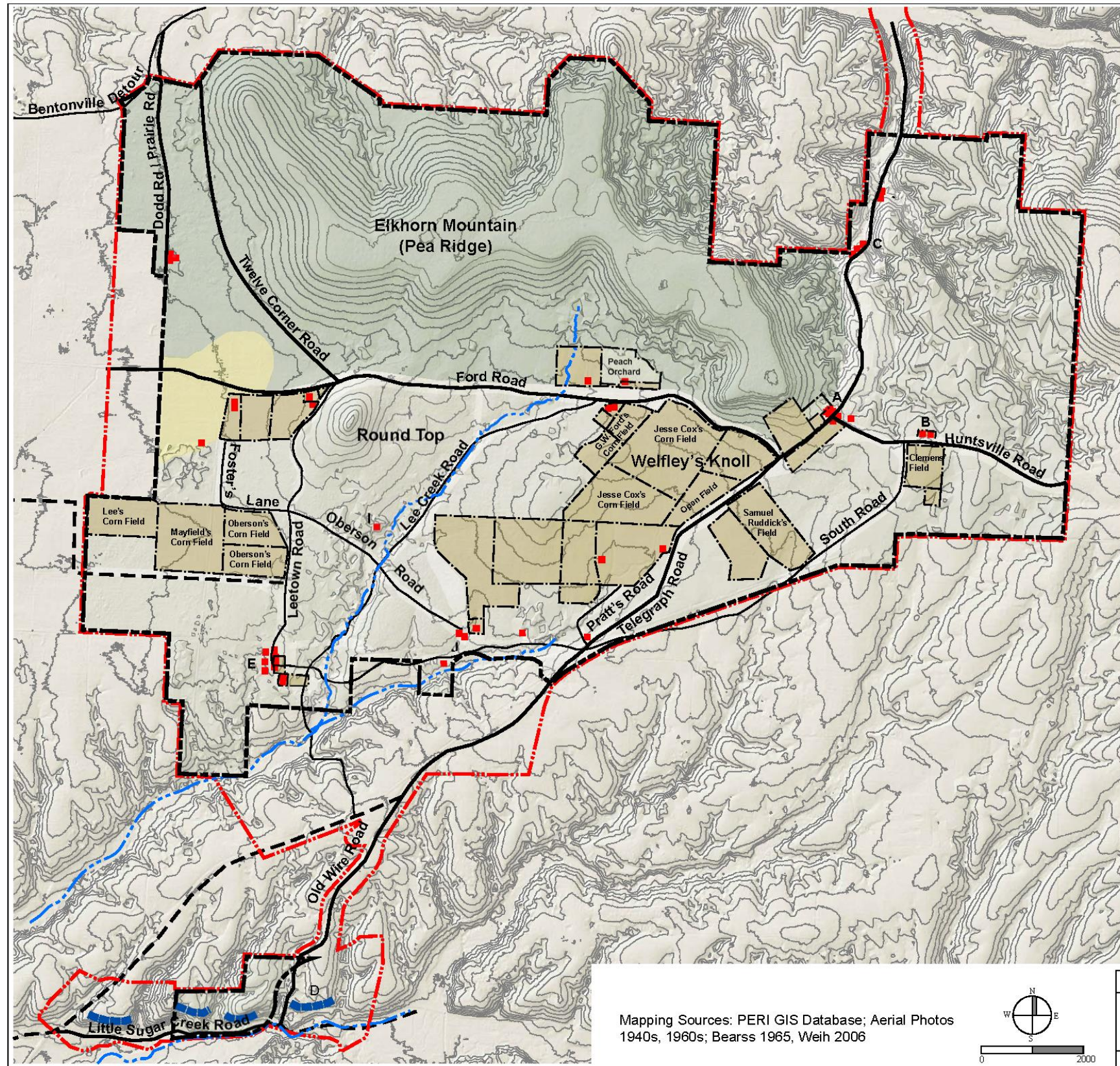
Despite four more decades of archeological investigations tending to confirm what Brown wrote, the Bluff Dweller concept still hangs on in the public imagination. Rees and Brandon, in their recent critique, offer two explanations for its enduring appeal. One is that the view of a laggard prehistoric people inhabiting the Ozarks essentially dovetails the twentieth-century image of the Ozark hillbilly. Writers such as the folklorist Vance Randolph suggested that the poverty-stricken farmer in the Ozarks in the 1930s was an anti-modern who could be seen as a foil to runaway modernity in the rest of the nation. This romantic though denigrating critique of Ozark lifeways in the 1930s became entrenched in Ozark studies and Ozark tourism, a kind of regional branding. As stated by Rees and Brandon, “the Bluff Dweller construct reads the hillbilly back into prehistory.” The second explanation that the Bluff Dweller myth has endured is perhaps even more problematic. By making the prehistoric inhabitants of the Ozarks into an extinct culture of a lost world, it severs contemporary American Indian tribes from their ties to ancestral cultures and lands. Contemporary archeological findings do, in fact, suggest some continuity between Late Woodland prehistoric sites and the Caddo and Osage tribes who inhabited the area in historic times and are still in the region today. “The Bluff Dweller identity,” Rees and Brandon observe, “can be a way of depriving modern tribes of literal and figurative ownership of the prehistoric past of the region.”⁷

