

This research topic guide is best used with the Chronicling America website ([chroniclingamerica.loc.gov](http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov)), a Library of Congress website co-sponsored with the National Endowment for the Humanities. Chronicling America is a repository of digitized historic American newspapers from 1777-1963 and is an excellent resource for primary and secondary materials. This guide is focused on Arkansas topics but can be relevant to other states. To search in Arkansas papers, select the state in the drop-down menu. Choose the desired date range to search, then enter one or more words in the search bar and click GO.



(TOP) Harvesting of a large cypress tree in the Moro bottoms near Jacinto around 1925. Courtesy of the Southwest Arkansas Regional Archives. (BOTTOM) Logger Clancy Graves in Bradford around 1910. Courtesy of the White County Historical Society via Encyclopedia of Arkansas.

Arkansas's abundant forests presented obstacles and opportunity for early European settlers. Clearing trees for settlements and farms by axe and saw was slow and laborious, but yielded the raw lumber needed for houses, barns, fences, and furniture. Advances in technology were used to improve timber processing, and by the 1850s steam powered sawmills were common across Arkansas. Despite the increase in output with advancing mechanization, these sawmills could only serve nearby communities because they lacked practical long-distance transportation. This changed after the Civil War, when railroads were built across Arkansas. In the late 1800s, timber companies began using trains to expand their operations and export lumber state and nationwide.

The railroad and timber industries complemented one another, as railroad companies needed lumber to build train tracks and as cargo, and timber companies shipped their trees for processing and sale via train. Companies like the Fordyce Lumber Company, Crossett Lumber Company, Arkansas Lumber Company, and Southern Lumber Company built their own railroads into timber country to transport tree harvests. With the ability to sell beyond local need, Arkansas lumber companies bought and leased huge tracts of timberlands, especially in the southern part of the state. With additional machinery like tree cutters and road building machines, timber operations continued growing into the 1900s.

As the industry grew, timber companies established new towns and developed existing towns. Timber "company towns" usually began as sawmill camps that were expanded by the timber company after the addition of railroad tracks. Expansions included housing and stores for workers and their families. As towns grew, they added additional facilities like schools, churches, fire departments, hospitals, stores, and newspapers. Not all timber towns flourished, however, as many companies at the turn of the century practiced "cut out and get out." This means once the timber company cut through the forests, they moved their operations and left the town behind if there were no more nearby forests. Burdette and Nimmons were just a few of the towns founded and later left by timber companies. Though these company towns remained after the timber business left, other company towns were eventually abandoned completely, like Graysonia, Mauldin, and Forester.

The Crossett Lumber Company (CLC), founded in 1899, provides a prime example of how Arkansas lumber companies operated. CLC became Arkansas's largest and most influential lumber company in the early 1900s. The company founded the town of Crossett in southeastern Arkansas to house its workers and their families. After CLC built a railroad in Crossett, they expanded quickly by adding houses, a school, and

### COMMON SEARCH TERMS

lumber company, timber, timber industry, Graysonia, logging, sawmill company, logging operation, timber mill, paper mill, pulp factory, timber men, forestry, Division of Forestry, timber lands, lumbermen, forest management, national forests, forestry problems, forestry division, professional forester, Ozan Lumber Company, Crossett Lumber Company, Caddo River Lumber Company, Arkansas Soft Pine Bureau, Ozark National Forest, Arkansas National Forest, forest service, lumber railroad, timber railroad, pine tree, forest conservation

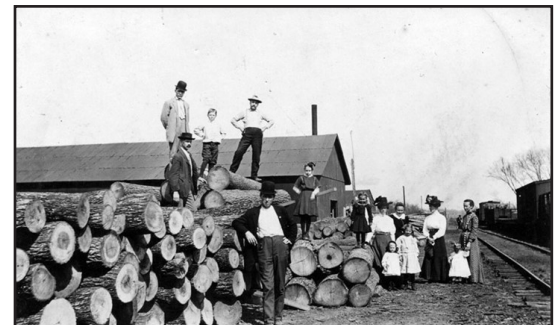
church. Further amenities were soon available, like the Crossett Observer newspaper, which began publication in 1906. Unlike some companies, CLC continued to work out of Crossett rather than employing the “cut out and get out” method used by others.

Arkansas's lumber production peaked in 1909 at 2 billion board feet of lumber cut that year, which coincided with growing local concern about forests running out as timber companies cleared large sections of the state. The federal government had already been surveying the extent and condition of U.S. forests, as forest clearing was occurring nationwide. In the 1900s, the U. S. Forest Service (U.S.F.S.) developed forest management programs to sustain the remaining forests while also producing timber with the tenet that forests were crops to be managed and regrown.

