



**ARKANSAS HISTORIC  
PRESERVATION PROGRAM**

# Railroad-Era Resources of Southwest Arkansas (Lafayette, Little River, Miller, and Sevier Counties) 1870-1945

By the Staff of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

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# Railroad-Era Resources of Southwest Arkansas

(Lafayette, Little River, Miller and Sevier Counties)

## 1870-1945



*Cotton Belt Railroad Hospital, Texarkana, Miller County*

Cover photo courtesy of Arkansas History Commission

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## Early Railroad History

The first railroad in the United States, built in 1825, ran from Quincy, Massachusetts, to the Massachusetts Bay. With cars drawn by horses and a three mile long track, the train transported granite from the Quincy quarries to the barges headed for Boston. Only three years later, on July 4, 1828, the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad began operating the first passenger train in the United States. During the next 20 years, the legislatures of nearly all the states granted charters to railroad companies, though many of these enterprises were purely speculative and the roads were never built.<sup>1</sup> By the early 1850s, there was a considerable amount of discussion on the construction of a transcontinental railroad beginning at the port city of Charleston, South Carolina, and extending by the way of the most direct and convenient route to a terminus at San Francisco, California. When the word made its way across the Mississippi River, it was joyously received by the people of southern Arkansas.



*Train sketch, 1881. Courtesy of the Arkansas History Commission.*

Sparsely settled before the Civil War, the four counties in extreme southwestern Arkansas Sevier, Little River, Miller and Lafayette were profoundly affected by the development and extension of the railroads. The redistribution and redirection of existing transportation routes and the founding and development of new communities economically dependent on the rail lines would radically alter the cultural landscape of Southwest Arkansas. The railroad brought new settlers and industries to the region and introduced new architectural styles and influences to the old and new communities. This historic theme study examines the effects of the railroad on urban and small community development in Sevier, Little River, Miller and Lafayette counties between 1870 and 1945.<sup>2</sup>

## Early Railroad Development in Arkansas

While in 1858 there was not a mile of steam railroad anywhere west of the Mississippi River,<sup>3</sup> the national excitement over railroads spread to Arkansas as early as the mid-1830s. Numerous companies were formed, routes discussed, and land grants obtained. Roswell Beebe, Grandison D. Royston and Edward Cross, who were agents for the owners of what became the Cairo and Fulton Railroad Company, planned the first survey

for the construction of a railroad in Arkansas. Capt. Henry D. Shreve was in charge of the survey, which covered land from the northeastern corner to the southwestern corner of Arkansas. The United States War Department cited this area as the best route, geologically, for the transcontinental railroad that would terminate at the Pacific Ocean.<sup>4</sup> The second Arkansas General Assembly granted charters to two companies for construction of two railroads on January 9, 1839: one from Little Rock to Napoleon; the other from Little Rock to Helena.

Many railroad companies were incorporated and charters were granted by the state of Arkansas in 1852. The Arkansas Central Railroad Company incorporated on January 2, 1852, with Roswell Beebe as the chairman. The committee called for construction of a railroad from Memphis, Tennessee, to the Texas state line. On January 14 and 15, 1852, legislation to establish railroads running from Memphis via Little Rock to Fulton, and from Helena via Little Rock to Fort Smith, were introduced by Sen. Solon H. Borland and Rep. Robert W. Johnson of Arkansas to the United States Congress. The former followed the route of the Barney survey, conducted in 1850 by Capt. Joshua Barney of the United States Topographical Corps of Engineers. The line would serve as the general route running from St. Louis to Fulton and then on to the Pacific by way of Santa Fe, New Mexico.<sup>5</sup> The Little Rock and Memphis Railroad Company was incorporated by an act of the Arkansas General Assembly and was approved by Gov. Elias Nelson Conway on January 10, 1853. This was the first railroad chartered that went into actual public service.<sup>6</sup>



*Roswell Beebe. Courtesy of the Arkansas History Commission.*

While citizens of Arkansas were interested in the advantages of railroad transportation, progress was slow. Insufficient funds,<sup>7</sup> a series of national financial panics, illnesses among workers, fires, and floods thwarted Arkansas railroad construction for several years. The only construction completed before the Civil War was on the Memphis and Little Rock Railroad, and the Mississippi, Ouachita and Red River Railroad. On January 9, 1862, train service was inaugurated between DeValls Bluff, on the western bank of the White River, and Huntersville (present-day North Little Rock), on the northern bank of the Arkansas River.<sup>8</sup>

Not everyone was interested in the development of the railroad. In fact, there was opposition to the railroad across the United States. In the fall of 1828, a few months after work commenced on the Baltimore and Ohio, some young men of Lancaster, Ohio, organized a debating society and applied to the school board of Lancaster for the use of the school house in which to hold their meetings. Learning that the society intended to discuss the practicability of the railroad, the board replied, “we are willing to allow you the use of the school house to debate all proper question in but such things as railroads we regard as rank infidelity. If God had ever intended his children to fly over the face of the country at the frightful speed of fifteen miles an hour, he would have foretold it clearly through his holy prophets. It is a device of Satan to lure immortal souls to hell.”<sup>9</sup> One generation later, public sentiment had undergone a radical change. The railroad was no longer looked upon as “rank infidelity,” but as one of the most powerful agents in the development of the country.

The controversy in Arkansas over the railroads did not center over their lack of divine providence, but rather the corruption and fraud that was associated with many of the companies. The earliest railroad controversy occurred in the spring of 1853. A charter was granted to build a railroad from the community of Napoleon, on the Mississippi River, to Little Rock. Since both the Cairo and Fulton and the Napoleon and Little Rock

railroads were chartered during the previous legislative session, the Napoleon faction believed it had equal rights with its opponents, the Cairo and Fulton. However, the Napoleon and Little Rock Railroad Company opposed both Governor Conway and the Cairo and Fulton Railroad Company, accusing them of using the Cairo grant for their own interests and conspiring to prevent the building of the Napoleon road.<sup>10</sup>

On September 18, 1866, reports were made that Congress passed a bill signed by President Andrew Johnson that renewed a former grant of lands. This bill gave an additional amount of land to railroads such as the Cairo and Fulton.<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile, the Arkansas General Assembly passed legislation to encourage the development of railroads in Arkansas. A levee bond was established in 1868, which made funds available to companies to build levees along navigable streams at overflowing points. On March 18, 1867, the Arkansas legislature overruled Gov. Isaac Murphy's veto on an act lending aid, on the credit of the state, for the construction of railroads in the form of state bonds.<sup>12</sup>

The years of the Reconstruction era brought men to power who were liberal in granting state aid to railroads. A number of companies were incorporated to build railroads "beginning nowhere and ending nowhere." These companies and the dates of incorporation include: the Texas, Mississippi River and Northwestern, November 1868; the Little Rock, Pine Bluff and New Orleans, November 1868; the Camden and Red River, August 11, 1871; the White River Valley, August 1871; the Memphis and Western, December 1871; the DeValls Bluff and Auburn, February 26, 1872; the New Orleans, Little Rock and St. Louis, May 11, 1872; the Kansas City and Memphis, October 1872; the Washington, Lewisville and Shreveport, February 5, 1873; the Helena and Northwestern, March 31, 1873; the Memphis, Pine Bluff, and Shreveport, March 24, 1873; the North Central, March 31, 1873; and the Fort Smith, Dardanelle and Little Rock, April 7, 1873.<sup>13</sup> Most railroads, planned by businessmen, were never built, although a few plans were put into action.

Shortly after taking office, Reconstruction Gov. Powell Clayton approved a bill that granted \$1,000 per railroad mile in state bonds, payable in 30 years at 7 percent interest per annum to railroads in need of financial assistance. The railroad companies that had not already received federal grants were eligible to receive \$15,000 per railroad mile for construction and financing purposes. In applying with the secretary of state, each railroad company was required to issue a map of the proposed line showing the territory to be covered and the terminal points, an affidavit from the company's president and chief engineer showing the estimated cost to grade the first 100 miles of the line, and another affidavit showing that 10 miles were graded and set up for actual use. The new act also included the governor and the secretary of state as part of the establishment of the railroad commission. The vote at the general election of November 3, 1868, was five-to-one in favor of granting aid to the railroads. Arkansas, Union and White counties were the only counties to disapprove of the measure.<sup>14</sup> In 1871 there were a total of 86 chartered railway companies in Arkansas, all controlled by fewer than 20 powerful politicians and their allies. The state had a bonded indebtedness of \$6.9 million, and had only 271 miles of railroad track to show for it.<sup>15</sup> Many of the state bonds were thrown on the New York markets and sold cheaply. This resulted in many of the roads -- the Little Rock, Pine Bluff, and New Orleans, and the Mississippi, Ouachita, and Red River railroads in particular -- becoming insolvent.

The railroad between Little Rock and Fort Smith was contemplated in 1853 by Boston capitalists who had previously been interested in railroad building in the East. Associating with some Arkansas men, they obtained a charter from the Arkansas legislature and, in 1854, the line was surveyed under the direction of Joshua Barney, chief engineer. The length of the proposed road, as ascertained by the survey, was 163 miles. The work of grading was commenced soon after the survey was finished, but it was suspended in 1860 for lack of capital. Nothing was done toward the building of the railroad until after the Civil War.<sup>16</sup>

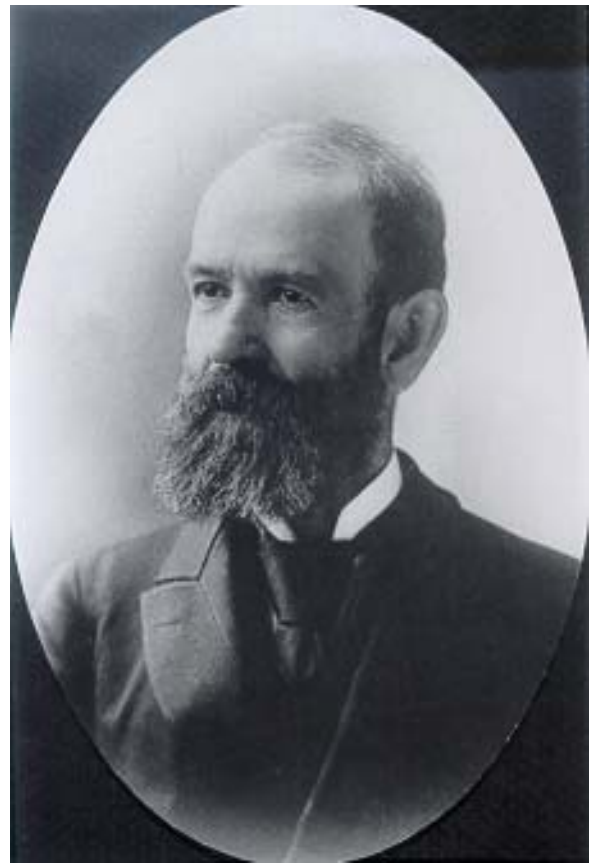
At the beginning of the Civil War the Boston company had \$31,304, mostly in gold, in the treasury. Both the military and civil officers of the United States and the Confederate governments tried to get possession of this fund, but Capt. Philip Pennywit, a veteran steamboat captain and treasurer of the railroad company, managed

to preserve the fund. With this sum as a nucleus, work on the railroad between Little Rock and Fort Smith was resumed in 1866 with Jesse Turner as president. The roadbed was graded from Little Rock to Morrilton, a distance of 50 miles, under the Boston company when financial troubles arose and the franchise passed into other hands. Between the years 1866 and 1870 the road was graded to Van Buren and preparations were made for laying the rails. The *Arkansas Gazette* of March 4, 1871, announced the arrival of the steamer *Hennie Howell* at Little Rock; it was bringing a large cargo of iron rails from New Orleans for the Little Rock and Fort Smith Railroad. The following month, the steamer *Importer* brought up 100 more tons of iron rails. Before the close of the year the road was finished as far as Ozark and in 1872 it was completed as far as Van Buren, where freight and passengers were transferred for Fort Smith. The entire line was completed in 1874 and is now a part of the Missouri Pacific system.<sup>17</sup>