⁶ Ibid, 32-50.

⁷ Rees and Brandon, “Beyond the ‘Bluff Dweller’,” 141-42.

“WHEN THE WAR COME UP”





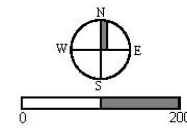
Legend

- Park Boundary
- Study Area Boundary
- Topography
- Federal Trenches
- Road
- Stream
- Fence Line
- Prairie
- Fields/Pastures
- Orchard
- Woodlands
- Open Forest - Along Roads
- Buildings and Structures

Places

- A Elkhorn Tavern - Elkhorn Tavern, Barn, Outbuildings, Spring Box
- B Clemens' Farm - Clemens' House and Clemens' Barn
- C Tanyard
- D Federal Trenches
- E Leetown Hamlet - Lee House, Masonic Lodge, 12 buildings/structures

Mapping Sources: PERI GIS Database; Aerial Photos 1940s, 1960s; Bearss 1965, Weih 2006

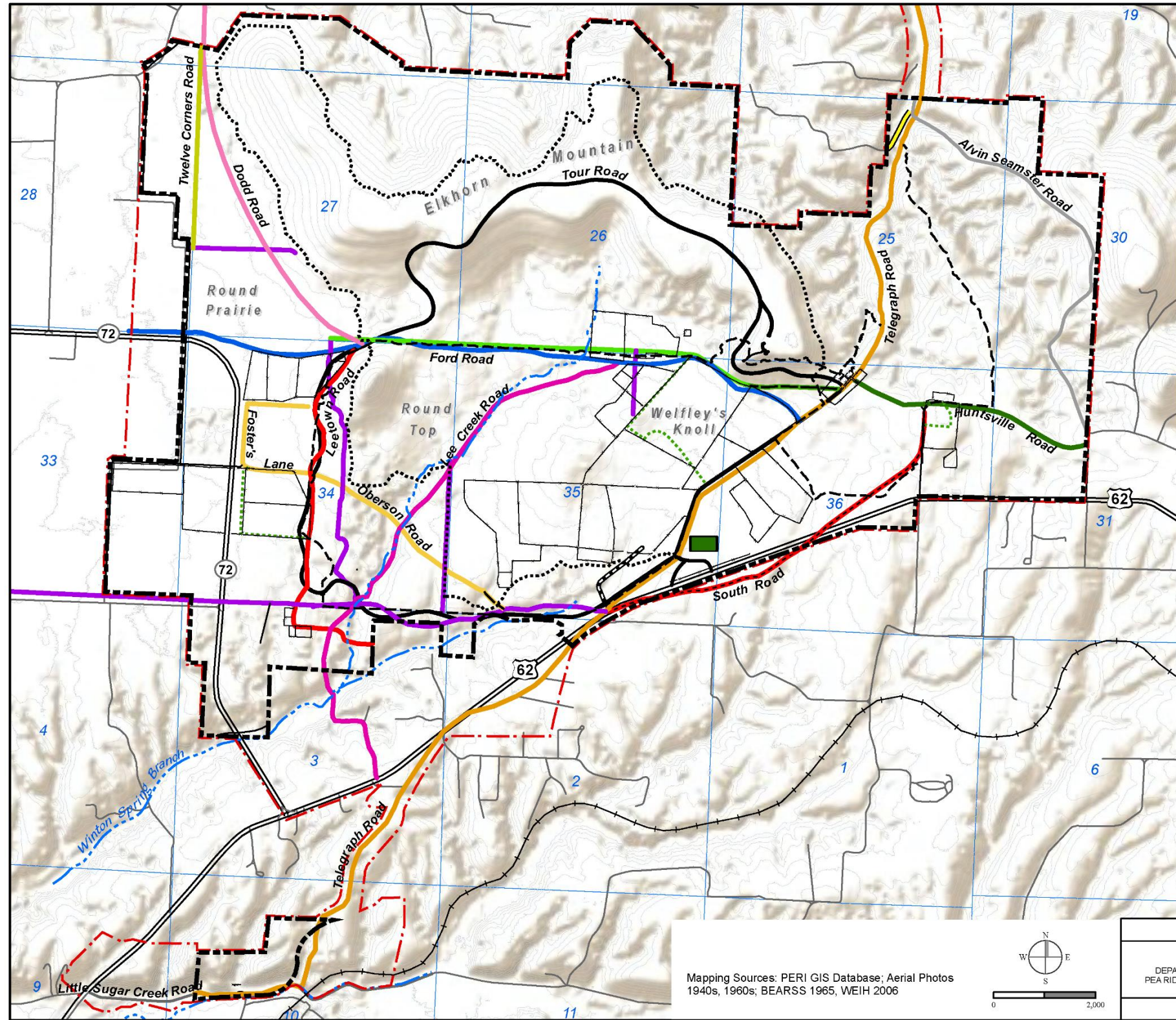


UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
PEA RIDGE NATIONAL MILITARY PARK

MINDUS BISHOP

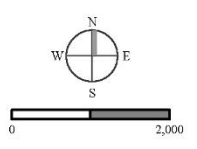
TITLE OF PROJECT
HISTORIC RESOURCE STUDY
TITLE OF DRAWING
PRE-MISSION 66 STRUCTURES
NAME OF PARK
PEA RIDGE NATIONAL MILITARY PARK

