

**Walks through History**  
**Historic Pangburn**  
**July 17, 2010**  
**By: Rachel Silva**



### **Intro**

Hi, my name is Rachel Silva, and I work for the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program. Welcome to the July Walks through History tour of Historic Pangburn! Today we'll discuss the history of Pangburn and see some of the town's National Register-listed homes. I'd like to thank Bill Leach from the White Co. Historical Society for his help organizing the tour as well as local residents Kerry and Darrell Hickman for their help and for allowing us to use their building as a break room. There will be a water/bathroom break about half-way through the tour.

### **Brief History of Pangburn**

Pangburn originated as a small settlement near the southern bank of the Little Red River. The community was initially called Judson, and Emanuel Sawyer became the first postmaster on October 7, 1856. Dr. David Pangburn and his family came to the area from New York in 1858 and purchased 80 acres. Pangburn became the community's second postmaster in 1859. In addition to serving as the town's doctor, he built a store and a new post office. On November 10, 1880, the town name was changed to Pangburn in honor of the good doctor. Legend has it that the residents chose to name the town after Pangburn because they had a hard time paying him for his services monetarily.

One of Pangburn's most influential figures was Harry Churchill. He came to Pangburn in 1899 with his wife, Kate. Churchill was originally from Linn Creek, Missouri, and was a representative of the Western Tie and Timber Company. His

mission was to secure the best areas of virgin oak timber for the manufacturing of railroad crossties and stavebolts. He hired many local residents to cut crossties, which made him very popular because he provided much-needed jobs. By 1904, he was floating 24,000 crossties annually down the Little Red River to the nearest railroad spur in Judsonia. After amassing a considerable amount of wealth from this practice, Churchill hired his friend, Jim Bunch, to manage the timber business. At this time, Churchill devoted himself to the improvement of Pangburn. He dreamed of securing construction of a railroad line through Pangburn—not only for its benefits to his timber operation, but also because he wanted to transform the sleepy village into a bustling town. Harry Churchill made numerous trips to Harrison to meet with M & NA railroad executives to lobby for Pangburn's inclusion along the company's new route.

### *Railroad*

The St. Louis & North Arkansas Railroad Company was reorganized and sold in 1906 to the Missouri & North Arkansas Railroad Company. Under previous ownership beginning in the early 1880s, the railroad company laid track from Seligman, MO, to Eureka Springs, and then on to Harrison. From Harrison, the tracks went southeast to Marshall, Leslie, Heber Springs, and in 1908, to Pangburn. The M & NA ultimately sought to construct a line from Seligman, MO, to Helena on the MS River. By 1909, they had accomplished this task. The M & NA railroad created at least 33 settlements, caused the demise of a few communities that it bypassed, and fostered the rapid growth of several existing towns...including Pangburn.

The first trains came to Pangburn in July 1908, bringing increased access to the outside world and better shipping capabilities for the area's natural resources like timber, strawberries, potatoes, and cotton. The entire town of Pangburn was virtually redesigned around the railroad, with the streets lining up parallel and perpendicular to the railroad tracks. The streets were renumbered beginning with 1<sup>st</sup> Street immediately east of the tracks. Other streets were named after prominent residents, such as John Austin Pangburn (Austin St.; son of town's namesake, David Pangburn), Maggie Pangburn Torrence (Torrence St.), and Charles McKee (McKee St.).

The arrival of the railroad also sparked a building boom in Pangburn. The houses constructed during this period were built as quickly and inexpensively as possible to keep up with the increased demand for housing. In 1907 the population of Pangburn was 25, and by 1912 the population had grown to over 1,000 people??

[The 1914 Sanborn map says the population was 300.] Like all towns at the end of the line, Pangburn was temporarily the “home base” for railroad workers constructing track to the southeast. Plus, the town experienced business growth because of its new ability to ship goods on the railroad. By 1912, there were 4 cotton gins in Pangburn as well as sawmills, planing mills, and stave mills along the railroad tracks. Almost every building we will see today was constructed during the Railroad Era (generally identified as 1870 to 1914).

The town of Pangburn was officially incorporated on April 8, 1911 (so the town’s centennial is next April). The M & NA stopped running through Pangburn in September 1946.

### **From Museum, go north on Searcy St.**

**West side of Searcy St.**—was lined with commercial buildings, including general stores, millineries, a restaurant, and the 2-story stone Castleberry Hotel on the SW corner of Searcy & Church. Sometime between 1914 and 1923, the Mt. Zion Orphanage was built on the SE corner of Searcy & Church. Historic buildings now gone...since 1960s?