The Memphis and Little Rock route was of foremost importance to the state because the swamps of eastern Arkansas made Memphis, only 133 miles from Little Rock, virtually inaccessible by land and the water route wound far to the southeast. Building proceeded eastward from Little Rock and westward from Hopefield in modern day Crittenden County in 1857, and was fairly rapid until the eastern section, laid mostly on trestles, reached Madison on the St. Francis River. By 1862 the western section extended to DeValls Bluff on the White River. The war and the engineering problem of constructing a roadbed through the morasses bordering the St. Francis, Cache and White rivers interrupted track laying for several years. Meanwhile, passengers covered the distance between Madison and Clarendon by coach and traveled from Clarendon to DeValls Bluff by steamboat. The two sections were completed in 1871, and the line was opened amid celebration. The Memphis and Little Rock Railroad was not a profitable institution, owing chiefly to the frequent floods that interfered with traffic over the eastern 40 miles. In 1898 the road was purchased by the Choctaw Oklahoma and Gulf Railroad Company, which immediately began work on an extension from Little Rock westward into Oklahoma. Construction was pushed forward rapidly and on December 15, 1899, regular trains were running between Memphis and Oklahoma City.<sup>18</sup>

While the Civil War delayed railroad building in Arkansas, by 1870 ambitious promoters of the St. Louis, Iron Mountain and Southern had pushed a line south from St. Louis to the Arkansas border and were looking toward Texas. They bought the Cairo and Fulton, which had secured rights of way before the war but had done no building, and constructed the first railroad that crossed the entire state. These tracks followed the general route of the old Southwest Trail to Fulton on the Red River. In 1872 the road reached Little Rock. Its terminus on the Texas border, where the new city of Texarkana was to grow, was completed in 1874. At the same time the state's other major highway between Little Rock and Fort Smith was being paralleled by the Little Rock and Fort Smith Railroad. Construction stopped at the coalfields of Clarksville in 1874 and the route was not extended to Fort Smith until 1879.<sup>19</sup>

Jay Gould, a Wall Street financier, acquired the St. Louis, Iron Mountain and Southern Railroad lines for \$2 million in 1882 and visited Arkansas to inspect his roads and investigate the possibilities of extending his transportation empire in the southwest. The same year, he bought the Little Rock and Fort Smith and added it to the Iron Mountain system, which continued to grow until it became the



*Jay Gould. Courtesy of the Arkansas History Commission.*



largest in the state.<sup>20</sup> Gould and other entrepreneurs realized that the only way they could tap the wealth of the 30 million acres of virgin timber was through the railroad and thereafter Arkansas's railroads and lumbering industries developed together. Section camps became lumber camps and frequently grew into mill towns. Spurs built solely to haul timber were occasionally linked together to form a new railroad line. Conversely, lines built to reach a good timber section were sometimes abandoned after the forest was exhausted. Throughout the rest of the 19th century, and until World War I, steel tracks were forced through swamps and jungles by lumbermen eager for more cypress, pine and oak. The cut timber also supplied fuel to the engines of the trains as they pushed a path through the Arkansas forests. A veteran engineer on some of the earliest trains in Arkansas recalls: "wood yards were placed from 15 to 30 miles apart. . .there was a crew of men at each wood pile that kept the wood piled up on temporary platforms on the side of the track. . .we would go to this wood pile and stop and everyone on the train would assist in piling the wood on the tender. . .firemen in those days were experts in handling wood. Some of them could stand in the back of the tender and throw a stick of wood in the firebox door, a hole about 18 inches in diameter."<sup>21</sup>

Until the railroad came in the 1870s, the settlement and prosperity of Arkansas was most evident along the rivers, particularly in the Arkansas River Valley. The steady growth and expansion of railway service coincided with and was responsible for the slow decline and death of steamboat trade after 1880; shipping by water was too expensive, slow and uncertain. The shift in population from the old river towns to sites along the new steel highways was striking. Dozens of communities that had based their prosperity on steamboat traffic disappeared completely. New railroads swept commercial farming and industry to inland regions. The forests of southern Arkansas were dotted with new lumber mills. Tourists began visiting the Ozark and Ouachita mountains. The northern part of the Delta between West Memphis and Blytheville began to hear the whine of large sawmills around 1900. Land that was cleared by lumbermen was converted to cotton crops. Southwest Arkansas farmers learned that sandy soil would grow peaches and other fruit. Pre-railroad trading centers, established by traditions and sentiment, maintained their existence but languished. Most of Arkansas's commercial cities date their founding or beginning of their growth from the building of the railroad.

On March 21, 1871, the Levee Act was approved giving railroads the opportunity to collect aid ranging from \$10,000 to \$15,000 per mile in swampy areas needing levees. This act did not affect a previous levee act and some companies even collected twice for the same mileage. On March 28, 1871, an act was passed by the Arkansas General Assembly demanding that all railroads that received state aid and were presently under construction should complete one-fourth of the line within two years, one-half within three years, and the entire road within five years. The new Levee Act ensured that each railroad had sufficient finances to complete its line by the deadline set in the March 28 act.<sup>22</sup>

A railroad bill was introduced in 1873 to release the railroad companies from their indebtedness to the state and allow the taxpayers to pay the interest on the railroad bonds. Gov. Elisha Baxter vigorously opposed the bill, much to the chagrin of some of his Republican supporters.<sup>23</sup> This incident led to a falling out between Governor Baxter and the political machine of former Gov. Powell Clayton, a break that eventually led to the Brooks Baxter War of 1874. By the time the State Aid Bill was repealed in 1874 by Democrats in the post Reconstruction General Assembly, 440 miles of railroad had been built. About 700 miles of railroad were built during the five years of Reconstruction and Republican rule in Arkansas. In June 1877, the Arkansas Supreme Court ruled that the railroad aid and levee bonds had been illegally issued and were therefore void. The state was relieved of all responsibility for the bonded debt, which, with principal and interest, amounted to \$7,135,298.<sup>24</sup>

By 1883, much dissatisfaction existed throughout the state concerning the small valuations returned by the railroads for taxation. In June of 1883, a commission consisting of the state auditor, secretary of state and the governor proceeded to assess the property of the railroad companies. The St. Louis, Iron Mountain, and

Southern Railroad and the Memphis and Little Rock Railroad issued writs of equity to restrain these proceedings. They declared that their charters had been granted with clauses exempting them from taxation and that the act passed by the 1883 legislature was a violation of the constitution of the United States. Gov. James Henderson Berry engaged Judge U.M. Rose to assist C.M. Moore, the attorney general, in the defense of these suits. The chancery court decided in favor of the state, as did the Arkansas State Supreme Court, after an appeal. The state's rights to tax the railroads were sustained again when the case was appealed to the United States Supreme Court.<sup>25</sup>



*Many Arkansas railroad companies actively solicited settlers for the land along their lines. Courtesy of the Arkansas History Commission.*

The Arkansas Railroad Commission was established in 1899 to oversee the development and activities of railway companies in the state, and to ensure that the railroad would be in the best interest of the citizens of the state. The governor, attorney general, state auditor, secretary of state, state treasurer, commissioner of agriculture and commissioner of state lands constituted a state board of railroad incorporation. Each time articles for a railroad incorporation were filed, the railroad commission was required to meet and decide whether or not to approve a charter. If a charter was granted, the railroad company would be required to faithfully execute its contracts with the public and to build the road according to its preliminary survey. Failure to complete one-fifth of the railroad within three years would be cause for revocation of the charter, and the failure to complete the railroad within six years could result in the forfeiture of the uncompleted portion of the line. If the commission felt it to be in the public interest, extensions could be granted for the completion of particular lines.<sup>26</sup>

While there were only 822 miles of operating railroad track in Arkansas in 1880, the close of the decade would see more than 2,000 miles of track in operation.<sup>27</sup> By the turn of the 20th century, the importance and influence of the railroad industry in Arkansas was extraordinary. Many of the smaller branch lines established in the late 19th century were acquired by larger corporations. Important industries dependent on shipping large cargos of raw materials were able to develop and thrive in Arkansas as more and more of the state was drawn into the railroad network and became linked with national markets. The railroad industry itself became a major factor in the state's economy as facilities grew around the shops and roundhouses of towns which actually owed their inception to the coming of the railroad.<sup>28</sup> By 1941, there were approximately

4,700 miles of railroad track in Arkansas. Although passenger service declined because of the automobile, the railroad continued to be an integral factor in Arkansas industry and shipping, specifically in Southwest Arkansas.

## **Railroad Development in Southwest Arkansas**

### **The Kansas City Southern Railroad**

Arthur Stilwell and E.L. Martin began work on what would become the 800-mile Kansas City, Pittsburgh and Gulf Railroad (later the Kansas City Southern) in the late 1880s, opening a more direct route from the grain-growing Midwest to the shipping lanes on the Gulf of Mexico. By the early 1890s, Stilwell and Martin acquired smaller lines in and around Texarkana, Fort Smith and Indian Territory, and work proceeded apace to link all of the lines into a major route. Unfortunately, outbreaks of malaria and other diseases among the railroad workers plagued the fledgling line. Then a national financial panic in 1893 finally dried up investment capital halting construction on the Kansas City, Pittsburgh and Gulf Railroad, which soon went into receivership. Undaunted, Stilwell decided to seek European capital to finance the remainder of the line. In the Netherlands, Stilwell met with Jan DeGoiejen, a coffee wholesaler he met several years earlier, and solicited his support in helping finance the troubled line.

Several years later, an associate of DeGoiejen described Stilwell's sales pitch in a letter to a resident of DeQueen: "The alluring pictures Mr. Stilwell drew of building a line that would be the shortest connection between the great grain producing center of the United States and the seaboard, and which line incidentally would mean the opening up of new countries for agriculture, industries, mining, etc., and which not only would give a fair profit to investors but also would give a chance for the development of thousands of enterprises by the energetic settlers from all other parts of the United States, that all made a deep impression on Mr. DeGoiejen ... Mr. Stilwell had been enabled to start building this road, but lack of confidence in the enterprise and the bad times in the United States had put a stop to the work right at the beginning. Mr. Stilwell's trips to Europe to try and interest foreign capital had neither met with success, so that it looked as if the railroad would remain a dream ... A ray of hope for Mr. Stilwell was Mr. DeGoiejen's deep interest in the scheme. A study of the plans followed, with the result that the latter quit the coffee business for the purpose of promoting Mr. Stilwell's proposition. The ultimate outcome of Mr. DeGoiejen's decision was the completion of the railroad, and a canal was dug from the Gulf of Mexico to the town of Port Arthur, Texas, and various enterprises along the line were started."<sup>29</sup>

DeGoiejen was successful in raising \$3 million in European capital, enabling the Kansas City, Pittsburgh and Gulf Railroad to build one-third of the total new railroad mileage in the United States in 1893.

With European financing in place, the Kansas City, Pittsburgh and Gulf Railroad contracted W.C. Merritt to survey southern Sevier County near Rock Hill (present day Horatio) in an attempt to identify the optimum route out of the lowlands and into Silver Hill (present day Gillham) in the Ouachita foothills. Worth Millwee, a local resident, led the engineering party on horseback from Morris Ferry in the southern part of the county up to Silver Hill, where construction on the new railroad line was to begin. Other surveys were conducted just east of Chapel Hill and Redmen Cemetery. More than 40 property owners sold rights-of-way to the railroad, and the citizens of Sevier County anxiously awaited the completion of the railroad and the prosperity that was certain to follow.

Under chief engineer Robert Gillham (for whom Silver Hill would later be renamed), the Kansas City, Pittsburgh and Gulf Railroad advanced rapidly through Sevier County, establishing new town sites along the way. The final spike connecting Kansas City with Shreveport was driven just north of Avon on March 2, 1897, at a site known as Pullman Hill. In September, the final segment was completed to the terminus of the line in a new community in Texas called Port Arthur (named for Arthur Stilwell). Passenger service from

Kansas City to Port Arthur began on October 8, 1897, and people from all over the region traveled to DeQueen to witness the arrival of the first passenger train, which carried Arthur Stilwell, Jan and Mena DeGoiejen, and several other European investors.<sup>30</sup> In 1900, the Kansas City, Pittsburgh, and Gulf Railroad went into receivership and reorganized under a new name: the Kansas City Southern Railroad Company.

## **The Mississippi, Ouachita and Red River Railroad**

After incorporating on January 8, 1851, the Mississippi, Ouachita and Red River Railroad was granted a charter on August 2, 1852, at the request of the Arkansas General Assembly. The first railroad to receive a charter in Arkansas, it was named for the three major streams to be encountered on the route.<sup>31</sup> The route was originally proposed to run from Gains Landing at the mouth of the Arkansas River westward to the vicinity of Fulton on the Red River and then on to the Texas border.<sup>32</sup> The railroad owners were given permission to issue capital stock in the amount of \$1.5 million, represented by 15,000 shares valued at \$100 each. Provision was also made for the state to subscribe to the company's stock.<sup>33</sup>

During the 1854 session of the General Assembly, Gov. Elias N. Conway proposed that the state grant a portion of the internal improvement lands to the new railroad. The method of making the grant was rather involved. It was finally decided to grant alternate sections of land extending a distance of six miles on either side of the final surveyed route. This method would give the company ownership of land in a checkerboard pattern, with the government retaining possession of the alternate sections. Lloyd Tilghman was hired as chief engineer to supervise surveying of the most feasible route and to oversee construction of the road.