REGION: MIDWEST COUNTY: BENTON STATE: ARKANSAS

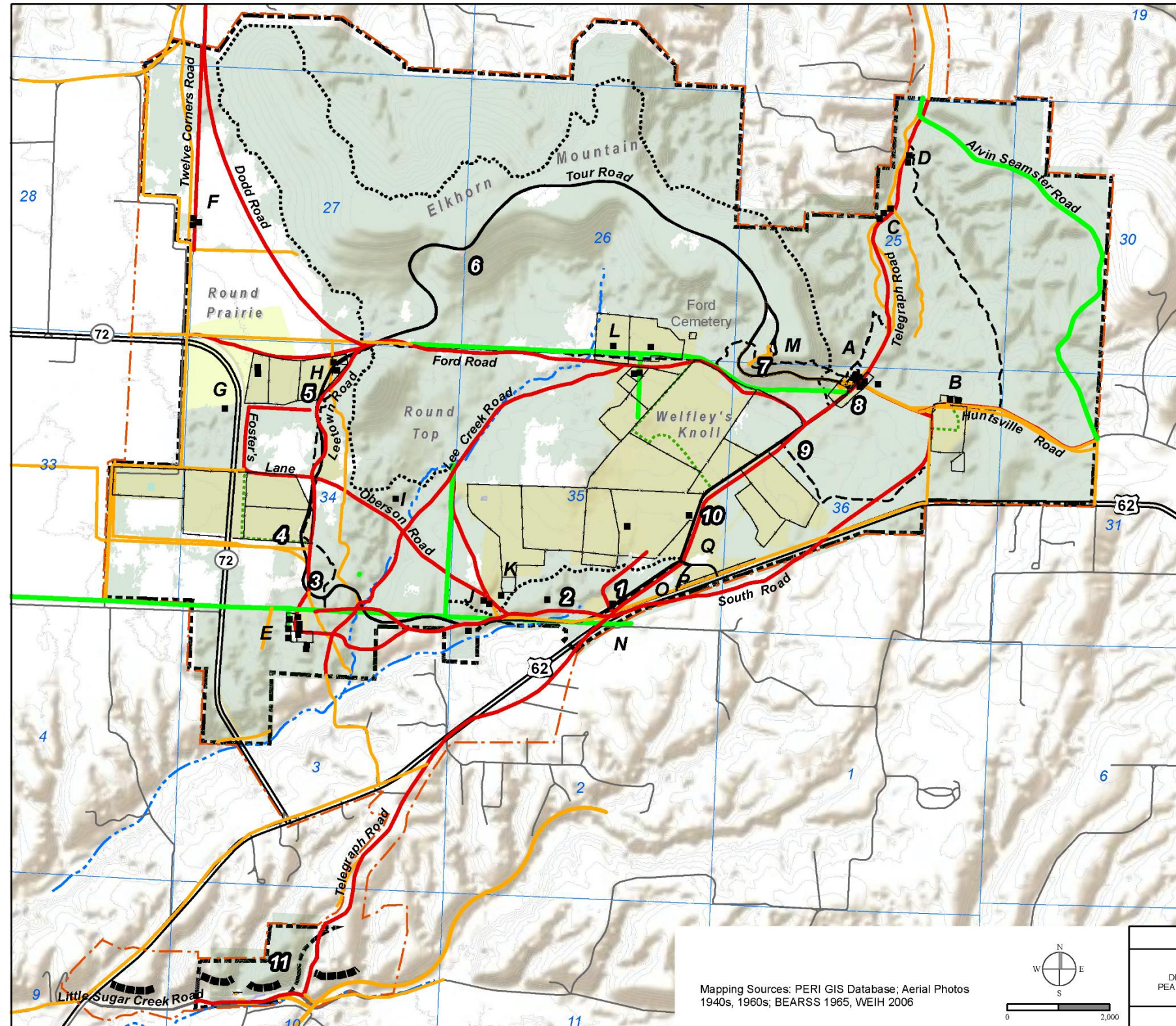


- ### Legend
- Park Boundary
 - Study Area Boundary
 - NPS Visitor Center/Facilities
 - Tour Road
 - Private Access
 - Ford Road
 - 1940s Roads/County Roads
 - Foster's Lane
 - Oberson Road
 - Old Highway 72
 - Lee Creek Road
 - Leetown Road
 - Twelve Corner's Road
 - Dodd Road
 - Pratt's Road
 - Telegraph Road (Butterfield Overland Route, Trail of Tears, Old Wire Road)
 - Huntsville Road
 - South Road (Ruddick Road)
 - Service Drive
 - Winton Spring Road
 - Outside Park Roads
 - Horse Trail
 - Mown Trail
 - Park Loop Trail
 - Worm Fence
 - Topography
 - Stream

Mapping Sources: PERI GIS Database; Aerial Photos 1940s, 1960s; BEARSS 1965, WEIH 2006



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR PEA RIDGE NATIONAL MILITARY PARK MINDUS BISHOP		TITLE OF PROJECT HISTORIC RESOURCE STUDY TITLE OF DRAWING HISTORIC AND EXISTING ROADS NAME OF PARK PEA RIDGE NATIONAL MILITARY PARK REGION: MIDWEST COUNTY: BENTON STATE: ARKANSAS
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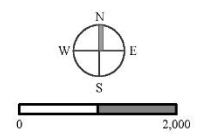
Legend

- Park Boundary
- Study Area Boundary
- Roads/Highways
- Tour Road
- Pre-1860 Road
- 1940s Road/County Road
- Roads Outside Park
- Horse Trail
- Mown Trail
- Park Loop Trail
- Fence
- Ford Cemetery
- Topography
- Buildings/Structures (includes foundations)