### **Cary House (NR-listed 1992)**

SE corner of Searcy & Short. The Cary House was built about 1910 and is a good example of an irregularly shaped, wood-frame house with Folk Victorian (or vernacular Queen Anne) style details. Sometime between 1914 and 1923, the house was slightly altered with the addition of the front porch and the bay window. Interestingly, I cannot find any information on the Cary family, but this house was home to the Hamilton family for at least 40 years. Martha Hamilton lived in the house in the 1930s. Her son, John, who was crippled with polio was well known in Pangburn. He taught high school math at White County Central for many years, and also did income tax work for many people. After his mother’s death in 1940, a related family with the surname of French lived here as well.

### **Oran Vaughan House**

NE corner of Searcy & Short. Probably built in late 1920s or early 1930s by Oran Vaughan. Vaughan ran a mercantile store on the west side of Searcy St. about half-way between Main & Church in the 1930s. [conflicting info on location of Vaughan’s mercantile—might have been at NE corner of Main & Searcy]

**Go east on Short St. & cut through by school to Pine. Head east to Church of Christ.**

### **Church of Christ**

Although extensively altered with additions, vinyl siding, and a metal roof, the Pangburn Church of Christ was built in 1914 during the railroad boom. It is the oldest Church of Christ building (not congregation) remaining in White County. It was originally a one-room church with windows down both side elevations. You can still see the basic form.

FYI: This started off as a 1<sup>st</sup> Christian Church and after a national split in the church in 1906, this congregation changed to become a Church of Christ. For the Churches of Christ, any practices not present in accounts of New Testament worship were not permissible in the church, and they could find no New Testament documentation of the use of instrumental music in worship. For the Christian Churches, any practices not expressly forbidden could be considered.

**Go around the corner to Main St. and head west on Main**

### **Avanell Wright House (NR-listed 1991)**

Triangular lot at corner of Main & Pine. This house was built about 1910 and is very similar in plan to the Austin Pangburn House we'll see in a little bit. It features a pyramidal roof with cross gables and a wrap-around porch supported by Doric columns. Although Avanell Wright lived here, that is not the historic name for the home. We know that German immigrants Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Vangaasbeck lived here in the 1920s, and they were followed by the John Q. Adams family, next was the Cleaton Crosbys, and then Lewis and Avanell Wright.

### **Churchill-Hilger House (NR-listed 1991) Maybe go inside? Dixie Gunter**

SE corner of Main & Searcy. Built in 1914 by Harry Churchill for himself and his wife, Kate. At the time of its construction, this was considered to be quite a lavish house by Pangburn standards. It is unique because of its Craftsman influence—seen in the home's front porch columns—tapered columns resting on square, brick bases that extend below the porch floor. Also seen in the exposed rafter tails.

I've told you a lot about Mr. Churchill already, but he continued to be influential in Pangburn after the arrival of the railroad. Under his direction, the swinging bridge

over the Little Red River about one mile north of Pangburn on Hwy. 110 was built in 1909. In 1914 Churchill constructed one large commercial building with 4 storefronts and a bank building on Main Street. This is part of the only remaining commercial block in Pangburn and is referred to as the “white brick.” Churchill also donated 7 acres of land for the construction of a new school and playground (2-story, red brick high school built in 1914 & later burned). Churchill left Pangburn in 1917 after a series of misunderstandings and unsubstantiated allegations regarding his bank and its investment practices.

After the Churchill family left Pangburn, Tont Chandler, who owned the Fair Store, was the home’s second resident. He stayed here until the early 1930s when his store went under during the Great Depression. Then Napoleon “Po” or “Pole” Hilger moved here (he had been living at 901 Main). Hilger was a German immigrant whose family came to the Little Red settlement in the 1830s. Some other German families who settled in the area were the Yinglings, Wishes, Stahles, and Von Grolmans. Hilger served one term as Cleburne County Sherriff in 1898 and was also Pangburn’s mayor for several years. He took over the Pangburn bank during the Depression. Some residents may remember the peacocks he kept on his farm. Hilger died in 1940, and his wife lived here until her death in 1947. Artis and Lowren Hughes lived here in the 1940s and 50s, and when they moved to Kentucky, Gene and Anne Faulkner bought the home. After the Faulkners owned the home, it was owned by a few different people who only kept it for short periods of time. Finally, Gene and Anne Faulkner’s daughter, Dixie Gunter purchased the home.

**Cross Main & then cross Searcy to walk by the commercial buildings.**

### **“White Brick”**

The commercial buildings on this half-block of Main were built by 1914. The white glazed brick on the upper facades earned them the name “white brick.” The buff brick building to the west of the white bricks was built by Cleve Treat—not sure on year, but there was a building on this site by 1914. The south side of the street was also lined with commercial buildings, including a movie theatre and post office (1914), but they are now gone. This “white brick” section had a bank on the corner of Main & Searcy. In its early years, the bank was run by Napoleon “Pole” or “Po” Hilger and Jesse James Capps. The next four storefronts are actually one building. Note the original bulkheads and starburst transom windows on a few of the storefronts. These storefronts were occupied by general mercantile stores, a dry goods store, and a hardware store in 1914. By the 1930s, it was (going east to

west) the bank, the Fair Store (like the forerunner of the dollar store or 5 & 10 cent store—there were other Fair Stores in Searcy, Beebe, and Judsonia), Bob Williams General Mercantile, a drug store (started by Noel Crook), Capps Variety Store, and Ed Doyle's General Mercantile.