The first extensive timber conservation efforts in Arkansas occurred in 1907 and 1908 following an executive order, by which President Theodore Roosevelt created the Arkansas National Forest (now the Ouachita National Forest) and then the Ozark National Forest. Under federal management, these forests are used for nature conservation and recreation while also sustainably providing timber. Local commercial conservation work was headed by CLC, which was the first Arkansas lumber company to invest in forest management. CLC worked with the Yale University School of Forestry and hired a professional forester to study the company's forest holdings and develop plans for sustainable yields. Crossett's new strategy was “perpetual operation” as they harvested and replanted their forests. Strategies like selective cutting and replanting were adopted by other timber companies so that Arkansas's forests have been farmed sustainably since the 1940s.

In addition to conservation practices like sustainable harvests, lumber companies developed ways to use smaller trees and reduce waste. Arkansas's trees had primarily been used to make lumber for furniture and houses, newsprint, paper, and charcoal. New factories and mills opened in Arkansas to further process timber to get as much product out of a tree as possible. Factories made goods like kraft paper and food containers from smaller pieces of wood. Any remaining wood waste was turned into chemicals like wood alcohol and turpentine.

After the peak of timber production in the early 1900s, many of Arkansas's smaller timber towns and operations closed. Less timber is harvested today than in past decades, but Arkansas remains one of the nation's top producers of lumber and other timber products. Currently several large timber companies are the main operators in the state, harvesting trees from private land, commercial land, and the National Forests. Over the past century, market fluctuations linked to national economic trends have resulted in fluctuations in the timber industry, but timber remains one of Arkansas's most important resources.



(left) Crossett Lumber Company sawmill, unloading logs into the pond. Courtesy of the Butler Center for Arkansas Studies via the Central Arkansas Library System. (right) Timber for Frisco Railroad ties in St. Paul around 1900. Courtesy of Mary Ellen Johnson via the Encyclopedia of Arkansas.

## SOME SIGNIFICANT DATES

- 1827 First steam-powered sawmill in Arkansas opens in Helena.
- 1876 Congress approves creation of the position of Special Agent in the Department of Agriculture to assess U.S. forests.
- 1850s By this point most sawmills run on steam power, whereas previously they had used waterpower.
- 1880 Timber industry takes off in Arkansas.
- 1881 Federal government expands their forest assessors by creating the Division of Forestry to continue monitoring the extent and condition of U.S. forests.
- 1891 Forest Reserve Act passed to protect the country's dwindling forests, which allows the President to remove land from public domain to create forest reserves and protect forests from over-exploitation. This was the beginning of national forests, originally called forest reserves.
- 1899 Crossett Lumber Company founded, which became Arkansas's largest and most influential lumber company in the early 1900s.
- 1901 Federal Division of Forestry renamed the Bureau of Forestry.
- 1903 Crossett incorporated as a town, which was built by the Crossett Lumber Company as a "company town" to house their workers.
- 1905 The Bureau of Forestry is renamed the United States Forest Service (U.S.F.S.), which took over management of forest reserves/national forests.
- 1907 President Roosevelt creates the Arkansas National Forest (now the Ouachita National Forest) from land south of the Arkansas River, withdrawing this land from public domain to conserve the forests. The Ouachita National Forest is the oldest and largest national forest in the South and was the first national forest with large tracts of shortleaf pine trees.
- 1908 President Roosevelt creates the Ozark National Forest from land north of the Arkansas River, withdrawing this land from public domain to conserve the forests. The Ozark National Forest was the first national forest with considerable hardwood forests.
- 1909 Peak lumber production in Arkansas at 2 billion board feet of lumber cut that year with 73% of Arkansans working in the timber industry. Lumber production decreases after this point.
- 1912 Arkansas Soft Pine Bureau (ASPB) founded by Arkansas timber companies to advertise Arkansas's pine lumber.
- 1920 Timber companies mainly operate in the Ouachita Mountains in the west and the Timberlands in southwestern Arkansas.
- 1926 Crossett Lumber Company begins hiring professional foresters to develop management techniques for forest sustainability at Crossett. The techniques developed at that time are still used today in U.S. forests. President Coolidge changes the name of the Arkansas National Forest to the Ouachita National Forest.
- 1927 Only 57% of Arkansans are involved in the timber industry, still a majority of workers, but a large drop from the peak of the timber boom.
- 1930 Ouachita National Forest lands are extended into Oklahoma.
- 1939 Pine tree adopted as Arkansas's official state tree, one of the state's most harvested trees, due to the importance of the timber industry to Arkansas's economy.
- 1945 Arkansas's forests are farmed sustainably.
- 1962 Crossett Lumber Company is merged into the Georgia-Pacific Company.