The actual building of the railroad was slow and plagued with misfortune. Sickness was common among the work crews and floodwater destroyed portions of the new roadbed. Another stumbling block was a financial panic in 1857. As the depression began to ebb, the future of the road looked solid. However, the Civil War completely halted construction on the line. The forest reclaimed the roadbed, and the completed portions soon deteriorated through neglect. When the war was over, the Mississippi, Ouachita and Red River received \$1.95 million from the State of Arkansas's railroad aid bill signed by Gov. Powell Clayton. The relief was short-lived, however, because the various roads receiving state bonds dumped them on the New York market at the same time. Their value immediately dropped until they were worth nothing. The Mississippi, Ouachita, and Red River Railroad became insolvent.<sup>34</sup>

In the fall of 1873, the Little Rock and New Orleans Railroad Company consolidated with the Mississippi, Ouachita and Red River Railroad Company. The new title was the Little Rock, Mississippi River and Texas Railroad. Powell Clayton, no longer governor, became president and Jackson E. Sickels became vice-president, although the foreclosure and sale of the Little Rock, Mississippi River and Texas Railroad parts became necessary because of financial difficulty.<sup>35</sup>

## **The DeQueen and Eastern Railroad**

The Dierks Lumber and Coal Company, based in Kansas City, incorporated the DeQueen and Eastern Railroad Company in September 1900 to facilitate the transport of timber. The line was to run from the Dierks fields in Arkansas's Howard County and southeastern Oklahoma to the Pine Mill at DeQueen and the northern markets that were accessible via the Kansas City Southern Railroad. The first DeQueen and Eastern Railroad terminal was constructed at Logville (later renamed Hortense and, finally, Geneva), and by May, 1902, the track was almost complete from DeQueen to Lockesburg, which was still the county seat of Sevier County. Passenger service for the 12-mile stretch between DeQueen and Lockesburg began on June 14, 1902, while work continued extending the line into Howard County. The Dierks company town of Provo, in eastern Sevier County, was established later as the track was pushed east. The first DeQueen and Eastern depot was constructed in DeQueen the following October, measuring 24'x64' and including a baggage room, two

waiting rooms, and office space; machine shops and a 50'x160' roundhouse for the repair of flat cars and wheeled vehicles were in place by 1908.<sup>36</sup>

## **The Texas, Oklahoma and Eastern Railroad**

In 1910, the Dierks Lumber and Coal Company incorporated yet another railroad, the Texas, Oklahoma and Eastern Railroad, to link the company's extensive timber holdings in southeast Oklahoma with the Kansas City Southern line and the Pine Mill in DeQueen. New track was laid from Valiant, Oklahoma, and by 1912 the new line almost reached the Arkansas line, where the town of Broken Bow and the Choctaw Lumber Company mill were established. In the early 1910s, the Dierks Lumber and Coal Company decided to relocate the Arkansas milling operations to the town of Dierks following a major fire at the Pine Mill in DeQueen. In the process, they consolidated the offices of their two railroads, the DeQueen and Eastern Railroad and the Texas, Oklahoma and Eastern Railroad. C. C. Ray was placed in charge of the new railroad offices, located in DeQueen. World War I interrupted the development of the Texas, Oklahoma and Eastern Railroad, but in July 1920 work finally began anew on connecting Broken Bow with DeQueen. J. C. Leeper, chief engineer for both Dierks railroads, surveyed the optimum route through the rolling hill country of western Sevier County, and by January 1921, the Texas, Oklahoma and Eastern Railroad and the DeQueen and Eastern Railroad met at DeQueen. An elaborate system of signals costing \$15,000 was erected at the point at which the Texas, Oklahoma and Eastern crossed the Kansas City Southern line. The *DeQueen Bee* noted that "[w]e can stand on these hills and hear the whistles of the locomotives on the DeQueen and Eastern, and the Kansas City Southern and the Memphis, Paris and Gulf."<sup>37</sup>

## **The St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad**

The St. Louis and San Francisco Railway Company, commonly known as the Frisco, was established in 1853 to develop a route west to San Francisco across the 35th parallel, which included Arkansas. Though much of the line was completed by the 1870s, the venture ultimately failed due to inferior administration, fallacious timing, erratic public opinion, bad luck and greed. In 1866, Congress rescinded the Frisco's 1866 land grant, reclaiming all but 14 million of the 40 million acres it had granted to the company for development purposes, and the line was taken over by the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe system. The Panic of 1893 forced the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe into receivership, and in 1896 a reorganized St. Louis and San Francisco bought the eastern portions of the old line at a foreclosure sale. By July 8, 1902, the company, financially solid, bought the Arkansas and Choctaw Railway company (renamed the St. Louis, San Francisco and New Orleans Railroad company on October 2, 1902). With lines that crossed the northeast corner of the state, providing access to Memphis, the Frisco paralleled the old Butterfield stage route across the northwestern counties to Fort Smith, and additional tracks ran from Hope to southern Oklahoma. The Frisco had an important impact on Arkansas's cultural and industrial environment<sup>38</sup> and provided "downstaters" with easy access to the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville.<sup>39</sup>

## **The Missouri Pacific Railroad**

The Missouri Pacific Railroad Company, which in 1917 incorporated and formally absorbed the Iron Mountain system, was for many years the most important railroad in Arkansas. In 1927, the Missouri Pacific Railroad operated 1,810 miles of railroad in Arkansas, more than 35 percent of the state's total mileage, with an assessed value of almost \$39 million. The company's main lines to the Southwest and to Mexico crossed Arkansas following the old Southwest Trail route of the Cairo and Fulton. Other principle sections of the system branched to Memphis, down the Arkansas valley toward New Orleans, to Fort Smith, through the Ozarks to Joplin, Missouri, and along Crowley's Ridge to Helena; a network of lines also covered the south-east corner of the state.<sup>40</sup>

## **The St. Louis Southwestern Railroad**

Commonly called the Cotton Belt Railroad, the St. Louis Southwestern Railroad was incorporated under the name Texas and St. Louis Railway and ran from St. Louis through eastern and southern Arkansas to Texarkana and into Texas. The first section of the road in Arkansas was built between Jonesboro and Clarendon in 1882. The following year, it was completed from Clarendon to Texarkana and trains began running in early 1884.<sup>41</sup> The St. Louis Southwestern Railway completed bridges across the White and Arkansas rivers at Clarendon and at Garland City respectively and traffic opened between Pine Bluff and Clarendon on August 12, 1883. In 1885, the St. Louis Southwestern became involved in grave financial trouble and Samuel W. Fordyce, vice president and treasurer of the company, was appointed receiver. Under his management, the company was reorganized as the St. Louis, Arkansas and Texas Railroad and the branch between Little Rock and Altheimer was built. In 1889, the road again went into the hands of a receiver and in 1891 it was reorganized as the St. Louis Southwestern.<sup>42</sup>

## **The St. Louis, Iron Mountain and Southern Railroad**

In March, 1868, the interest of the state of Missouri and the St. Louis and Iron Mountain Railroad were sold to Thomas Allen. Allen, who influenced some Eastern capitalists, finished the line as far as the Arkansas state line. A consolidation was then effected with the Cairo and Fulton company under the name of the St. Louis, Iron Mountain and Southern Railroad and work commenced on the Arkansas extension. Under an act approved by the Arkansas legislature on July 31, 1868, state aid in the form of bonds to the amount of \$3 million<sup>43</sup> was awarded to the Cairo and Fulton Railroad Company. Because the land grant was constantly growing more valuable and the company had sufficient working capital, the state aid was declined. By the fall of 1872, the road was in operation to Arkadelphia, and in January, 1874, trains began running between St. Louis and Texarkana. The great iron bridge project across the Red River was completed enough for traffic by August 2, 1880, and the first train crossed the river on the St. Louis, Iron Mountain and Southern railway that morning.<sup>44</sup>

The St. Louis, Iron Mountain and Southern Railroad encountered trouble in 1886. Railroad employees in Texas, Arkansas and Missouri went on strike, threatening the peace of the state and the progress of the railroad. The Miller County sheriff called on the governor to assist in enforcing the law at Texarkana and Capt. John H. Twigg kept the Gate City Guards prepared should the sheriff need their assistance. The presence of the militia sufficed and the violence soon ceased.<sup>45</sup>

## **The Memphis, Dallas and Gulf Railroad**

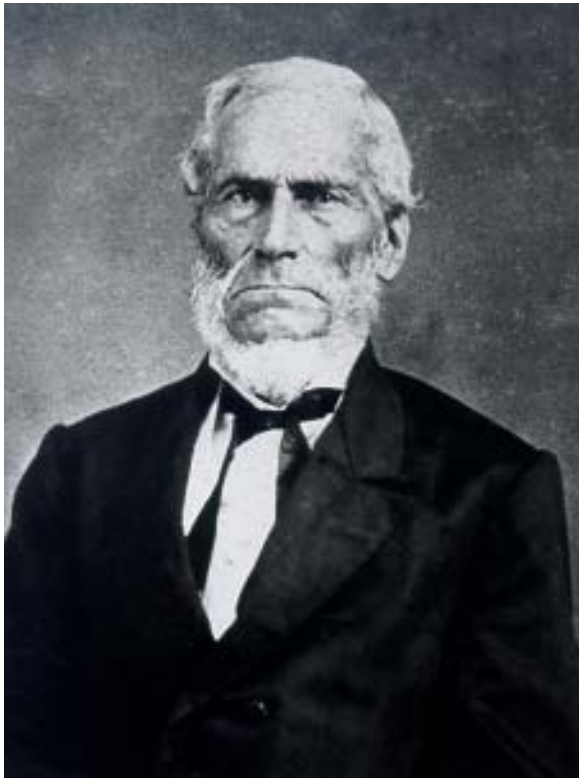
In July 1906, a consortium of Southwest Arkansas businessmen incorporated the Memphis, Paris and Gulf Railroad, initially to build a railroad between Ashdown and Nashville, and eventually to link Memphis with Paris, Texas, and the Gulf of Mexico. Unfortunately, the Memphis, Paris and Gulf was never completed, and only 25 miles of track were laid connecting Nashville, Arkansas, with the Kansas City Southern Railroad at Ashdown via Paraloma in extreme southeastern Sevier County. In bridging the Little River at White Cliffs southwest of Paraloma in 1907, the railroad engineers opted not to erect a swing-span, and the river was thereafter closed to navigation north of White Cliffs. Later renamed the Memphis, Dallas and Gulf, and still later the Graysonia, Nashville and Ashdown, the shortline did provide an outlet for the timber and fruit products of northeastern Little River County. The Ideal Cement Company purchased the line for use as a private line in 1927.<sup>46</sup>

## **The Cairo and Fulton Railroad**

The Cairo and Fulton Railroad Company was chartered by the Arkansas legislature on January 12, 1853, to build a railroad from the Missouri state line to the Texas state line. The purpose of the railroad was to

construct a line from Cairo, Illinois, to Fulton, Arkansas. This was the first railroad company incorporated under Arkansas law and was the first to place a railroad in actual operation. The incorporators completed the organization of the company on April 15, 1853, by electing Roswell Beebe as president. By the end of 1854, Bacchus Ford, chief engineer, completed a survey measuring a distance of 133 miles from Little Rock to Memphis and 304 miles across the state.

On September 16, 1856, Roswell Beebe resigned from the presidency of the Cairo and Fulton County Railroad Company because of poor health, and was succeeded by Judge Edward Cross. A reorganization meeting was held because acts of the Arkansas General Assembly placed limitations on the use of the land, and prevented sale until 12 years after the completion of the railroads. The company offered to turn the franchise over to the state, but the restrictions were removed November 16, 1856. Financial difficulties prevented the land from selling and a financial panic in 1857 brought development of the Cairo and Fulton, as well as



*Edward Cross. Courtesy of the Arkansas History Commission.*

railroad companies across the nation, to a halt.<sup>47</sup>

However, excitement for the railroad remained. The Little Rock *True Democrat* of December 15, 1857, said, “the road has already been partly completed and is entitled to the florid eulogy of being the first to start the ‘iron horse’ on the soil of Arkansas.”<sup>48</sup> The editor said the company was trying to complete the road from Hopefield to the St. Francis River, a distance of 40 miles. Judge Edward Cross, still president of the company, announced that it could not be built through Little Rock unless the subscriptions to stock increased and payments were made more promptly. On January 3, 1858, Thomas A. Hendricks, United States land commissioner, stated that the federal government granted lands to Arkansas as aid to railroad construction as legalized by the Cairo and Fulton Railroad Act of Congress of February 9, 1853, in the following amounts: for the Cairo and Fulton (from the Missouri line to Fulton on the Red River) 1,170,067 acres; for the Fort Smith and Little Rock branch, 525,550 acres; and for the Memphis and Little Rock branch, 438,646 acres. The Cairo and Fulton Railroad was completed to Madison on the St. Francis River and trains began running regularly early in 1858.<sup>49</sup>

On November 3, 1859, the Cairo and Fulton Railroad company directors held a four-day meeting in Little Rock. Edward Cross announced that the board had ordered that the company’s 1,116,000 acres of railroad lands and other property serve as collateral for an issue of \$5 million in bonds as security for the construction of the road. The lands were to be brought into the market, and the bonds were to be receivable for the land of the company. Lands were held, by deeds for ready pay, or contracts upon time. The plan was for the lands to be appraised and the owners of the land given the preference in buying at appraised prices, not including their improvements.