- Interpretive Stops
- Stream
- Federal Trenches
- Mowed Grassland
- Restored Tallgrass Prairie
- Woodlands
- Marsh
- Water

Buildings/Structures

- A Elkhorn Tavern (building, foundations)
- B Clemen's Structures (foundations)
- C Tanyard (non-extant)
- D Unidentified Structures (non-extant)
- E Leetown Hamlet (non-extant)
- F Amos J. Patterson Structure (non-extant)
- G Wiley Foster Structure (non-extant)
- H Sturdy Cabin (non-extant)
- I Log Cabin
- J Winton Springs House (foundation)
- K J. Ruddick Structures (non-extant)
- L G.W. Ford Structures (non-extant)
- M East Overlook
- N Pratt's Store (non-extant)
- O NPS Maintenance
- P NPS Administrative
- Q Visitor Center

Mapping Sources: PERI GIS Database; Aerial Photos 1940s, 1960s; BEARSS 1965, WEIH 2006



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR PEARIDGE NATIONAL MILITARY PARK MINDUS BISHOP	TITLE OF PROJECT HISTORIC RESOURCE STUDY TITLE OF DRAWING PARK DEVELOPMENT / EXISTING CONDITIONS NAME OF PARK PEA RIDGE NATIONAL MILITARY PARK REGION: MIDWEST COUNTY: BENTON STATE: ARKANSAS
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Oberson Road
Pratt’s Store
Soldiers Reunited Monument
Spring Box at Elkhorn Tavern
Tannery House Ruin
Tannery Well Ruin
Telegraph Road
Union Trenches
U.S. Army Headquarters Monument
Will Mayfield House Well
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