## SELECT ARTICLES FROM CHRONICLING AMERICA

- "In the Forests" *Pine Bluff Daily Graphic* July 10, 1900, Image 1, Column 1-2
- "Hanby Still Lumber King" *The Green Forest Tribune* October 10, 1903, Image 1, Column 5
- "Paper Mill in Arkansas" *Newport Daily Independent* April 11, 1906, Image 1, Column 2
- "A National Forest" *The Prescott Daily News* May 17, 1907, Image 1, Column 1
- "For Cutting Timber" *The Mena Weekly Star* September 10, 1908, Image 2, Column 2
- "Mastering Great Forest Problems" *The Green Forest Tribune* November 5, 1909, Supplement, Image 3, Column 1-4
- "Would Abolish Forest Reserve" *The Mena Weekly Star* May 26, 1910, Image 7, Column 1



### CONTINUED SELECT ARTICLES FROM CHRONICLING AMERICA

- "Investors Here May Buy Timber" *Pine Bluff Daily Graphic* November 3, 1911, Image 2, Column 3
- "With the Lumber Jacks in Winter" *The Green Forest Tribune* February 23, 1912, Image 5, Column 4-6
- "Floods Controlled by Production of Forests" *The Prescott Daily News* August 30, 1915, Image 1, Column 3
- "Pines are Pride O' Pulaski Hills" *The Pulaskian* October 1, 1915, Image 1, Column 1-2
- "Perkins Lumber Co." *The Carlisle Independent* July 25, 1918, Image 12, Full Page
- "Good Income from Farm Woodland is Assured to Farmer by Proper Care" *The Newark Journal* November 13, 1919, Image 5, Column 4-5

### RELEVANT EDUCATION AND LESSON PLANS

Central Arkansas Library System: Arkansas Geography:

<https://arstudies.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/lessonplans/id/88>

Central Arkansas Library System: Nature and Place Names in Arkansas:

<https://arstudies.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/lessonplans/id/110>

Central Arkansas Library System: Arkansas: A Natural State Lesson Plan:

<https://arstudies.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/lessonplans/id/70>

Central Arkansas Library System: The Ozark Timber Boom...and Bust! Lesson Plan:

<https://arstudies.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/lessonplans/id/96>

Central Arkansas Library System: Into the Wilderness: Habitat vs. Development Lesson Plan:

<https://arstudies.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/lessonplans/id/43>

Central Arkansas Library System: N is for Natural State Lesson Plan:

<https://arstudies.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/lessonplans/id/56>

Central Arkansas Library System: Timber: Living and Working in an Arkansas Forest Lesson Plan:

<https://arstudies.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/lessonplans/id/135/rec/1>

Central Arkansas Library System: Ouachita National Forest and Its Value to "The Natural State" Lesson Plan:

<https://arstudies.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/lessonplans/id/113/rec/78>

Central Arkansas Library System: Symbols of Our State: Arkansas Lesson Plan:

<https://arstudies.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/lessonplans/id/59/rec/94>

Central Arkansas Library System: Crowley's Ridge Lesson Plan:

<https://arstudies.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/lessonplans/id/100>

UALR Center for Arkansas History and Culture: History Alive: Virtually!: From Trees to Lumber Exercise:

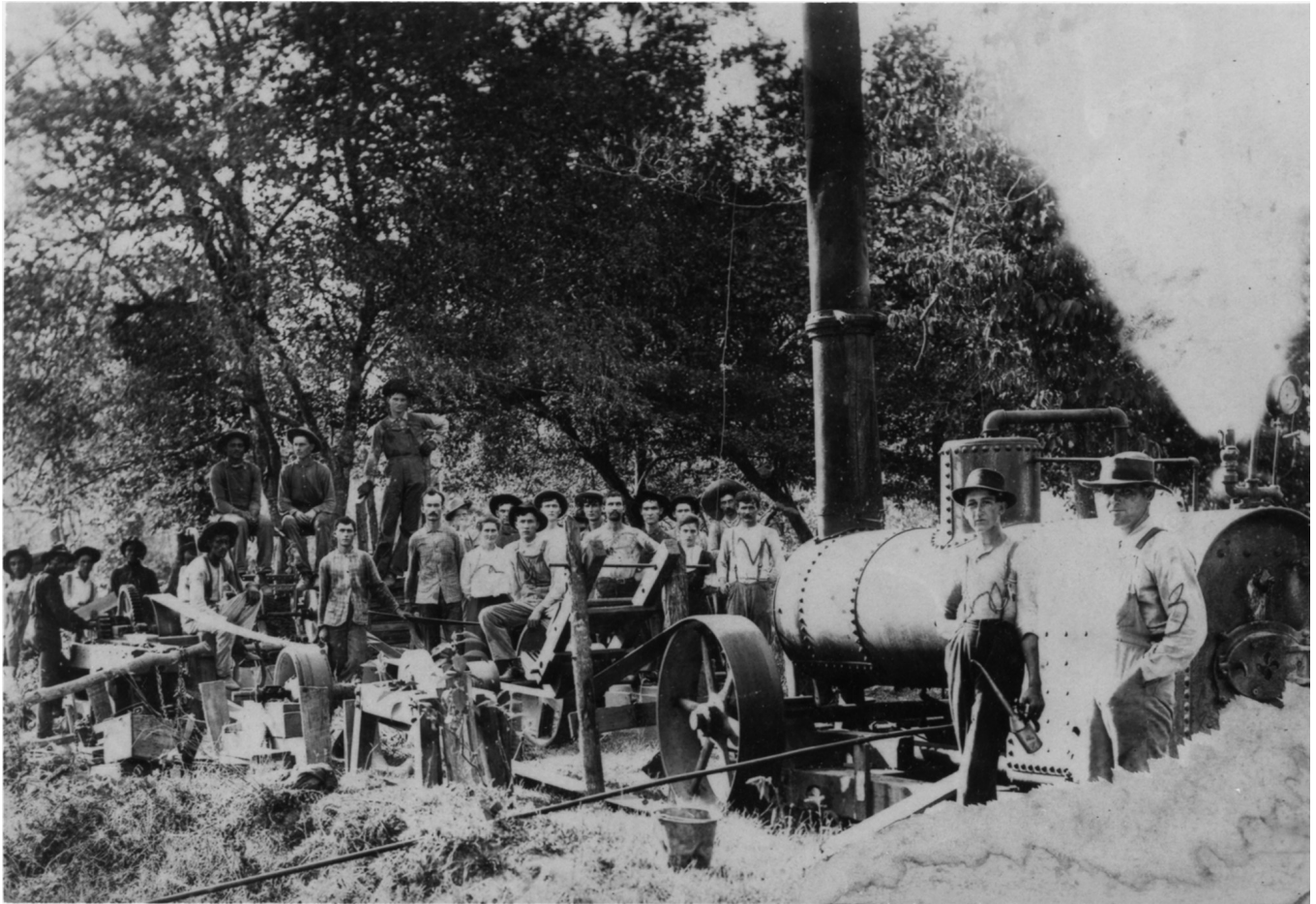
<https://ualrexhibits.org/historyalive/exercise/from-trees-to-lumber/>

Find more of our topic guides at <https://digitalheritage.arkansas.gov/newspapers/>.

Further information about this topic can be found in the Encyclopedia of Arkansas, courtesy of the Central Arkansas Library System at <https://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/>.

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(TOP) Steam powered sawmill in southwest Arkansas. Courtesy of the UA Little Rock Center for Arkansas History and Culture. (BOTTOM) Workers at the Sturgis Lumber Company in Malvern in the early 20th century. Courtesy of the Butler Center for Arkansas Studies via the Central Arkansas Library System.





(TOP LEFT) Chicago Mill and Lumber Company loading cut trees onto train cars near West Helena in the 1910s. Courtesy of the Butler Center for Arkansas Studies via the Central Arkansas Library System. (BOTTOM LEFT) West end of the timber mill at Graysonia around 1915. The timber mill eventually closed and Graysonia was abandoned by 1950. Courtesy of the Arkansas State Archives.



(ABOVE) Employees at the Arkansas Lumber Company in Warren in 1914. Left to right: Satters, Bookkeeper, J. E. Barnks, Warehouse keeper, S. A. Williams, Sales Mgr, R. E. Keeley, Steno Sales Help, J. H. Adams, Chief Timberman, R. C. Hargrace, Chief Clerk, A. Q. Powell, Steno Sales Help, J. Sestn Leslie, Steno Private. Courtesy of the Butler Center for Arkansas Studies via the Central Arkansas Library System.