On January 9, 1862, the company advertised that the railroad was open between DeValls Bluff and Brownsville. On February 20, 1862, it advertised that trains were running between DeValls Bluff and Little Rock. The fare between Memphis and Little Rock was \$10 and took 32 hours. Between DeValls Bluff and Madison there was a gap in the railroad line that was filled by stage and steamboat and the gap was not complete until after the Civil War. By the act of July 31, 1868, the railroad company was entitled to state aid in the form of bonds at the rate of \$10,000 per mile or a total of \$1.2 million. With this incentive, the gap was closed and the last spike was driven on April 11, 1871.

James H. Morley was appointed as chief engineer of the Cairo and Fulton Railroad on February 1, 1871. At that time there were 20 miles of completed track from the Arkansas River and an additional stretch of 30 miles was under construction. In December 1871, the line reached the Little Red River and by January 9, 1873, it reached the Missouri line. Trains started operating from St. Louis on February 10, 1873, and construction southwest of Little Rock reached Texarkana on January 15, 1874. Until the Red River Bridge was completed on March 20, 1874, the railroad operated between Fulton and Texarkana by using a ferryboat at the Red River.<sup>50</sup>

Before Texarkana was connected, the Cairo and Fulton Railroad Company of Arkansas consolidated with the St. Louis and Iron Mountain Railroad Company of Missouri. This merger, ratified by stockholders of the two companies on May 4, 1874,<sup>51</sup> caused the new company to be named the St. Louis, Iron Mountain, and Southern Railroad Company. On January 22, 1881, Thomas Allen sold his interests in the Cairo and Fulton Railroad to Jay Gould for nearly \$2 million. Gould later changed the name of the railroads to the Iron Mountain Lines.

## **The Arkansas and Choctaw Railway Company**

The Arkansas and Choctaw Railway Company was incorporated on August 31, 1895. A line on the Texarkana and Fort Smith Railway began at Ashdown and ran 22 miles to the Arkansas state line west of Arkinda. In 1895 construction was completed while the line was under control of the Central Coal and Coke Company of Kansas City, Missouri. The Choctaw Construction Company was organized by Central Coal and Coke to construct the railroad line from the Arkansas state line to Ardmore, Oklahoma. Control of the line passed to the Choctaw Construction Company on June 11, 1901. Choctaw Construction was controlled by an executive committee of its stockholders, consisting of Richard H. Keith, president of Central Coal and Coke Company; George A. Madill, a director of the St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad Company; and John Scullin of the St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad Company.<sup>52</sup> A syndicate was formed by the St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad Company to finance such a purchase, under an agreement dated July 8, 1902, which passed control of the Choctaw Construction Company to the St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad Company. The construction plans were changed to provide for a railroad line from Hope, Arkansas to Ardmore, Oklahoma.

In September 1902, construction began on the line that ran from the Arkansas state line west of Arkinda to Ardmore, Oklahoma. The line was 167 miles long and was completed in August 1903. A 32-mile stretch from Ashdown to Hope was started in September, 1902, and completed in December 1903. The line from Kersey (originally Mead), Oklahoma to Texas Junction, Texas (originally Platter) was completed on November 8, 1903. The St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad Company, by virtue of the agreement of July 8, 1902, became the owner of all the construction company's securities on January 1, 1904. On November 30, 1907, the property was deeded to the St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad Company.

## **Southwest Arkansas Counties**

### **Sevier County**

The fertile valleys of the Little River and the Cossatot River attracted settlers to Sevier County as early as 1810. On October 17, 1828, Gov. George Izard approved an act of the Arkansas Territorial Legislature that removed parts of Miller and Hempstead counties and fashioned a new county, which was named in honor of Ambrose H. Sevier. Sevier was speaker of the Arkansas House of Representative and was later one of the first United States senators from Arkansas.<sup>53</sup>

As the 1860s drew to a close, Sevier County was beginning to emerge from the chaos and uncertainty that had





*DeQueen and Eastern Railroad Machine Shop, DeQueen, Sevier County. AHPP Photo.*

characterized the Reconstruction period in Southwest Arkansas. Although the Civil War did not actually reach Sevier County, the period of carpetbagger rule that had followed the war was more far-reaching. In November 1868, in response to the organization of the Ku Klux Klan in the state, the murders of a number of prominent Republicans, and a statewide outbreak of citizen unrest and resistance, Republican Gov. Powell Clayton declared martial law in Sevier County and dispatched Gen. R. F. Catterson to southwest Arkansas “in search of arms and ammunition.” A company of approximately 200 men under a Captain Reeves appeared in Center Point (in present-day Howard County) and began confiscating property, arresting citizens and breaking up meetings.<sup>54</sup> Despite the intense resentment the imposition of martial law had engendered among the citizens of Sevier County, order was eventually restored and Governor Clayton rescinded military rule in January 1869; nevertheless, much of the property seized in Sevier County was never returned.<sup>55</sup>

## **Railroad Communities**

### **Lockesburg**

The organization of Little River County from the southern portion of Sevier County in 1867 effectively isolated Sevier’s existing county seat, Paraclyfta, in the extreme southeast corner of the county. In an attempt to select a more centrally located site for the county government, Ben Norwood, Sr., Robert Grady and Green L. Cox were elected as commissioners on March 5, 1868, to choose a site for a new courthouse. They chose a site in the east-central part of the county on property belonging to Matthew, James and W. T. Locke, brothers who donated 120 acres for 10 dollars as an inducement to the commission. The new community was christened Lockesburg in the former property owners’ honor, and A.D. Hawkins, James F. Locke and Benjamin F. Parker were appointed by the county court to survey and plot the town, sell lots, erect all necessary public buildings and prepare the new community for habitation. In 1870-71, two-story brick courthouse was erected in the center of the town’s public square at a cost of \$25,000. An accompanying jail was erected in 1888 for \$1,000. A post office was established in 1870 in the home of the town’s first postmaster, M. W. Locke. A

number of businesses began locating in the new community, owned by men such as William Wallace, T. W. McCown and B. F. Forney. A Methodist Episcopal church was erected in 1872 and rebuilt following a fire in 1880, while the Cumberland Presbyterian Church was constructed in 1878.<sup>56</sup>

Lockesburg grew rapidly following its designation as county seat in 1869 and its official incorporation on September 27, 1874. By 1890, the community had a population of 450 and boasted six general stores, one grocer, one drug store, four physicians, five practicing attorneys, four blacksmiths, two newspapers (the *Tocsin* and the *Democrat*), and one hotel, which was operated on the courthouse square by James and “Aunt Kit” Locke.<sup>57</sup> A log, one-room school house was erected in 1871, and in 1893 J. B. Martin established Sevier County’s first high school, Hesperian High School. The school moved into a new two-story brick building in 1912, and was renamed Lockesburg High School in 1924. When some began to feel that the Lockesburg school’s tuition was too high, another institution, Tobe’s School, was organized north of town on the Provo Road, with a Mrs. Hames employed as teacher.<sup>58</sup> The African-American community in and around Lockesburg established its own churches and schools in the communities of Holly Springs and Macedonia, east of town, as well as a variety of businesses that catered to the black community. The Sevier County Training School, an African-American academy, was established in 1927 with R. H. Jacques as principal.<sup>59</sup>

Despite the community’s early status as county seat, Lockesburg’s economy remained primarily agricultural. Most of the local citizens farmed for a living, raising a variety of crops including peanuts, cotton, hay, sorghum, and a variety of truck crops. Thad Park and Jim Cannon both owned local packing houses, further facilitating the export of the region’s agricultural produce. In 1897, the *Missouri and Arkansas Farm Newspaper* described the growing community: “We enter Lockesburg, a small village of 400 people, with many pretty homes. Modern frame houses, large yards shaded with massive, forest trees, and tastefully kept green lawns and flowers, shrubs and fruits. The town comprising (sic) a brick court house in the center of a square, which is lavishly shaded with large forest trees, around which is the business part of the town, comprising fifteen or twenty stores of various kinds. The buildings are frame and scattered as room is one of the greatest features of Arkansas. The houses are not pretentious nor have the sidewalks and streets passed through many stages of evolution ... In all our travels, we have never seen a better class of merchants, nor as large and well appointed stores in a town of this size.”<sup>60</sup>

Nevertheless, the county’s growth proceeded slowly through the late 1880s, when the Kansas City Southern Railroad was completed through the county. Unfortunately, Lockesburg’s exorbitant demands for right-of-way costs forced the railroad to seek another route, presaging a relative decline in Lockesburg’s importance and its eventual loss of the county seat to the new railroad community of DeQueen in 1905: “Losing the county seat was perhaps the hardest blow Lockesburg has suffered thus far in her history. The town, although it remained prosperous, was nipped in its growth. Over the years many of its sons and daughters have moved away. Many of its business leaders migrated over to DeQueen.”<sup>61</sup>

Many of the businessmen relocating to DeQueen following the removal of the county seat purchased lots on the same blocks and streets and built together just as they had in Lockesburg. Despite the allure of the railroad and the booming economy in DeQueen, many regretted being forced to leave Lockesburg: “This town will move bodily to DeQueen and all admit that the courthouse and seat of government will also go. Many are lothe (sic) to leave here on account of their delightful social and home surroundings and the historic association which binds them with such ardent and close attachments...But the building of the new railroad has changed the center of trade and the people are shrewd enough to fathom its meaning and though with much reluctance, they are preparing to go with the tide.”<sup>62</sup>

The construction of the DeQueen and Eastern through Lockesburg in 1902 brought a measure of prosperity back to the community, although the town was never able to regain its former preeminence over DeQueen. The Bank of Lockesburg was established in 1902, and a cotton gin was erected near the DeQueen and Eastern railroad tracks. As the timber industry came to dominate Lockesburg’s economy through the early 20th

century, a sawmill, brick kiln and stave mills were established to serve the needs of the community, and in the early 1920s, the Duncan Lumber Company of Kansas City established a planer and sawmill west of town. However, Sevier County's future would be determined by the Kansas City Southern Railroad and DeQueen's fortunes would eventually eclipse those of Lockesburg.