Cross Alley—the next building was built sometime after 1923 b/c it does not appear on the 1923 Sanborn map. Probably built in the late 1920s or 1930s. Notice the rock work on the building's east side—it has raised mortar between the rocks. That's called grapevine or giraffe mortar. This building was constructed by Will Jenkins, and he had his grocery and feed store here. He raised chickens out back and sold chicken and eggs in his grocery. Jenkins lived next door in the Hickman's house. The commercial building was later occupied by a hardware store.

There were commercial buildings across Main Street where the park is, and in the 1930s, Stewart Coffey's barber shop was over there. The rock building at the SE corner of Main & Austin St. (now ice cream shop) was built by Tuck Crews as a barber shop. Two barbers on the same block? Maybe different time periods.

**Stop at Kerry & Darrell Hickman's commercial building for a water/bathroom break.**

### **Jenkins House**

NE corner of Main & Austin. Built about 1908 shortly after the arrival of the railroad. I read that Po Hilger lived in this house until the early 1930s, when he moved down the street to the Churchill-Hilger House. This is where the grocer, Will Jenkins, lived in the 1930s. The house has nice scalloped detailing in the gable end. Kerry & Darrell Hickman live here now, and they constructed an addition to the rear, but it blends in well with the historic portion of the home.

### **Austin Pangburn House (NR-listed 1991)**

NW corner of Main & Austin. Built about 1908. Has good Folk Victorian-style details in the front-facing gable end—diamond-shaped shingles and scalloped gingerbread trim. The front-facing gable also has a bay window instead of being flat (this is also a characteristic of Folk Victorian and Queen Anne-style architecture). Like the Avanell Wright House we saw earlier, this house has a distinctive wrap-around porch with Doric columns. Austin Pangburn, son of the

town's namesake, Dr. David Pangburn, lived here. Note that Austin Street runs right next to his house.

### **John Shutter House (NR-listed 1991)**

SW corner of Main & Austin. This house was built in 1908 by John Shutter, who ran a mercantile store in Pangburn. The home has some Craftsman influence in its front porch columns.

### **James William Boggs House (NR-listed 1991)**

East side of Austin St. between Torrence & McKee. Built in 1908 by James William Boggs, who moved to Pangburn in 1907 from the nearby community of Clay, which dried up after the railroad bypassed it. The Boggs family had a telephone office at Clay, and they opened the Pangburn telephone company in the second story of this house in 1908. The Boggs had two daughters, and one of them was responsible for climbing telephone poles if anything went wrong. Someone always slept upstairs in case a call came through at night. Sometime between 1912 and 1926, a two-room shotgun style house was moved behind the Boggs House from its original location on the alley behind Heartsell and Bonnie Capps' house. In the mid-1940s the telephone office moved to a large tin building where the library is now. The Pangburn telephone company was sold in the 1940s to Allied Telephone Co., which became Alltel (now Windstream).

The house that was moved behind the Boggs House was a doctor's office—have read/heard two different doctor names, and maybe they each practiced here at different times—Dr. Frasier and Dr. Peeler.

The Boggs House sat empty for about 30 years, and then the Hickmans bought it and restored the home. Susan Ramsey purchased the house in 2006. When the house was being restored, the doctor's office and main house were connected.

### **Rufus Gray House (NR-listed 1991)**

SE corner of Austin & McKee. This house was built about 1912 and has nice Folk Victorian details like scalloping in one gable end, a bay window, and a front porch supported by Doric columns. The only story about the Gray family that I know was told by Leon Van Patten. The Grays didn't have any children, and when he was a child, Leon would play in their yard just to aggravate them.

**Not on tour, but some other buildings to see...**

McAdams House at SE corner of McKee & Maple. Built about 1915 and NR-listed in 1991.

Marsh House at NW corner of Maple & Torrence. Built about 1920 and NR-listed in 1991.

M & NA Depot—near the intersection of 1<sup>st</sup> Street and Church Street. Built in 1908. It has been used as a residence in recent years, and they are now removing the vinyl siding so you can see the original depot. The railroad tracks ran N-S just to the west of the depot. It's in bad shape, so see it while it's still there. ☺

Baptist Church at the SE corner of Second & Short. A Baptist church has occupied this site since at least 1923. Neat rock work and stained glass windows, but has large modern addition.

Methodist Church at the SE corner of Austin & Church. Has been a Methodist church on that corner since at least 1923.