## DeQueen

In appreciation for Jan DeGoiejen's aid in financing the DeQueen and Eastern Railroad, Arthur Stilwell asked the Dutchman to select several points along the railroad line, one to be named in DeGoiejen's honor, another in honor of his wife, Mena, and a third in honor of his mother's maiden name, Janssen. In a visit to Sevier County with Stilwell, DeGoiejen personally selected the site of the town to bear his name, at an existing

community known as Calamity in a fertile valley between the Cossatot and Rolling Fork rivers. Overnight, a boomtown of tents and hastily-constructed wooden buildings grew up on the site of the new town, including a saloon, a general mercantile store, a meat market, a blacksmith shop and the De Horse Hotel, a log cabin with a frame addition and a crude mud and straw chimney propped up by a sapling at one end. A post office was established in May, 1897, with William Meredith as postmaster. Because the investor's Dutch name was difficult to pronounce, the



*Hotel Dee Swift, DeQueen, Sevier County. AHPP Photo.*

phonetic spelling "DeQueen" was substituted for the new town. Soon after the selection of the Calamity site, surveyors began plotting the new town and it was announced that lots would be available for sale on April 26, 1897. The town was incorporated on June 3, 1897, and less than two months after the sale of the first lots, the new community was flourishing; within nine months after its founding DeQueen's population had exceeded 1,500.<sup>63</sup>

The arrival of the railroad had a profound impact on the economic development of DeQueen and Sevier County. A telephone exchange was established in DeQueen in 1900, a water system was completed in 1909, and a sewer system was added in 1912, although the city's streets would not be paved until 1930. A one-story frame schoolhouse was erected soon after the town was established, but was replaced by a brick structure in 1903. A high school was established in 1910. Although the new community virtually burned to the ground in 1899, the booming economy and the enthusiasm of the populace resulted in a rapid rebuilding. A mayoral/ aldermanic form of government was established, and although the city treasury was initially dependent on revenues garnered through saloon licensing, the city council began levying a five-mill city tax in 1899. With

direct transportation links to Kansas City, Port Arthur, and all points in between, the county's agricultural products had access to a much greater market than had been the case previously. In 1898, just one year after the line's completion, 1.4 million tons of Sevier County freight in the form of fruits and vegetables, honey, cotton, furs, hides, and livestock were shipped to Northern and Eastern markets. Southwest Arkansas's abundant timber resources were opened to lumber interests, and the region began exporting pine, hardwood lumber, barrel staves and ties to points nationwide.<sup>64</sup>

In 1900, the Kansas City, Pittsburgh and Gulf went into receivership and reorganized under a new name, the Kansas City Southern Railroad Company. Despite the railroad's difficulties, DeQueen was booming. The Port Arthur Eating House was established in August 1901 to accommodate the many travelers passing through the community, and by August 1903 DeQueen had outgrown the depot. The Kansas City Southern Railroad added 70 feet to the north end of the building for a waiting room for black people and additional office space. New track was added on the west side of the depot's platform in September 1907, to better facilitate the loading and unloading of passengers and freight. Unfortunately, the town had a second major fire and the entire depot complex burned to the ground just one month after the additions were made. The Port Arthur Eating House was forced into service as a temporary depot. Although rumors persisted throughout 1908 and 1909 that the Kansas City Southern would not rebuild, a new \$10,000 brick depot was finally constructed and ushered into service on July 3, 1909.<sup>65</sup>

In 1905, DeQueen was prepared to challenge Lockesburg for the county seat. A Sevier County quorum court appropriation of \$25,000 for a new courthouse in Lockesburg aroused considerable controversy among a number of DeQueen businessmen, who offered to build a \$10,000 courthouse at no cost to the taxpayers if the county seat was moved to DeQueen. Lockesburg countered with an offer to donate \$5,000 for the repair of the existing courthouse. An election to decide the issue was scheduled for March 1905. Charges of bribery and fraud were leveled against both factions, and tensions ran high between the citizens of Lockesburg and DeQueen. DeQueen won the election by 150 votes; however, the disgruntled Lockesburg faction maintained sufficient votes in the quorum court to prevent the county from adding anything to the \$10,000 DeQueen had promised for the construction of the new courthouse. The contract for the two-story brick courthouse was awarded to J. T. McClenahan and John and Fred DeGroot for \$9,500, and the county officials and county records were moved into the new building upon its completion in January 1906.<sup>66</sup>

In August 1909 the city of DeQueen raised more than \$6,000 in a successful attempt to persuade the Kansas City Southern to relocate its division headquarters from Mena to DeQueen. In September 1909 the Arnold Contracting Company of Chicago, Illinois, was contracted to build the new roundhouse and machine shops at DeQueen. The following month the Kansas City Southern selected the Ferguson Contracting Company to begin work on the division terminal building; the latter contract involved moving several old houses and closing two streets in blocks 32 and 33 of the Bradley Addition.<sup>67</sup>

By 1927, the 21-year-old DeQueen courthouse began to show signs of its age and poor construction, and was in urgent need of structural repairs. An evaluation of the building ordered by County Judge J. C. Arnold found the walls to be badly cracking and the second story structurally unsound. In March 1929, the quorum court voted to approve the construction of a new county courthouse and jail to replace the dilapidated and increasingly unusable 1906 courthouse. Unfortunately, the quorum court's decision caused the animosity over the 1905 courthouse battle between DeQueen and Lockesburg to flare anew. Still resentful over their loss of the county seat to DeQueen 24 years earlier, the Lockesburg business community offered \$50,000 for the construction of a new courthouse, contingent on the return of the seat of government to Lockesburg. An election to decide the issue was scheduled for April 1929, and again the DeQueen interests carried the day. A building tax was approved for the construction of the new county facilities in DeQueen; nevertheless, the Lockesburg faction maintained that voting and posting irregularities had marred the election, and the Arkansas Supreme Court was eventually called upon to affirm the validity of the voting.<sup>68</sup> Before construction began, however, Arnold ordered the county records moved out of the old courthouse to rented buildings, and

the circuit court began meeting in an auditorium above the newspaper offices of the *DeQueen Bee*.<sup>69</sup>

More than \$100,000 in county bonds were issued for the construction of the new courthouse and jail and the Texarkana architecture firm of Witt, Siebert, and Halsey was retained to design the new facilities. The 1906 courthouse was razed, and the Hardy Construction Company began construction on June, 1930. J. Leroy Davis, worshipful master of the local Masonic lodge, placed the new courthouse cornerstone on November 12, 1930. The failure of the American Exchange Trust Company, the Little Rock bank where the proceeds from the Sevier County bonds were on deposit, slowed construction, and it was not until May, 1933, that the Pulaski County chancery court ordered the bank's liquidator to remit the funds in question to the county. The new courthouse was completed in August 1933 and formally dedicated the following month with Gov. Junius M. Futrell in attendance.<sup>70</sup>

By 1936, DeQueen boasted a population of 3,400, with more than 800 houses and structures, two and one-half miles of paved streets, 50 miles of concrete sidewalks within the city limits, and construction of a municipal airport being considered west of town.

## Gillham

The mining community of Silver Hill flourished during the first of Southwest Arkansas's mining booms in the late 1860s and early 1870s, but it would be the arrival of the Kansas City Southern and the development of the railroad town of Gillham nearby that would bring true prosperity to northern Sevier County in the 1890s. In August 1897, "a new town on the [Kansas City, Pittsburgh and Gulf Railroad], about two miles south of the north line of Sevier County was laid off." The new townsite, named for the chief engineer of the railroad, Robert Gillham, and located approximately one and one-fourth miles southeast of Silver Hill, quickly eclipsed the older community. In 1898, the Silver Hill post office was moved to Gillham, where W. S.

Johnson, the new community's first postmaster, built "a nice house to put the post office in."<sup>71</sup>

The new community grew quickly; before the turn of the century, Gillham boasted a number of stores, two sawmills and a hotel. The Gillham Bank was chartered in 1905, and by 1909 a gin, a gristmill, another hotel, a restaurant, a public school, two churches and a Masonic Lodge had been added. In 1900, Gillham's newspaper, *The Miner*, sang the praises of the new community: "[Gillham has an] impres-



*Goff and Gamble Merchandise Store, Gillham, Sevier County.  
AHPP Photo.*

sive host of businesses: H. H. McDaniels' Home Saloon; W. R. Hughes' Fresh and Fancy Groceries; H. G. Gantts' City Barber Shop; R. Foote's Realty; M. S. Almond's Livery Stable; J. T. Gilbert, Contractor; Charles W. Grady, Contractor; and, Mrs. S. L. Cooper's Hotel Silver Hill . . ."<sup>72</sup>

The railroad provided an outlet for the region's agricultural produce. Truck crops such as turnips, cucumbers, green beans, squash, grapes, cantaloupes, radishes and blackberries were grown on the terraced hillsides. By



April 1898, 500 acres of strawberries were in cultivation and the county's fruit growers had organized a commercial association. In the late 1890s, W. F. Knod established a prosperous produce market in Gillham that would operate through the 1920s. In the late 1920s, professional dairy farming was introduced to the region.<sup>73</sup>

By 1902, Gillham's population stood at 400. The Silver Hill saw mill continued to operate, processing timber and producing staves, while the area's mines continued production. The Bellah Mines and Antimony Mines employed a number of local residents, and the North American Antimony Company established and operated an ore mill on the Kansas City Southern tracks near the post office. World War I brought a resurgence in demand for Gillham's mining production, as evidenced by a November 1919 article in the *DeQueen Bee* on mining in and around Gillham: "The Boston and Arkansas Mining Company is operating the old Davis Mine which is about five miles from Gillham. It is claimed that at one time it shipped some eighty or ninety carloads of zinc concentrates...The outcome of the Boston and Arkansas operation will spell the future of mining of the whole district."<sup>74</sup>

A devastating fire in January 1928 destroyed much of downtown Gillham, as reported by the *DeQueen Bee*: "Fire Tuesday night destroys telephone exchange, R. O. Henry's Drug Store, G.W. Morrison's office, Emory Higgins' meat market, T. D. Claborn's residence and drive-in station, W. A. Beckett's residence and Claborn's property rented to Clifford Gunter. Damage was done to the Bank and the Goff and Gamble Building."<sup>75</sup>

Although the fire, in addition to the 1930s Depression, was devastating to the economy of Gillham, the produce industry continued to provide jobs for many of the residents.

## **Horatio**

On December 25, 1894, H. C. and Mary Pride granted 63 1/2 acres in Section 36, Township 9, Range 32, to Fred B. Hubbell, a trustee of the Texarkana and Fort Smith Railroad, which was later acquired and integrated into the Kansas City Southern Railroad system. This land, the first plat for the town that would become Horatio, was surveyed and subdivided on January 10, 1895, by W. W. Millwee. Subsequent donations by George and Ada Smith, later known as the Smith Donation and the Smith Addition, were surveyed and platted in the fall of 1895, while the Doggett Addition north of town was added to the city on May 7, 1903. A two-room frame schoolhouse was constructed in late 1898 on three acres of land purchased from the Smiths; though modified through the years, the school served the community until 1919. The community's greatest expansion came in 1917 with the incorporation of the Horatio Heights addition on land to the east of the school.<sup>76</sup>

Horatio was officially incorporated on January 23, 1900, and a mayoral/city council form of municipal government was established shortly thereafter. In 1895, the post office in Norwoodville was closed and relocated to a frame building at the west end of Main Street in Horatio, 200 yards east of the railroad tracks. In the late 1910s, a new post office was erected. It was a large stucco building on the northeast corner of Pride and Main streets, but the facility was later relocated back to the south side of Main Street. Electrical service was established in 1917 when the city awarded the franchise to the Arkansas Light and Power Company of DeQueen, although limited electrical service was previously available through a generator operated by S. R. Halliday in a building on the northeast corner of Main and Pennock streets.<sup>77</sup>

Horatio grew rapidly as the railroad prospered, and lots were sold almost as quickly as they could be platted. D. L. Cowden built the first brick building in town at the corner of Main and Williams streets to house his general store, replacing a large frame building that housed G. B. Pride's and George Scott's General Store. Pride and Scott themselves built a new brick building on the corner of Main and Pennock in 1900. Pride remained in business in Horatio until 1936, including a number of years with the Fruit Belt Hardware Store,

which was founded by his nephew, Morgan Pride, in 1913. The E.R. Brinkley General Store was established on the north side of Main Street in 1905 under the motto “Everything you eat, wear or use.” Brinkley’s sons, O.T. and J.R., took over the family business in 1908 and moved across the street into the Cowden building. By the early 1910s, S.R. Halliday, a prominent local contractor and builder, had constructed a number of concrete buildings on the south side of Main Street, housing the Fruit Belt Hardware Store, the Pride Company, Wescott’s Bank, the Bank of Horatio and a number of other mercantile establishments.<sup>78</sup>

The late 1910s brought a renewed cycle of construction to Horatio. A \$40,000, three-story, brick hotel, including space for the First National Bank, was built on the southeast corner of Main and Pride streets. Simultaneously, a new, \$20,000, two-story Bank of Horatio building was erected at the northwest corner of the same intersection, opposite the hotel. A new \$40,000 school building, featuring steam heat, running water, 10 classrooms and an auditorium, was completed in the spring of 1919. By 1920, the town’s population stood at approximately 1,200.<sup>79</sup>

In July 1909, the Ferguson Contracting Company began work on a new railroad line detour west of Horatio. The detour started at Neal Springs, went around Horatio Big Hill, and ended at DeQueen. Eighty men were employed under Pete Pernie in construction of the line, later known as the Neal Springs to DeQueen detour. Once completed, the Kansas City Southern intended to discontinue usage of its track through Horatio. However, in 1911, a group of Horatio businessmen persuaded the Arkansas General Assembly to require the railroad to maintain a freight and passenger depot in the city, although the Kansas City Southern oil tank was moved from Horatio to DeQueen. Although the Kansas City Southern tried a number of times in the ensuing years to discontinue the older line, Act 139 of 1911 ensured passenger and freight service through Horatio until after 1936, when the region’s agricultural importance began to wane.<sup>80</sup> In 1920, when the agriculture industry maintained steady growth in Horatio, the population stood at 1,038 and remained at that level through the 1930s.

## King

The Kansas City, Pittsburgh and Gulf Railroad, later the Kansas City Southern Railroad, began operation through what was to become King in 1897. This induced a lumber company from Kansas City to go into business in the area in 1900. Walker Beckett was sent from Kansas City to manage the newly established King-Ryder Lumber Company. King-Ryder Lumber Company established a company town and was responsible for building several two-room company houses and a company store for their employees. In 1916, King-Ryder Company sold out to King Saw Mill and Planer Company, but diminishing timber supplies caused the company to close in 1921.



*King Schoolhouse, King, Sevier County. AHPP Photo.*

A petition was drawn up on September 26, 1911, to incorporate the town of King. This petition was signed by Joe Edgar and three others and was presented to the county judge, A.L. Tribble. For one year the town operated under a mayoral/aldermanic system, until, on a technicality, the incorporation was canceled. King did not attempt to incorporate again. The first school at King was in a church building at Spring Hill in 1897. During 1915, the school moved to the church house in town while a new school building was constructed just southeast of the old school. School opened in 1916 in the new brick building where classes were held until the school was closed in 1945. Before a post office was established in 1906, people received their mail on a route from the Pullman Post Office. The one church in town was attended by all denominations. The first store in King was opened in 1902 by Charley Stewart, who later became the postmaster from 1910 to 1925.

During the height of the lumber business, King was a prosperous town with board sidewalks, a doctor's office, a blacksmith shop, a barber shop, a boarding house, a depot, a church building, a schoolhouse, a tie yard, four store, and even a dance hall. By 1936 a graded and drained road was added though the town.<sup>81</sup>

## **Provo**

Originally the settlement of Farribaville, Provo was renamed by Dierks officials and became a company town for the DeQueen and Eastern Railroad.<sup>82</sup> W. M. Wilson went to Provo to live in 1857. E.G. Mattingly and J.A. Mattingly came to Provo in 1914 from Kentucky and were instrumental in establishing the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. The presiding minister was Rev. G.E. Greer. In 1916, the name was changed to Provo Cumberland Presbyterian Church and a white frame building was erected in 1921. The building materials were donated by the Dierks Lumber Company and hauled on the DeQueen and Eastern Railroad.<sup>83</sup> With continued growth through the 1920s and 1930s, a paved road was added through Provo.

## **Avon**

The little saw mill town of Avon was one of the first communities to be built on the new Kansas City, Pittsburgh and Gulf Railroad, which was completed near the end of the 19th century. Carlo Dean renamed the community after the Avon River that Shakespeare made famous in Stratford, England. Prior to this the community had been called "Accident."<sup>84</sup>

The Avon post office was only a short distance from Little Bear Creek, two miles from Rolling Fork Creek, and five miles west of the Cossatot River. Mail was brought every day by both north- and southbound trains. The village itself had only about 75 inhabitants in 1898, but the post office supplied service to between 150 to 200 people. The Avon Lumber Company operated a mill, which was the main industry of the community. The community lost its post office when the mill was sold in 1901.

The Avon School District was created December 21, 1899. By Christmas of 1900, a little white school building was completed. The last day the Avon School operated was March 16, 1931.<sup>85</sup>

## **Brownstown**

Brownstown, earlier known as Pine Woods, was on a high ridge between the Saline River and the Little River. The place was named for Henry K. Brown, an early settler who owned a large plantation three or four miles south of the community. He and his wife, "Aunt M," were old style aristocrats who reportedly traveled around in great style. They had a closed carriage with four horses, complete with driver and footman. The first reference to Brownstown community is December 18, 1833, which is the date that the Pine Woods post office was established.

Brownstown was devastated economically after the Civil War and lost most of its population. The post office



moved to Ben Lomond in 1868.<sup>86</sup> However, the town continued to survive, and in 1886, a pioneer teacher, J. B. Martin, came to teach in Brownstown. Faced with 38 students who expressed a desire to attend school, Martin credited himself with making the first effort to have a graded school in Sevier County at Brownstown Preparatory School.<sup>87</sup>

The *Arkansas Gazette* called Brownstown, known as “Black Colony” until May 13, 1880, “a thriving, business community” in 1881. J.R. Smith’s general store had groceries, clothing, hardware, dry goods, boots, shoes, notions and “did a good trade.” W.K. Williamson and Company had general merchandise, plus medical prescriptions under the supervision of Dr. K. Coats. P.S. Kinsworthy had a store with well-selected stock, attractively arranged, while R.M. Shirley ran a large general store. There also was a village blacksmith named J.W. Pipkin.<sup>88</sup>

## **Chapel Hill**

Hankins and Company were the first merchants in Chapel Hill, opening their store in 1847. John S. Hankins, a captain in the Civil War, built a log cabin in 1869, which was occupied until 1942. Hankins’ father practiced medicine in Chapel Hill and was buried in the town cemetery on June 24, 1867. A short time later S.H. Nunnally went into business. E.G. Corder proposed a post office for Chapel Hill in 1877. Before the Kansas City Southern Railroad and the town of DeQueen were built, Chapel Hill had two general stores, one grocery store, one drug store, a wagon maker and three physicians. The place was noted for its mineral water from the many springs in the vicinity. It is possible that the first oil wells in Sevier County were drilled in the Chapel Hill vicinity. Two were drilled after the turn of the century and before World War I.<sup>89</sup>

The school at Chapel Hill can be traced back to 1870 and was, according to some, the oldest public school in the county. Chapel Hill school was built at Professor R.J. Bettis’ personal expense. Capt. John G. McKean described the school: “The building was made of hewn logs and had puncheon floors. One log was taken out of the full length of the house and served as a window for the writing shelf. During certain hours of the day, the pupils were given writing lessons. During that exercise the teacher was kept busy sharpening pens made of goose quills. School lasted three months. Teachers took turns staying with different families.”<sup>90</sup>

## **Geneva**

Originally Logville, the town of Hortense had two schools in 1897: Humphrey School, which doubled as a church, and Nettle Hill. The town grew even more when it became a flag station on the DeQueen and Eastern Railroad in 1901. In 1906, the town again changed its name to Geneva. By 1909, there was a post office, two cotton gins, two stores, two sawmills, two grist mills and a telephone exchange. The depression of the 1930s caused hard times at Geneva; the sawmills, cotton gins and grist mills all closed and only one store remained open.<sup>91</sup> Throughout the decade, crops, animals and gardens sustained the town.

## **Neal Springs**

J.A. Neal established his home and named the area Neal Springs in 1879. He and his friends formed a baseball team, which played on a large meadow near the springs. Eventually, the town also had the convenience of being connected to a major railway, the Kansas City Southern. The location of this community and its potential for growth were talked about in the *DeQueen Bee* in 1913: “Neal Springs is situated one mile south of Horatio, where the Kansas City Southern cut off is found. This is where freight trains often switch off in order to avoid some hard grades. This switch has been responsible for the erection of the new depot called Neal Springs. Some radical persons interested in the new townsite claim a great future for it and that Horatio will be a suburb. If they build a big city, we will be the town, for the Little River is on the south,

swamps are on the west, and there is no where to build a town except toward Horatio.”<sup>92</sup> According to a 1936 map, little was left of Neal Springs although the Kansas City Southern tracks that ran through Neal Spring were still in use.

## **Paraloma**

A man named John Rhyne coined the name Paraloma from Paraclifta and a man named Ben Lomond. Rhyne believed the railroad would cause Paraloma to outgrow the other towns. The new town was in the southeastern part of Sevier county on the Memphis, Dallas, and Gulf Railroad and, in 1909, the population was close to 100. R.H. Ellis was postmaster, and the community had three general stores, a news and confection stand, a hotel and a bank. Residents also were planning a church and a school.<sup>93</sup>

## **Pullman**

Pullman was a flag station on the Kansas City Southern, six miles north of DeQueen. It had a sawmill, planer mill and a rural telephone line. The mail was carried by rural route from DeQueen. Pearl Coulter taught school at Pullman in 1922. She thought Pullman might have had the first hot lunch program in the county; often it consisted of hot chocolate, stew or soup. The school boys carried the large can of hot food, prepared by their mothers, to the school about 11:30 a.m. every day.<sup>94</sup>

## **Little River County**

Created by an act on March 5, 1867, out of territory taken from the counties of Hempstead and Sevier, Little River County takes its name from the Little River. The temporary seat of justice was fixed at the house of William Freeman, who lived near the present town of Foreman. In 1868 Rocky Comfort was made the county seat and the first term of the circuit court began on August 4, 1868. As a result of statewide violence and citizen unrest, Little River County, like Sevier County, was one of the 10 counties in Arkansas placed under martial law by Gov. Powell Clayton in November 1868. Gen. B.F. Catterson was in charge of the militia that was sent to Little River County to confiscate guns, horses and mules. In 1880 the county seat was moved to Richmond. A courthouse fire on February 2, 1883, destroyed many of the county records; however, several records were reproduced from the Sevier County courthouse and by affidavits. Like many other Arkansas counties during the turn of the century, there was a constant struggle among the towns in the county to obtain and keep the county seat. By 1902 the county seat was moved to Rocky Comfort (present-day Foreman) where it remained only until 1905. It was then moved to Ashdown, on the Kansas City Southern Railroad line, which was more centrally located and offered greater accessibility.<sup>95</sup>

The railroad came to Little River County in 1889. Bill Whitaker was interested in building the Texarkana and Fort Smith Railroad through Richmond, which is located five miles west of Ashdown. Some of the landowners in Richmond refused to provide a right-of-way across their land. As a result, the Texarkana and Fort Smith Railroad bypassed Richmond. By 1910, with the railroad extended to every part of the county, commercial river navigation began to decline. The Texarkana Northern Railroad was authorized to construct a railroad bridge over the Red River at Index, Arkansas, and over the Little River north of Wilton. The bridges were to be drawbridges with spans 200 feet apart.<sup>96</sup>

## **Railroad Communities**

### **Alleene**

Alleene is located two miles from a pre-Civil War town called Mineola. In 1892, with the coming of the railroads, the town of Alleene was surveyed and laid out by Ben Lawrence on his own land. Lawrence

donated 10 acres to the railroad company and named the new station Lawrenceville. The Kansas City Southern railroad objected to the name of the station and renamed it Alleene, where the Mineola post office was moved.

Among the first businesses in Alleene were stores owned by men named Strawn, Skinner and Stephens. A man with the last name of Harvey came to Alleene and built a hotel in block one. Harvey's Hotel had running water and other accommodations that made it a very comfortable hotel for the day. The hotel also managed a barber shop, bakery, butcher shop, cafe and real estate office. The real estate office was run by R.L. Johnston. There was a large general store owned and operated by the Ryner Mill company. Harvey bought the store in 1912 and added living quarters on one side and a livery stable on the other side.<sup>97</sup> There was a telegraph office, a telephone exchange and a two-story section house to accommodate the railroad section crew. The 1922 edition of the Bradstreet Company listed Alleene with a population of 300. There were at least three businesses and three doctors in town.

## Ashdown

Ashdown, first known as Keller, developed at the site where the Peytonville-Richmond Road crossed the Texarkana-Fort Smith Railroad. Originally, Judge Lawrence Alexander Byrne, a land speculator and railroad lawyer, bought land in Little River County for a town he hoped to develop and called the area Keller. Judge Byrne owned several sawmills between Hudson and Rankins. In 1890 one of the mills burned, leaving nothing but ashes. According to oral history, the judge said, "the mill has burned down and is in ashes, but I am going to build a town here and call it Ashdown."<sup>98</sup> On June 11, 1892, the town of Keller officially became the town of Ashdown.



*Hunter-Coulter House, Ashdown, Little River County. AHPP Photo.*

The actual founding of the town was the result of the work of many people. In 1888, the families of John Coggins, Henry Westbrook and S.A. Maddox were among the first arrivals. The first homes were hewed logs with puncheon floors. There were two of these log cabins in Ashdown, belonging to William and Maloy Waddell. The walls were chinked with mud to keep out the cold winter wind and the mud was removed in the summer to allow the breeze. The most prosperous of the farmers and plantation owners soon replaced these houses with one- or two-story frame houses. They had wide front porches, or, if they were two-story, had double verandas across the front.

The community grew and businesses opened. General trading stores were owned and operated by S.A. Maddox, John Westbrook, and Will Collins. The town had two or three saloons. Ann Gurley had a boarding

house. There was also a cotton gin and a livery stable. By 1898 Ashdown had a post office, and by 1904 Ashdown was a “boom” town with more new businesses opening regularly. H.L. Toland and Company sold dry goods as well as groceries. W.F. Bridwell sold insurance. One of the first churches, the First Baptist Church of Ashdown, was established on August 29, 1894, with only four charter members. In 1894, the First Methodist Church, which operated out of the Richmond Circuit, had members from Hicks, Richmond and Ashdown. Other churches were established as the town grew. The north end of Ashdown was overshadowed by an “L”-shaped compress and warehouse.<sup>99</sup>

Because the town flourished, the county seat was moved from Richmond to Ashdown in 1905.<sup>100</sup> Ashdown’s location at the junction of the Kansas City Southern Railroad, the St. Louis-San Francisco Railroad, and the Memphis, Dallas and Gulf Railroad caused the town to grow rapidly. The town continued to grow and in 1922 the Bradstreet Company recorded the population as 2,205. On September 20, 1937, the *Camp Chatter* newspaper reported more exciting news regarding the railroad. The Kansas City Southern Railroad began running three new, fast-freight locomotives with larger engines capable of pulling 100 loaded freight cars. The new engines, according to the paper, were the “largest and most modern ever to operate in the region.” During tough economic times in the 1930s, Ashdown still prospered and employed several residents at businesses and industrial plants such as the Temple Cotton Oil Mill. Continuing to slowly grow, the population in 1940 was 2,332.

## Foreman

The Arkansas and Choctaw Railroad from Ashdown to Arkinda was built in 1895. The railroad cut through virgin forest one mile north of what is said to be the oldest town in Little River County, Rocky Comfort. Records indicate the sale of right-of-way easements from Carl Schuman, Bettie Bell, Joe Madden and Horace Coontz, in sections 14 and 15 of township 12 south, range 32 west.

In 1900, a post office was established along the new route and named for Ben Foreman, a well-known Republican in Texarkana. For many years every deed or mortgage carried a description in the new town as being



*Anderson-Hobson Mercantile Store, Foreman, Little River County. AHPP Photo.*

situated in New Rocky Comfort rather than calling the new town Foreman. Stores in the old Rocky Comfort were moved to the new town of Foreman, which was incorporated on August 20, 1901.

The county seat was moved from Richmond to Foreman in 1902. Block 30 in the middle of town was set aside for county government. A jail was built, and the county records were housed on the second floor of a large building on the main street of town. Before a courthouse was ever built in Foreman, it lost the county seat, which was moved to Ashdown in 1905.<sup>101</sup> Then, in 1907, the Arkansas and Choctaw Railroad became part of the St. Louis San Francisco Railroad. Through the first half of the century, the town continued to grow from 612 residents in 1910 to 1,050 in 1940 and the town's first public school opened on September 10, 1945.

## **Ogden**

The present site of Ogden was originally the John Nunneley farm. Judge M. W. Bates gave the town his wife's family name of Ogden in 1878. Judge Bates was a businessman and soon owned the first cotton gin, sawmill and store. The town's physicians were Dr. Bright and Dr. Allen Bellar. Ogden thrived because of the farming and timber business, which relied on the Kansas City Southern Railroad. The Johnson Township or the Laurel Bell Community of Ogden had the first black-owned cotton gin in Little River County. Lewis Armstrong operated it as early as 1897. Lewis Armstrong, Dick Banks, Ben Baines, Sr., and Cary Robinson all hauled the lumber to build a church in Johnson Township in 1889. The church was named Laurel Bell after two of the women who helped clear the land for the church site.<sup>102</sup>

## **Lippton**

The town of Old Winthrop became the town of Lippton in 1904, and was a "flag station" on the Kansas City Southern Railroad. W. C. Merritt surveyed the town site for Winthrop in 1894 and the settlement of Winthrop and the building of the Kansas City Southern Railway occurred simultaneously. H.M. Bates began buying and selling town lots. G.W. McDaniels was the first to build a residence in the town, and Dr. W.M. Lambert was one of the first physicians. Anderson and Cooper were the first store operators. As the town grew, saw mills, blacksmith shops, churches, and schools were established.<sup>103</sup> In 1907, just a few years after the town was renamed Lippton, a post office was established. According to a 1936 map of Little River County, a metal surface road ran east from Lippton to Alleene.

## **Arkinda**

Between 1820 and 1845, the United States government moved great numbers of Native Americans out of the Southern states and settled them in what became known as Indian Territory. In 1832, the Choctaws were moved into land abutting the southwest corner of Arkansas. A trading community soon developed across the line in Arkansas. Known as Choctaw City, this community had several saloons and stores. Later the Old Post Road (also known as Old Doakes Road or Choctaw Trail) was built, and a stage coach line was established. Choctaw City became a crossroad town, a typical frontier town with the inevitable lawlessness, drinking and fighting, known for attracting outlaws. This was the status of Choctaw City until July 5, 1899, when an agreement with the Arkansas and Choctaw Railroad company caused a town site be established and located on the site. The agreement also provided for a commission to partition this land and report to the Arkansas and Choctaw Railroad. The town of Arkinda was born as a result of this agreement, and was incorporated on October 7, 1901.<sup>104</sup>

While the railroad was built primarily as a logging road, cotton was still grown, the Dawson Cotton Gin was built, and the railroad added a cotton platform for loading. Logging and especially tie making developed into a thriving industry. Several large stores opened, there was a hotel, and eating establishments and the saloon businesses continued to prosper. The first school was northeast of the present town, but in 1910 a new brick



school was built closer to the main part of town. When this school burned, a two-room frame building in the same location replaced it. Arkinda had the dubious distinction of never having had either a church or cemetery.<sup>105</sup> Eventually, the St. Louis San Francisco Railroad ran through the town, according to a 1936 map.

## White Cliffs

The only part of Little River County located north of the Little River is the 12 sections known as the White Cliffs area. A lime formation is exposed to form White Cliff Hills, which are solid limestone and loom approximately 150 feet high above the Little River. The town of White Cliffs was originally located one mile north of the cliff proper, on the road to Brownstown. There were two stores, several homes and a hotel known as the Cliff House, which was built around 1890. A large concrete cistern marked the back of the building, which faced west. The Cliff House was used as a hotel for a short time before the first cement plant drew the town to the perimeter of the cliff. The Cliff House was then used for a school, which was known as the Shorkenbach School.

Harry Sandefer, D.R. Fawcett and two men named Smith and Coates moved their stores to the new town located on the cliff. The stores all faced east with the Sandefer store on the south end. Henry Sandefer's store was later bought and became the Fred Schiermer Store.

The new town was laid out in streets and the cement company built many homes. All homes were supplied with river water by a system of pipes. Another hotel was built near the plant on the north side of the quarry hill but was later moved to the top of the hill. The Portland Cement and Chalk Company was incorporated for the purpose of manufacturing cement, chalk, lime, calcimine, whiting, brick and artificial marble. This corporation was granted permission to build and maintain a system of water works, an ice plant, and an electric light plant for the use of the company and for private consumption. The company also built a railroad known locally as the White Cliffs Branch, which connected the town with the newly built Texarkana and Fort Smith Railroad at Millkin. In 1903 the name of the town was changed to Folmina. Deeds to most of the lots in Folmina were forfeited for taxes in 1918. The Lime Products company bought the land and built a small plant that crushed limestone. Later, the town again became White Cliffs.<sup>106</sup>

## Wilton (Millkin)

Wilton, incorporated on January 29, 1884, was originally named Millkin in honor of S.S.P. Mills and P.S. Kinsworthy, who owned the land upon which the town was founded. Mills was responsible for bringing the



*S.S.P. Mills & Son Building, Wilton, Little River County. AHPP Photo.*

railroad right-of-way from the Red River to Wilton. Kinsworthy came from Brownstown in 1888 and went into the general mercantile business. Other pioneers who homesteaded in Wilton before 1890 were John Thompson, James H. Barkman, James H. Clark, Sam A. Weaver, Newton Cothen and Alex Scott.

The town of Wilton was well established by 1891 because of the railroad. Millkin to Ashdown through Rankin was an important rail route because Rankin was a sawmill town. The people of Millkin thought their town big and important enough by 1892 to make a bid for the county seat. A list of reasons why Millkin should be named the county seat appeared in the *Millkin Gazette*; however, the town lost the bid. The name of Millkin was changed on July 1, 1892, to Wilton, in honor of one of the stockholders of the Texarkana and Fort Smith Railroad.<sup>107</sup>

## **Miller County**

By an act of April 1, 1820, part of Hempstead County was cut off to form Miller County, named after James Miller, the first territorial governor of Arkansas. The act provided that the temporary seat of justice should be at the house of John Hall in the Gilliland settlement. An act dated November 3, 1831, designated commissioners to locate a permanent county seat and defined the boundaries of the county. These boundaries included a considerable territory lying within the Republic of Mexico and subsequently caused much trouble. The boundary line between the United States and Texas was not definitely established and for several years the settlers of Miller County were uncertain as to which government they were subject; in fact, many were inclined to acknowledge the Texas government. In his message on February 15, 1838, to the General Assembly, Gov. James Conway called attention to conditions in Miller County. He submitted a number of letters transmitted to him by Sheriff Fraizer of Miller County to corroborate his statement. "The easiest and most effectual remedy," he said, "that presents itself to mind, is the abolition of Miller County and the attachment of her territory to some other possessed of more patriotism. I therefore recommend that the General Assembly abrogate the County of Miller and attach her territory and jurisdiction to the County of Sevier."<sup>108</sup>

On February 20, 1838, Absalom Fowler introduced a bill making it a misdemeanor for any citizen of the county to hold office under the Republic of Texas. It passed both houses and was approved by Governor Conway on March 3, but it failed to produce the desired results. The county officers either refused or neglected to enforce the laws of Arkansas. In his message of November 7, 1838, at the opening of the next session of the General Assembly, Governor Conway again referred to the subject, especially the failure of the Fowler law to improve conditions. A few days later he received a letter from Sixth Circuit Judge William B. Conway, explaining that the judge had failed to hold a term of court in Miller County in October because the county officers has not made any provision. "Texas," Judge Conway said, "has usurped full jurisdiction over Miller county and divided it into two counties - Red River and Fannin - and has provided fully for the civil and military organization of these two counties."<sup>109</sup> This led to the disorganization of the county and the attachment of the territory to Lafayette County. Miller County was re-established by the Act of December 22, 1874, with its present boundaries. The county seat was established at Texarkana.

## **Railroad Communities**

### **Garland**

Garland, located on the St. Louis Southwestern Railroad line near the eastern boundary of Miller County, was incorporated December 28, 1903.<sup>110</sup> Also called Garland City, it "is one of the most 'washed away' towns in Arkansas." Mud marks on homes and on buildings, which indicated the height of the latest flood, were common in the early 20th century. Several times the river has so isolated the town that food and medicines have had to be parachuted from airplanes.<sup>111</sup> The town was named for Rufus Garland, who once owned the land on which the town was built. In 1936, the town population was recorded as 425.

## Texarkana

The date generally given as the founding for Texarkana is December 8, 1873. There are several versions on how the town received its name, but all of them stem from the play on the combination of Texas, Arkansas and Louisiana. Texarkana developed directly on the Arkansas-Texas line. In December 1873, lots began to sell on the Texas side of the town; in January 1874, lots began to sell on the Arkansas side. The first attempt to incorporate the town was unsuccessful, but incorporation was finally approved on August 10, 1880.

Two railroad lines met at the site of Texarkana: the St. Louis and Iron Mountain Railroad and the Cairo and Fulton Railroad. The St. Louis and Iron Mountain Railroad was authorized by the Missouri legislature to build a railroad from St. Louis to Pilot Knob, Missouri, then on to the Arkansas state line where it joined the rails of the Cairo and Fulton Railroad. The St. Louis and Iron Mountain Railroad and the Cairo and Fulton Railroad consolidated to form the St. Louis, Iron Mountain, and Southern Railroad. Texarkana, Arkansas, was laid out by the St. Louis, Iron Mountain and Southern Railroad and some of the most important downtown streets were laid out along the angle of the railroad tracks. Consequently, many of the business blocks are sliced into irregular patterns; some office buildings are wedge-shaped, and others have walls staggered or even slightly zigzagged to fit available ground space. Although the Civil War interrupted construction, the railroad was completed from the Missouri-Arkansas state line to Texarkana on March 20, 1874; thereafter a direct line was open from St. Louis to Texarkana. Soon after, in late 1874, the Arkansas legislature established Miller County and made Texarkana the county seat.<sup>112</sup> Texarkana, one of the fastest-growing towns in Southwest Arkansas, had a population of 11,821 on the Arkansas side of the state line and, including Texas, the population was 28,840, according to the census of 1940.



*Texarkana Union Station, Texarkana, Miller County. AHPP Photo.*

## Doddridge

The Texarkana, Shreveport and Natchez Railway ran a logging line out of Texarkana to the Fouke sawmill and then extended the line south to other sawmill locations, finally deciding to extend to Shreveport around 1895. Doddridge was located along the Texarkana, Shreveport and Natchez line a few miles north of the present Doddridge, and is said to be named for a family of Dodds that lived on a ridge near the present town site. A large fire on February 26, 1916, destroyed the Cabiness Hotel and two other commercial buildings.<sup>113</sup> According to a map from 1925, the Texas and Pacific Railroad ran through the town.





*Texas and Pacific Railroad Depot, Doddridge, Miller County.  
Courtesy of the Arkansas History Commission*

## **Fouke**

Settlers came to the Fouke area in 1850 but it was not until well after the Civil War, in 1890, that the town began to grow and was named after the original land owner, George W. Fouke. Located on the Texas and Pacific Railroad in the central part of the county, Fouke was an incorporated banking town with a bank, a telephone exchange, lumber and cooperage plants and general stores. The town also had a post office, a printing press, a blacksmith shop, a gas station, drug stores, cotton gins, a photographic studio and a railroad depot.<sup>114</sup> The population was 565 in 1936.

## **Lafayette County**

Lafayette County was created by an act of the fifth Arkansas Territorial Legislature on October 15, 1827, from part of Hempstead County. It was named for the Marquis de Lafayette, who came from France and allied himself with the American colonists in the Revolutionary War. The act designated the house of Joshua Morrison as the temporary county seat, but 10 days later an act was passed authorizing an election for commissioners to locate a permanent county seat. Because the early records are deficient, the identity of the elected commissioners remains unknown, yet it is known that they fixed the county seat at a place owned by a man named Wright on Chickaninny Prairie, where a log courthouse was erected.<sup>115</sup>

Settlers are known to have been in the area as early as 1816 when William Woodard settled on the Red River in an area called Long Prairie. Stephen F. Austin wrote a letter dated January 3, 1818, from Herculaneum, Missouri, to his brother-in-law James Bryan in Alexandria, Louisiana, locating Madrid claims on his improvements on the Red River. His father, Moses Austin, wrote a memo stating that Stephen F. Austin left Missouri in 1819 to reside in Long Prairie. Records of Stephen Austin indicate that there may have been other settlers on Long Prairie in 1818-20.

The survey of public land began in 1816 under William Rector. This survey was responsible for bringing James S. Conway to Lafayette County, where he settled in Long Prairie in 1823. Around 1840, Lewis B. Fort entered a tract of land near the Bayou Badiou in the northern part of the county but soon sold it to J. N.

Wilson, who offered to give the county enough land for a new county seat. The offer was accepted and the town called Lewisville was laid off. A brick courthouse costing \$4,000 was built in 1842; however, a judge was not elected until 1849.<sup>116</sup> Railroad transportation was provided by the St. Louis Southwestern Railroad Company and the Louisiana and Arkansas Railway Company.

## **Railroad Communities**

### **Bradley**

The town of Bradley was laid off in 20 square blocks, 300 square feet each, with 60-foot-wide streets and 20-foot alleys. The streets running east and west were numbered First through Seventh and the streets running north and south are named for parts of a train: Express Street, Coach Street, Cab Avenue, Pilot Street, Pullman and Woodruff, probably named for the surveyor. The town was named for W.C. Bradley, the son-in-law of James S. Conway, Arkansas's first governor. The St. Louis Southwestern Railroad ran north to south and a depot was constructed in 1888. The population was 363, according to a 1936 map of Lafayette County.

### **Canfield**

James P. Sutton, James T. McKnight and John Templeton are said to be the first to recognize the potential of the area later known as Canfield. Sutton and McKnight purchased the land from the United States government in 1854. Two streams drained the land: Mill Branch on the south and east of the community, and Heir's Creek on the north side. In 1887, C.C. DuBose, Jr., and E.H. and Lucy Canfield bought the land, and it was laid off for a town on December 5, 1887. Dubose moved to Canfield from Lamar, Texas, while the Canfields moved from Webster Parish, Louisiana.<sup>117</sup>



*Triplett Company Building, Lewisville, Lafayette County. AHPP Photo.*



*First Methodist Church, Lewisville, Lafayette County. AHPP Photo.*

A plat of the town shows there were six blocks on the west side of the St. Louis, Arkansas and Texas Railway, Arkansas and Southern branch, and eight blocks on the east. The names of the streets running north and south on the west side of the tracks were Fordyce and West avenues, while those on the east side were East Avenue and Pine Street. Streets running east and west were Bishop, Holt, Dubose, Homan, Lynch and Moore streets. All of the lots were 50-by-140 feet in each block, and all blocks had alleys. The streets were 60 feet in width.

The railroad brought the first major industry to Canfield: saw-milling. The Canfield Lumber Company, Inc., was incorporated in 1896, with Hugh Curry from Texarkana as president. Canfield claims to be the first town in the county to have a water works, which consisted of a large water tank at the saw mill that provided water for the town from a large overhead tank.<sup>118</sup> According to a 1936 map, the St. Louis San Francisco Railroad ran through Canfield.

## **Lewisville**

On January 1, 1883, the Southwestern Improvement Association, a St. Louis organization co-operating with the St. Louis Southwestern Railroad Company (also known as the Cotton Belt Railroad) purchased 240 acres from Lewis C. Steel, son of the original land owner, John Steel. The new owners platted a new town on the railroad, which was named "New Lewisville." Old Lewisville resisted cooperation with the railroad and refused to "give away" the right-of-way for its construction, assuming that the town was so important that it could not possibly be bypassed. The new town was laid out in 20 blocks consisting of 174 business lots and 134 residential lots, with one block reserved for the possible site of the county courthouse at some future time. The deed of the acreage contains an exception reading, "The spot of ground occupied by the Steel graveyard and sufficient to enclose the same is reserved." This graveyard is in the block reserved for a courthouse, and the markers at the graves indicate that John Steel and members of his family are buried in the plot, which is preserved by the county as provided in the deed.

During the first three years of the railroad's operation there was little indication that its coming to the area would change the status quo of old Lewisville. However, in 1885 M.D. Lester moved to New Lewisville from Mars Hill and opened a general store on First Street across from the depot. By 1886, Stone and Moore had constructed a store building at the corner of First (Front) and Spruce streets. Others purchased lots for



future buildings on First Street and at the corner of Second and Spruce streets, but few buildings were erected for three or four years. In 1887 W.D. Harrison constructed a store at the corner of Maple and First streets. The remaining business and residential lots were being offered by the Town-Site Company with little success.

The Sunny South Lumber Company, located on 80 acres east of the New Lewisville townsite, was established in January 1889 by Thomas A. Garrigues of Kansas City. It was one of the largest mills in South Arkansas at the time and prospered for several years, but by the end of 1892, it had fallen on hard times and, as a result of lawsuits, was placed in receivership in 1893 and ordered sold by the court. Two other large sawmills, the Red River Lumber Company and the Interstate Lumber Company, were in operation just west of the town in the early 1890s. These mills operated tramlines into the interior for several miles for hauling logs to the mills by rail. The mills gave employment to more than 200 workmen who lived in roughly built frame houses on the property of the saw mill owners. Customary “commissaries” were set up to supply the needs of the workers and their families, usually at exorbitant prices. The economy of New Lewisville soared rapidly and the town took on a new surge of growth as the result of the saw-mill operations. Twenty-eight businesses were in operation by 1890.

New Lewisville was incorporated on February 16, 1889, and the long-planned removal of the county seat from old Lewisville became a reality in October 1890. In December 1900, J.J. Tarvin was granted a permit by the City of New Lewisville to build and operate a telephone exchange in the town. By 1901, the City Council had authorized John Crocker to build and operate an electric light plant in New Lewisville, though electricity was not supplied to the town until 1904.<sup>119</sup> The population continued to grow in the early 1900s and in 1936, Lewisville had 1,061 residents.



*First Presbyterian Church, Stamps, Lafayette County.  
AHPP Photo.*

## Stamps

Stamps was named in 1884 in honor of the first settler, Hardy James Stamps, by his daughter, Mrs. C.T. Crowell, who was the first postmistress. The vast virgin pine timber in the area brought a large number of settlers to the area. The Bodcaw Lumber Company was established in the late 1890s and soon became one of the largest sawmills in the country. The company built a railroad to their land holdings in Louisiana and the logs were hauled on flat cars to the mills in Stamps. By 1899, Stamps was a thriving sawmill town with a population of approximately 1,021.

The mill consisted of two large sawmills and three planer mills, two steam-operated dry kilns, and many acres of lumber yards. The mill could daily produce and ship 350,000 feet, board measure, of the very best virgin short- and long-leaf yellow pine lumber. There were between 450 and 500 employees, most of whom lived in houses built by the company. Rent was \$1.60 per room for a four-room house and \$1 extra was charged for each room that was papered. Water was piped to most of the houses, and surface wells and bored wells were in general use.

Very few had electricity and there was no natural gas. Health conditions were dreadful and death was common. There was no cemetery until December 25, 1905. The original railroad that supplied logs to the sawmills ended just south of the Central Avenue and Main Street intersection, which was the original business district. The original logging railroad was discontinued and the Louisiana and Arkansas Railroad was built. The right of way was moved west to its present location where it crossed the Cotton Belt Railroad, which was built through the county in 1884. After the arrival of the Louisiana and Arkansas Railroad, a depot, railroad shops and general offices were built.<sup>120</sup> The population doubled in the first 30 years of 1900 and was 2,705 by 1936.

## **Additional Railroad Communities**

Towns that blossomed during the spread of the railroad in Southwest Arkansas but have little recorded information include Blanchard, Arden and Genoa. Blanchard, named after Blanchard's Mill, was eight miles west of the Kansas City Southern Railroad stop in Gillham. Although just a small village, it had religious meetings, a Woodman Camp, a general store, a literary society and a post office that was established around 1905.<sup>121</sup> Located on the Arkansas and Choctaw Railroad line, Arden's population in 1910 was 300. Listed in the 1916 Bradstreet for Arden was a sawmill owned by Harry C. Wilshusen. Located on the Cotton Belt Railroad line, the town of Genoa was listed in the 1916 Bradstreet for the Oscar Meek sawmill and gin. The population was 50 in 1910.

Other towns that were conceived by the railroad industry and appear on a 1925 map of Arkansas counties are as follows: Mineral in Sevier County on the Kansas City Southern Railroad, Bear Circle Junction in Sevier County on the Kansas City Southern Railroad, Orten in Little River County on the St. Louis San Francisco Railroad, Mandeville in Miller County on the Missouri Pacific Railroad, Motz in Miller County on the St. Louis Southwestern Railroad, Joelia in Lafayette County on the St. Louis Southwestern Railroad, Spirit Lake in Lafayette County on the St. Louis Southwestern Railroad, Buckner in Lafayette County on the St. Louis Southwestern Railroad, Buchanan in Lafayette County on the Louisiana and Arkansas Railroad, McKamie in Lafayette County on the Louisiana and Arkansas Railroad, and Dennis in Lafayette County on the St. Louis Southwestern Railroad.

A later map, dated 1939, lists several more railroad towns: Morris Ferry in Little River County on the Kansas City Southern Railroad, Red Bluff in Little River County on the St. Louis San Francisco Railroad, Clear Lake Junction in Miller County on the Missouri Pacific Railroad, Homan in Miller County on the Missouri Pacific Railroad, Boyd in Miller County on the Texas and Pacific Railway, Roberts in Miller County on the Texas and Pacific Railway, Boggy in Miller County on the Texas and Pacific Railway, Ft. Lynn in Miller County on the Texas and Pacific Railway, Kiblah in Miller County on the Texas and Pacific Railway, Baker in Lafayette County on the Louisiana and Arkansas Railroad, Gamma in Lafayette County on the Louisiana and Arkansas Railroad, Shreveport Junction in Lafayette County on the St. Louis Southwestern Railroad, Buckner in Lafayette County on the St. Louis and Southwestern Railroad, Kress City in Lafayette County on the St. Louis and Southwestern Railroad, Patton in Lafayette County on the St. Louis and Southwestern Railroad, and Frostville in Lafayette County on the St. Louis Southwestern Railroad. Little is known or documented on these towns except that their birth coincided with the growth of the railroad in Southwest Arkansas.

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66. "DeQueen Has A Birthday," Ibid.
67. McCommas, 93.
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72. "... Ibid., 134.
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**ARKANSAS HISTORIC  
PRESERVATION PROGRAM**

# Railroad-Era Resources of Southwest Arkansas (Lafayette, Little River, Miller, and Sevier Counties) 1870-1945

By the Staff of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

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